

The background is a solid red color with several thin, white, wavy lines that flow across the page, creating a sense of movement and organic form. These lines vary in thickness and direction, some curving gently while others are more angular.

the egg the embryo the explosion

A REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM OF ARCHITECTURE

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My First Time

I walked the streets as a child knowing this place was not for me. I waited patiently in seemingly endless bathroom lines; I buckled seatbelts uncomfortably over my chest; I measured tank tops with my fingers and the length of my shorts; I was spoken over; I was corrected, but I also had my own secret. An agenda of my body that not even I knew was powerfully pushing me forward. Even if I did not consciously know how I went on, despite the world breaking me down, my body knew. And in my most formative years, while my body grew and pulled, while she ached, she was trying to tell me. She was trying to tell me that despite the world trying to wrap my body, close it off with a nice neat bow, she was coming. Then one day she did. She arrived full force, bleeding at the seams. Not even the pad (one that I put upside down unknowingly from a lack of formal and adequate education in regards to my own natural cycle) could contain the life that burst unexpectedly from my body. My body bled, breaking the social seams sown to keep me trapped. I was told to hide it. I was shown how to control it, but she was never put to bay. She would come back each month, a small reminder of my body as capable, as alive, and as perseverant. My menstruation is my strength.

We are dying. A FEManifesto.

{ {Is it my time of the month or am I just mad? } }

My menstruation has been stolen.

Ripped from my body and commodified for a capitalistic agenda by the patriarch.

My blood is shed each month only to flow into the pockets of those who force my body into confinement.

My menstruation has been stolen and my body imprisoned.

I am pissed.

And you should be too.

The subversive potential of the female body is threatening. Menstruation is dangerous.

The egos of men are fragile, although their structures are not.

I pose menstruation as the antithesis of capitalism. The patriarch’s mortal enemy. The thing that makes them squirm. If we let menstruation flow free, the social binaries and product oriented worth would be disintegrated. Essentially irrelevant. Menstruation is our revolution. Western, white centric culture does not want us to discover our own power, so they have worn us down with centuries of oppression. But menstruation does not stop and neither do we.

Menstrual flow is irregular, it is inherently unpredictable and it is above all actively anti-production.

It is a riot.

We are rioting. Because menstruation is

natural. The patriarchy is NOT.

History is taken as a justification for naturalizing the systems of oppression that men know they would not be in power without. But history is written by men. History writes centuries of practices of suppression of the female body as if it was confirmed to be the innate way society was made. As if they did not violently repress any other possibility. As if their western ego and colonialist exceptionalism, did not go about squashing any dissenters and superimposing their ideals forcefully upon them. They were able to wash away cultures that outdated them ten to one, they were able to overthrow entire nations with their weapons, but they have never been able to make menstruation disappear. The best they could do was silence it.

Menstruation is nasty. It is dirty and it is shameful.

Their linguistic oppression of menstruation is the assist where history fails to come through. History can shroud menstruation in secrecy, but without a language that silences even the slightest notion of its existence, menstruation would come rolling back (every month to be exact). So they created language and advertising to infiltrate not only the external but deeply internal female psyche and perception of herself. A patriarch cannot take on menstruation on his own. Without the mass manipulation and socialization of female bodies to do their dirty work, menstruation would be out. She would flood the streets and she would not be tamed.

Their language infiltrates our psyche, weaponizing each and every one of us against each other to divert our energy away from realizing our potential to tear it all down. They know that we could burn this shit to the ground if our lives did not depend on playing into their sick games.

They rape us and then they blame us.

The patriarchy takes ownership over our minds, so they can exploit our body. Product oriented worth objectified us. The manipulation of our minds leaves us unable to distinguish if anything we do is for us or just another form of compensation to the patriarch for permission to exist. Our bodies are no exception. We are forced to walk a tightrope, balancing between death and imprisonment. We have to be pretty enough to make our

presence worth the patriarch's time, but not too pretty otherwise his uncontrollable impulses will violate our body. The home is our prison, but the streets are our hell. If we have children we should not also want to work. It is our desire to be mothers, right? The home is our designated safe haven but we are forced to remain inside of it: an awful lot like a cell I'd say. We cook, we clean, and we raise children. So we do not need a social space, right? Our place is the home, but only parts of it. We are locked inside of the home and expected to enjoy it, expected to be thankful for such a small sliver of space. But outside it we are killed. We are raped and beaten and we are watched. There is not much of an option there, is there? We dare to exist in a city outside of our designated place and are violently attacked for it. On the streets we are subject to the ferocity of the male gaze, not only directing our movements but restricting our access. Without winning the male gaze we lack acknowledgement, we are not let in. But with it we are degraded, slowly stripped of our sense of confidence. Our body, our menstruation, signals this attraction. Our bodies call the attention to get into the room, but our bodies simultaneously justify our denial from a seat at the table. The rules strictly impressed upon cannot be taken lightly. The necropolitics of the patriarchs capitalistic agenda means our lives depend on it.

We are dying.

Female bodies are being killed to guarantee their power can never be claimed. THIS blood, the blood of the war on femininity, is natural, it is JUSTIFIED, apparently, for the sake of upholding western exceptionalism veiled as democracy. While the blood of our bodies is labelled a nasty pollutant to their notions of freedom. Blood at the hands of the patriarch is ruthless and careless. It is the blood of a villains evil plan for socio-economic control. We have been educated, socialized, and institutionalized to believe this is not true while simultaneously internalizing our own oppression with the conclusion of our own body to blame.

But this is what the capitalistic patriarch wants us to believe.

They RELY on it in fact.

The beauty and power of our menstruation could undermine the historical, linguistic, and ultimately physical oppression of our bodies. And they know it. Our menstrual superheroism can dismantle this capitalistic nightmare.

In this story feminine space is the protagonist and menstruation is her super power.

Menstrual power is the dirty secret, capitalism does not want us to uncover.

My blood is beautiful.

My blood is mine.

The female body is dangerous.

Why?

The female body makes violence, emotional abuse, repression, and exploitation inevitable. But why?

The patriarchy fears the female body.

The female body threatens the very framework of their system which relies on a social hierarchy subordinating women in order to uplift the patriarch. They control the female body in order to maintain this fraudulent inflation of themselves. They have naturalized their oppression; they have silenced her; and they have imprisoned her, hidden her away, so their true face is not revealed.

But her body holds a secret. She is abused, she is beaten down, she is shut up, but her menstruation remains. Her menstruation is her superpower. It is the her promise of regeneration month after month, that sheds light on her as alive; she is living despite being told not to exist. The patriarchy would like to believe they have completely shut her down and commodified her for their capitalistic agenda, but each month she comes back. The constant reminder of their failure to attain ultimate and complete control. The patriarch maintains the visual of a closed body. They maintain the idea that their system is final and rigid, but are fooled. Menstruation cleanses the female body of their constricted role. She is pure and she is naïve in her natural flowing of blood. This act is so basic and yet creates such fear within the patriarch’s collective ego.

The act of residing inside a female body poses a threat to the patriarchy and menstruation is their warning; the announcement of the strength of the female body.

The empowerment of the female body has the transformative potential to redefine the oppressive cities we are currently bound to and menstruation is the superpower she possesses to activate the resistance.

Introduction

Through the enforcement of socially constructed body politics and economic regulation based in hierarchical gender norms, gender is both regulated and constructed in a binary. This is supported by historical and linguistic frameworks that force us to perform gender in this specified manner. The white cis hetero patriarchy have placed themselves at the top of a power structure they created and in no way earned or deserved. These systems of oppression are intentional, but they are not natural. They have been built up on years of deconstructing the female psyche and really any person who has been 'otherized' for the sake of maintaining white male dominance. This upholding and reinforcement of this oppressive state exists within every system and practice that exists in our society and architecture is no exclusion. The enforcement of violent, oppressive structures is so intertwined and encoded within the built environment that the only way to create spaces of justice and equity is to create a fundamentally new approach to architecture.

To create a more general, common understanding of the means and lengths taken to produce this artificial hierarchies and the framework of this oppression, we look to how selective recording of history and the language used to reinforce and reproduce it have created such a narrow baseline of evaluating everything (science, medicine, biology, space, etc.) that anyone that does not satisfy a white cis hetero ideal is left unconsidered and invisible. In the architectural framework, this has created a quite literal Built in Oppression, that cannot be removed with any mean or method in practice as of now. To attempt to work within the existing structures is to feed into hierarchies and binaries, and thus continue to reproduce them. It is vital that we completely abolish the way in we have traditionally approached architecture and design otherwise we are no less guilty of complacency.

The Production of Oppression

History is generally considered to be the recorded and interpreted past which is predominately taken from a masculine point of view thus quite literally writing out the experience of women. The production of a History solely from the perspective of white cis hetero men is reproduced over and over giving a certain sense of Universality. This establishes the assumption that women were not part of the making of history at all, but this disregards that History is only a partial record. Women did play key roles in the creation of events, they have just simply been made invisible under layers and layers of masculine narratives. While there is a collective memory shared between women of their experiences it has not been recorded and often gets lost. The History in which only the male perspective and interpretation has been recorded therefore, no conclusive statement can really be made about a woman's place when her interpretation was not even taken into account. They are a result of a socialized integration of half a historical record that has been presented to them. To consider women who are caregivers and child bears to be evidence of this natural progression of human history is to grossly ignore this fact. Female bodied and feminine presenting individuals are not portrayed in narratives of history in any predominant role, so how are we expected to be anything other than complacent in their preservation?

History, as discussed by Gerda Lerner in *The Creation of the Patriarchy*, is based on the assemblage of physical objects like tools, remains, pottery, ambiguous artifacts and the combination of them to create narratives of past events. We base the stories on the strung together evidence supporting questions we want answered in the present. These questions stem from androcentric assumptions and thus, our interpretations are dominated by androcentric answers. The assumption of a natural order of male dominance is so deeply rooted it has become a given in most cases. Any evidence that does not align with this narrative is "merely an exception to the rule or a failed alternative".¹

Female bodied and feminine presenting individuals are not victims or essentially inferior, their history was simply not documented, their experiences not interpreted in the same way that the male experience was. Thus, predisposing the cultural mindset that "women have not produced important advances in thought because of their biologically

¹ Lerner, *"The Creation of the Patriarchy"*, 16

² Lerner, *"The Creation of the Patriarchy"*, 7

³ Lerner, *"The Creation of the Patriarchy"*, 17

⁴ Cameron, *"Women's Oppression in Language"*, 80

determined preoccupation with nurture and emotion...while female and male bodies may be biologically different... the values and implications based on that difference are the result of culture" and not a result of a natural inferiority of the female body.² The biological determinant narrative is a result of socially constructed hierarchies for the direct goal of maintaining patriarchal power structures. This is directly correlated to many damaging assumptions placed on women as being natural that result in violence and harm on their bodies and minds.

Biological facts (false biological determinate assumptions) are evaluated through these severely lacking historical representations and are simultaneously being utilized to support this historical claim of a natural order of female subordination. Biological truths are riddled with patriarchal language and are again, lacking the full interpretation and understanding in and of themselves. Historical divisions of labor are often boiled down to just biological differences between the male and female sex. This sexual asymmetry is taken as the cause of female subordination. While these biological differences do exist, "men's greater physical strength, their ability to run faster, and lift heavier weights..." and certain , "biological equipment [that] destines her (the female body) for motherhood and nurturance",³ the social construction of hierarchies is what has led to a culture of male dominance over the female body and feminine presenting individual. This is not to say that biology is incorrect, it is merely to acknowledge that the way in which it is framed is patriarchal and that a holistic understanding has not been found due to a male baseline assumption.

History and the study of Biology are co-productive in reproducing these oppressive social constructs. The two are collectively reinforced by language that both subtly and apparently perpetuate these different fields of knowledge that are producing oppression.

"Language as the place where meaning is produced.. language is seen by many feminists as the site of oppression and conversely therefore, a potential liberation".⁴

As Gerda Lerner and Caroline Perez both discuss, historical record accounts for the male perspective and the male interpretation of events.

This record is riddled with linguistic impressions to supplement and reinforce these ideas. Without persistent male oriented language, this history would not be as ingrained as it has become. As history has been claimed as precedent for societal rules, however arbitrary, this male dominated narrative seeps into crevices of jobs, household and familial roles, and even into objects. Just as historical records are passed down through generations, so are these language expectations and determiners.

Almost all language uplift and uphold these beliefs. Many languages that have developed to include gendered nouns and gendering groups of people based on the presence of a singular male body quite clearly exemplify this; these include languages such as Spanish, German, French, Italian. It is less blatant, however still equally as damaging, in languages where the gendering is not so obvious or is not included at all: languages such as Hungarian and Finnish with genderless language. While languages that do not gender anything and do not describe things with an associated gendered term, do not have as prevalent gender disparities it has been found that the languages where a gender can be specified are the most gender inclusive, due to one fact alone: “Study authors suggested that if you cannot mark gender in any way you cannot correct the hidden bias in a language by emphasizing women’s presence in the world. In short: because men go without saying, it matters when women literally cannot get said at all”.⁵ This begins to present the incredibly destructive and damaging male baseline. The male baseline leads to the assumption that when unspecified or unsaid the male gender is assumed. This becomes particularly dangerous when gender is not identifiable based on regulated social cues. For female bodied or feminine presenting people, being able to specify a gender is important for recognition and to avoid the assumption of it being male. This presents itself in job positions such as doctor, teacher, lawyer, etc. when a gender is not specified in the ending or is not typically denoted with a pronoun preceding the noun in certain languages because without that specification it is assumed to be male. In languages where gender is denoted by the use of a pronoun there is the ability to not only lose the gendered noun but also to explicitly state a female presence through the use of she/her/hers. These languages known as natural gender languages, are considered to be the most inclusive for the

⁵ Perez, “Invisible Women”, 7

⁶ Perez, “Invisible Women”, 5

⁷ Perez, “Invisible Women”, 6

⁸ Cameron, “Women’s Oppression in Language”, 79

simple reason that gender is not assumed, but is specifically addressed without being embedded into the term itself.

The male baseline is not only limited to gendering job positions. The word man is so ambiguously ingrained in our linguistic politics that even the mention of human or humankind is assumed to be represented as a man. This is where I would like to begin a discussion of the linguistic politics that define how we articulate the world around us. To establish an evidence based framework for this claim, we can begin with the poem ‘Myth’ by Muriel Rukeyser where “an old, blind Oedipus asks the Sphinx, ‘Why didn’t I recognize my mother?’ The Sphinx replies that Oedipus answered her question (what walks on four legs in the morning, two in the afternoon and three in the evening incorrectly. ‘You answered, Man. You didn’t say anything about women.’ But, replies Oedipus, when you say man, ‘you include women too. Everyone knows that. But in fact the Sphinx was right and Oedipus is wrong. When you say man you don’t (necessarily) ‘include women too’...”⁶ Studies, such as “The impact of masculine generics on the cognitive inclusion of women” done by Friedrike Braun, Sabine Sczesny, and Dagmar Stahlberg, and Lisa Horvaths and Sabine Sczesny’s study of “Effects of the wording of job advertisements: European Journal of work and Organizational Psychology”, show that he as a gender-neutral term does not imply anything generic but does, in fact, read as male. The generic male is so pervasive that it reads in professions, politics, and education even when no gender at all is presented, terms such as: doctor, teacher, senator, and student. It is so widely assumed that it has even become a topic of contention in language policy. In 2017, “Academie francaise, France’s ultimate authority on the French language, was thundering against the ‘aberration of “inclusive writing,’ claiming that the French language finds itself in mortal danger, from workarounds for the generic masculine”.⁷

But this linguistic error runs deeper than just our assumptions about definitions. Deborah Cameron argues in “What is the Nature of Women’s oppression in Language?” that the struggle we face in the social construction of gender is not merely “implicated it is actually the disputed territory”.⁸ This distinction is an appropriate recognition of where the root of these disparities lie. It is clear and explicit in the way that as society, as cultures, we assume the male figure as a form

of generic representation for everyone, when he actually fits a very small percentage of people. When a male baseline is implemented this representation is clear, but the damaging effects run deeper in the implications of its use on what that severely lacking form of representation represents about who is prioritized and how so many people not only deemed less important but less valuable: their person invisible in the eyes of patriarchal priorities. A critique of representation but also meaning it creates must take place. As has been argued here, feminist epistemologists argue for a complete deconstruction of objectivity as we have traditionally come to understand it: in Historical record, in biology, in language. But, simultaneously we cannot fall into complete relativism as that disregards the very real meaning and experiences that the traditional objective truths and knowledge have produced. While the use of metaphor and similar linguistic tools is known to be merely representational it produces very real oppressive and often violent experiences. In “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles”, Emily Martin discusses the ways in which biology utilizes metaphorical language reinforces stereotypes that female bodies are weaker or lesser in some way than male bodies by describing the biological processes of the female sex as less worthy, thus implying that women themselves are less worthy than men. In texts such as Medical Physiology, edited by Vernon Mountcastle comparisons between the egg and the sperm are incredibly destructive in this regard, “where the female sheds only a single gamete each month, and the seminiferous tubules produce millions of sperm each day”.⁹ It is quite clear in it prioritization of capitalistic based production ranking systems where male mechanisms are remarkably able to “manufacture several hundred million sperm per day” while from this viewpoint, menstruation is seen as the lack of a child and there for a lack of contribution in the one way that a female body is seen as valuable.¹⁰ This language reinforces socio-political norms and even ideas within the field of medicine where “the making of sperm is seen as something ‘remarkable’ and menstruation is not”.¹¹ Menstruation is construed as a waste. But, if this is the case, then “the real mystery is why the male’s vast production of sperm is not seen as wasteful”.¹²			“Assuming that a woman ‘ripes’ one egg per lunar month, or thirteen per year, over the course of her forty-year reproductive life, she would total five hundred eggs in her lifetime. But the word ‘waste’ implies an excess, too much produced. Assuming two or three offspring, for every baby a woman produces, she wastes only around two hundred eggs” (Marin 489). Utilizing a similar logic let’s look at the male reproductive tract. Again, “assuming that a man ‘produces’ 100 million sperm per day (a conservative estimate) during an average reproductive life of sixty years, he would produce well over two trillion sperm in his lifetime... for every baby a man produces, he wastes more than one trillion sperm”.¹³ Purely in a numbers game comparison of the two, which is ten the preferred method under capitalism, that is just under a trillion item difference between the waste of the two processes, just in the numbers. And, if that is not enough, the disparities also arise in describing the process of the egg and sperm connection as a romanticized kind of love story of dominance and possession. Where the former “is swept or even drifts along the fallopian tube”, the sperm are “streamlined... strong and efficiently powered, together with the forces of ejaculation they can propel the semen into the deepest recesses of the vagina where... they can burrow through the egg coat and penetrate it”.¹⁴ As if the two connect in some kind of epic tale. Other stories describe an even more perilous tale of embarking on a religious or sacred journey to navigate the warm darkness where the egg can be found deep in the center. Heroic imagery is conjured of brave little sperms making the trek, where only some will survive, to rescue the egg from imminent death. All of these tales working together to further the narrative of a female body dependent on her male savior. The process happening during this supposed connection is slightly different in its reality. Emily Martin put it quite clearly, “We need to understand the way in which the cultural content in scientific descriptions changes as biological discoveries unfold, and whether that cultural content is solidly entrenched or easily changed”.¹⁵ While there’s a claim of metaphor being used to simply illustrate more clearly, it is glaringly apparent after breaking down the meaning produced by the language utilized here, the ways in which
	9 Martin, “The Egg and The Sperm”, 486 10 Martin, “The Egg and The Sperm”, 486 11 Martin, “The Egg and The Sperm”, 487 12 Martin, “The Egg and The Sperm”, 488	13 Martin, “The Egg and The Sperm”, 488 14 Martin, “The Egg and The Sperm”, 489 15 Martin, “The Egg and The Sperm”, 492	
30 Built in Oppression			the egg the embryo the explosion 31

metaphors such as these are in fact producing very real oppressions and experiences of that oppression.

The events of egg and sperm connecting have since been rewritten at the biophysics lab at John Hopkins University. Researchers here started to investigate the mechanical force of the sperm’s tail, that was previously assumed to be forcefully penetrating the inner layer of the egg, which was thought to be an impenetrable barrier, so therefore, this force was assumed to be quite strong. “They discovered, to their great surprise, that the forward thrust of sperm is extremely weak, which contradicts the assumption that sperm are forceful penetrators”.¹⁶ They found that the forward motion that the sperm tail was thought to move in was actually more of a back and forth motion, “so even if the overall force of the sperm were strong enough to mechanically break the zone (the inner barrier of the egg) most of its force would be directed sideways rather than foreword. In fact its strongest tendency, by tenfold, is to escape by attempting to pry itself off the egg”.¹⁷ The research concluded that the two are attached not by penetration but rather by adhesive molecules, bonds that the sperm is incapable of breaking from its side-to-side “wiggling”. The breaking of the zona actually comes from digestive enzymes that are released start to soften the zona just enough for the sperm to get oriented and can make through the barrier.

Language has embedded this sense of naturalized oppression into each individual psyche by working its way into our speech: the speech of menstruators and non-menstruators. Leading us, as menstruators, to speak about even ourselves in a deeply degrading and misogynistic way. Thus, manipulating each and every one of us into performing the (difficult) work of the patriarchy. This subject and subjected complex allows for the removal of the patriarch himself from being the only degrader thus removing partial or all of the blame, in some cases, from himself. Language enables unloading the burden of female oppression onto the menstruator herself. Her own demeaning, self-doubt entraps her in a seemingly inescapable position, perpetually one step lower than the patriarch. It is important to begin dissecting this linguistic oppression, as it has the potential to reveal points where the oppressive language could be reversed: where language can become liberation for menstruators instead.

¹⁶ Martin, “The Egg and The Sperm”, 492

¹⁷ Martin, “The Egg and The Sperm”, 493

¹⁸ Bobel, “The New Blood”, 12

While language, as seen, can be obtrusive and impeding on the female body and psyche within, it can also be a powerful, subversive force in deconstructing binaries that are particularly damaging to menstruators. Discourse that restricts anyone that bleeds to being women is problematic and unproductive in our struggles to reach more equitable and inclusive space. We can expand menstruation beyond the confines of gender, furthering its subversive power “by referring to “menstruators” instead of “women” linguistically, “expressing solidarity with women who do not menstruate, transgender men who do, and intersexual and genderqueer individuals. Refusing to equate menstruation with woman hood, such activists challenge the hegemony of the essentialized gender binary even in the context of what is generally taken to be a nearly universal embodied ‘womens issue’. In this way, radical menstrual activism acts as a feminist project with the potential to undermine gender as a stable category. If menstruation can be ‘queered’ then the perceived necessity of the patriarchal two-gender system erodes”.¹⁸ Queering language surrounding menstruation is only the beginning. Queering language goes towards deconstructing binaries that can be damaging to non-menstruators as well: such as perpetuating expectations of toxic masculine traits or restricting individual expression to masculine or feminine instead of a spectrum and ever changing evaluation.

Could the rewriting of linguistics of gender translate into rewriting the architectural implications of gender? Radical ownership over body and image has improved the way we feel about ourselves, but how do we tell everyone else and how do we make space for it? Education happens through text, images, and ultimately language, so where can we alter it? The same locations? New locations? A different time and place entirely? In what timeline and place are we free? As this thesis progresses, I hope to start to create a new library of menstruators history, a new dictionary of inclusive language for menstruators, and ultimately work with a more menstrual architecture as a site of potential liberation.

Not all women menstruate and not all people who menstruate are women



Not all women menstruate and not all people who menstruate are women



I apologize in advance for anyone that feels they should also be included within this collective, but does not feel represented by this definition. Defining the group is inherently limiting and if there is more inclusive verbiage or additional nuances that would be more inclusive to add, please help me to improve this!

Not all women menstruate and not all people who menstruate are **Who are Menstruators?** en

The definition of people who menstruate similar to menstruation itself, is not simple, and it is not tidy. It is complicated and there is no one definition that can encompass every person who menstruates. But to become as inclusive as possible, I shall begin with menstruation as an intersectional experience, one defined by any stain or mark, whether visible or internal, that renders an individual's body or character as defective in the eyes of hegemonic masculine culture. Now this is broad, but gains greater clarity as we understand that masculine and feminine hold deeper meanings in relation to power dynamics. Masculine as being considered superior and feminine as inferior. In order to maintain these arbitrary terms, hegemonic masculine culture must take any instance of difference, or any characteristic, really, that does not fit within dominating ideas of masculinity, and claim it to be feminine. Not only subordinating female bodies, but subordinating anything that marks a person as not strictly a man. Thus, menstruators are any person who has been marked as an "Other" to hegemonic masculine culture.

Not all women menstruate and not all people who menstruate are women

And to clarify this apology is not to straight, white men, you have your own collective, it is called the Patriarchy, and I do not feel that you need one created for you. The world is created for you and if you do not see that yet it is because you are part of the problem not the solution.

Discriminatory Design

II.

Introduction

The patriarchy and the oppressions, marginizations, and overarching hierarchies that result from it are constructed. They are a construct of long standing and upheld beliefs in the superiority of men. This belief has influence the way that History was recorded, how it has been interpreted, and the ways in which that interpretation holds significant influence over all other fields of study. The lack of representation of women and anyone that deviates from the superior white cis hetero male is directly correlated to their invisibility, misrepresentation, and violation everywhere and in everything. Architecture is no exception. Menstruators are abused by space and more importantly, the architectural translation of women forced to perform free labor to contain and manage men, menstruators have been made to be the space men get to exist within. Through a delegation of the sexual oppression upon womens bodies, constructing space to restrain and control women, and then proceeding to force the labor of its creation onto women themselves, the patriarchy has managed to layer so much oppression and fear onto us that there is virtually no option to revolt.

Delegated Sexual Oppression

The spatial politics regulating the female body’s access stem from violent imprisonment by the patriarchy but also deeply rooted internalized misogyny within female bodied individuals themselves. This transference of responsibility of the oppression of the female body onto the female bodied person herself, masks the true source of its violence. On a small scale, this pertains to the designing of the outward appearance of the body itself and scaled up, the architectural power designated to women but only for the comfort of her husband. Both her body and the spaces she has been allowed to exist within becomes the sites of her designated work.

The violent suppression of the female body can be briefly described in the same way that the female body is confined to the home. The world has been construed in such a way that the male baseline dominates how each and every one of us defines the things we are trying to achieve. We approximate as close as possible to the male baseline but when we inevitably fall short, it is deemed a failure. To understand this analogy between the female body and the home, Ann Bergen dissects both the myth of Pandora and Oeconomicus by Xenophon as texts that display implications of the Greek language and the origins of many cultures in the objectification of the female body. Pandora is the first woman, crafted out of clay by Hephaestus himself. She is both a body and a ceramic jar, which can be related to a container and thus a home. This is not only embedded in this mythical story but in the origins of the language itself where the Greek word for “own” is oikeios which is the adjectival form of the oikos the Greek word for “house”. Following the linguistic implications of these Greek terms paired with practices of father-rule, the “oikos tries to build between the pure and natural beauty of male kosmos and women who imitate it, on one hand, and female cosmetic deception on the other”.¹ The world is designed for men. Their homes are no exception to this. Only differing in that the work of their design is placed onto women. The domestic realm is the woman’s place but it is also the site of her architectural power. And since she is both a body and a home, she is moulding not only the house for her husband, but in the process moulding her body to fit within that design as well. Her oikeios and the oikos are designed to prioritize male pleasure. She pastes on cosmetics and morphs her hair, and exercises her body, so that no part of the experience of the home is unpleasant for the man, including her appearance.

¹ Bergen, “Female Fetish Urban Form”, 84

² Halberstam, “Unbuilding Gender”

³ Bergen, “Female Fetish Urban Form”, 79

Designing Her Own Prison

In Unbuilding Gender, Jack Halberstam approaches this through the artworks of Louise Bourgeois, specifically the Spider Cell (1997), “The woman/house and spider/house constructions are creepy because they suggest that the female body has become so entangled with ideas of nature and of domestic architecture as well, that we perhaps cannot imagine femininity otherwise”.² Not only do we need to recognize the way in which domestic space has confined the female body, but has taken such a powerful ownership over her control of her own body that she cannot be realized without the domestic space attached.

At surface level, the female body has been spatially imprisoned within the home, limited to navigation between only necessary spaces: often the kitchen, bedrooms, and bath. The home was essentially designed as the female distraction from everything she was being prevented from entering. It was designed to keep the woman working, feeling as if she was granted purpose (however small a sliver). The home becomes her prison, but the streets are a battlefield, a place of violent transgressions awaiting her body. She is imprisoned inside the home, but the streets are her hell. So she internalizes this place. She has to. Her life depends on it. Now the home is defined as her place, or at least part of it is, and she is defined as belonging to the home.

Thus, not only do we need radical reconstructions of buildings, but also of the way in which we treat the body tied up inside them. This is metaphorically described in “Female Fetish Urban Form” by Ann Bergen, comparing the female body to Pandora’s Box. Bergen follows the fifth-century Greek comedy by Aristophanes, Ecclesiazusae, as it poses the ceramic pot as a kind of beacon to call the women of Athens to the Assembly. Bergen claims that the “lamp is crucial to understanding the architectural meaning of the play, for it will illuminate the ideal, institutionalized relation in Greek thought between architecture and the female body”.³ The play constructs the ceramic pot turned lamp as the architectural embodiment of the female body through invoking both Pandora, the first female, and Oeconomicus by Xenophon, in which the women’s architectural school is described and portrayed as domestic space itself. “Pandora... is moulded by Hephaestus.. out of earth and water. Although a jar, she is also a building, with lips as doors. In the words of the myth, ‘there in the unbreakable halls hope alone was remaining inside under the lips of the jar, and it did not fly out from

the door.’ So Pandora as a ceramic container is thus a body and a house”.⁴

This control of the space within which the woman is allowed to exist within, teaches us not only about her domestic existence but also starts to suggest at the ways in which her body is controlled as well. The walls that define the oikos, or home and also ones ownership, also start to translate onto her body itself. The oikos, “tries to build between the pure and natural beauty of male kosmos and women who imitate it , on one hand, and female cosmetic deception, on the other”⁵. Men have constructed the ideal and order to survive within it, women try to achieve as close as an approximation to it as possible. But because of inherent and impossible to overcome differences in both their physical appearance and their internal psyche, they will never be able to achieve this male defined standard of success.

This domestic oppression inside of the home can be scaled up to the city as a home. Where women are taken as the worker bees to service the male architect. While the city is designed for and by men, the work of its maintenance and sustainability is performed by women. This leads to the urban violence that Christine Boyer discusses through the examination of the femme fatale in film noi .

“remapped postmodern space now becomes the subjected object of a reformulated cartographer’s gaze (male gaze), which exercises renewed jurisdiction over the urban terrain and establishes fresh alliances with the spectacles of urban violence perpetrated in and against the city and women”⁶.

(And I reiterate for emphasis) The female body is not only abused in space but she is space. She has been made to be the container of men. Men have made the feminine the house within which they live and receive certain care. Christine Boyer discusses through the femme fatale in film noir how the female body has been subjected to space and ultimately rewritten in terms of her male counterparts. She ascribes this to the “metaphoric transference of the female womb onto the spatial receptacle waiting for male impregnation and the masculine abstract model onto the disembodied ideal form giver”⁷. With the male figure being the maker and the female being the made. In order to lay claim

to this hearty proclamation, the male theorist or detective of film noir is positioned as a necessary controller because of the femme fatales tendency for disruption, “she spreads disorder and disruption and must not be allowed to appear in the same space as the rational detective lest he be seduced by her powers and deterred from solving crime”⁸. With the detective being posited as the figure to represent the white cis man, we can examine this through a modern and real lens of experience. In how the female body is considered to be rightfully contained lest she experience some sort of aggression or violence of the male gaze. This attack is blame transferred to the female body for being destructive rather than a recognition of the intensity of the male gaze itself being the uncontrolled force.

Examining femme fatale role in film noir specifically reveals two things: 1) the power (capability despite historical and biological determinants that may suggest otherwise) of the female body in manipulating or transforming actions of the male and 2) the reaction of reconstructing the female body onto space itself, denigrating her to an object meant to be looked at and maintained, rather than something spiritually free.

The application of the female body onto space itself dangerously restricts her power. As if the only way to control the hysterical female body is to denigrate her to an object. She is granted the architectural power to design the home, which becomes her prison and herself, thus as she designs the home, herself, she is subjected an attack layered under so many manipulative manoeuvres that it is almost impossible to remove.

4 Bergen, "Female Fetish Urban Form", 80

5 Bergen, "Female Fetish Urban Form", 86

6 Boyer, "Crimes in and of the City", 100

7 Boyer, "Crimes in and of the City", 100

8 Boyer, "Crimes in and of the City", 101

Case Study: Woman House

Womanhouse was an exhibition of the feminist art movement in the 1970s by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro. The pair tore apart and morphed an abandoned mansion with representations and images to the domestic

landscape for women. The work was meant to reject a typically untouchable art exhibition by placing actors inside of the exhibit and allowing for guest interaction. They had installations such as the "Menstrual Bathroom",



5 Judy Chicago Portal, "Womanhouse"

This multimedia art exhibition took place inside of a 75 year old abandoned mansion and these spaces that women have been prescribed to exist within were "re-examined, and the idea of a woman as a "happy homemaker" was questioned" (NYT).

"Bridal Staircase", "Eggs to Breasts", and the "Cocks and Cunts"⁵ performance. While this performance was meant and clearly does mock the absurdity of a woman's expectations within the home, it is also perpetuating it. Not only are woman on ridiculous display, their bodies are imprisoned into the space itself, as in the female body barred into the shelves and closed in fig. 10. These kinds of displays reinforce precisely the societal roles they are meant to be questioning. It is important to rec-

ognize that this was just the beginning of this art movement, only breaking the ice of what needed to be accomplished by it, but to hold it to a lower standard than we hold work now does an injustice to what these artists were striving for. We can go further. We can take this a step farther and take down the entire house.

In a dramatic display of a woman's role in not only within the domestic realm, but creating it, Womanhouse starts to poke fun at just how ridiculous expectations are. Her body becomes the space and starts to stuff the rooms she is allowed within, such as the "Menstrual Bathroom" (fig. 9). Domesticity becomes not just a home but the forced performance of women's sexuality for her husband. She is the object of his satisfaction. Her body as the art.

The woman is prescribed not only to the house but as the house. She is described in terms of objects and things, instead of allowing her to be a human.

fig. 9. Cock and Cunt Play, performed by Faith Wilding (left) and Janice Lester (right)



fig. 10. Menstruation Bathroom, Judy Chicago fig. 11. Linen Closet, Judy Chicago

Designing Her Menstrual Appearance

We understand how the domestic control and subsequent definition of menstruators bodies is constructed on two scales, the scale of the home, and the urban scale, but this oppression is prevalent even on the scale of our bodies. This oppression is so deeply embedded that even our vagina becomes a site of its construction and regulation.

“In requiring women to depilate their genital hair, the architecture of father-rule reaches into the female body’s ‘unspeakable recesses,’ as Praxagora puts it using a Greek work that refers to the innermost part of a landscape or house. Inside these ‘unspeakable recesses’ is the female’s pubic hair”.⁹

The female body’s genitals become another site on which this cyclical control takes place. A site that is both hidden, shrouded in secrecy, and also widely claimed. The female bodied fig t for their freedom. While she is trying to regain her touch with her own body, she is simultaneously feeding into the need for ‘sameness’ with the male ideal. She is simultaneously performing an attempt to participate in the fetishizing of the female body as well as admitting to her actual difference from the male body. This way in which she fetishizes herself plays into her metis or her architectural power. She is not only the architect of the home in favor of making men comfortable within it, but also the architecture of her own body and mind for the male gaze or male pleasure. She is thus, “indoctrinated with a single architectural ideal: to devote her metis exclusively to making herself... a parodic imitation of male design and design and her architectural imperative is this to fetishize herself”¹⁰. She shaves her genitals so as to not draw attention to her difference from the male body. Her lack of male reproductive parts unveils her as the lesser being. If she cannot reproduce exactly what she needs to become male, she will make men comfortable with the only appearance she can attain. She maintains this performance of designing for the experience through her own sexual suppression. And this is exemplified in the act of depilation.

This is not to say that the undeniable sexual appeal of the female body is not powerful, quite the opposite in fact. The female body is so dangerous and so incredibly seductive that the patriarchs only option, in a desperate attempt for control, is to trap her. From the sirens in Greek mythology to the dominatrixes of modern times, the female body has

been able to ensnare men with the use of nothing but her body’s sex appeal. But unfortunately, as the female body threatens the pedestal the patriarchs have placed themselves upon, the expression of the female body is dangerous to the female bodied individual herself. She risks her life exposing her sexuality in this way. Patriarchs are so desperate to remain in power the female body suffers incredible harm for its maintenance. The female body is equally as powerful as it is dangerous, but until the power structures that rely on its suppression are no longer in place, this power threatens the female bodied individuals life. At this point in time, her architectural power is tied up with weaving his home and her sexuality with bearing his children. But that is changing. And as it is changing the patriarchy has much to fear.

It is in the design of her appearance that her architectural power and her body as fetish coincide. Both designed for the sole purpose of male pleasure, making the compilation of the two an almost architectural fetish. The irony of this is that because she has become so well attuned to making both the home and her body of both male design and desire, she not only still holds her own powerful sexuality but also the ability to approximate a man.

Women have done the work of men and never lost her own. She wove herself into as close as she could to men, but this also implies that she can unweave herself just as easily when the time arises (thank you Athena). This begs the question as Bergen asks, “ What will a woman build, if left to her own devices?” and the play answers, “She will build as we have taught her”.¹¹ She was taught to build a house. In that house she was the leader and while in the structure of now, she is only a temporary leader, holding the man’s place while he is at work, when she is allowed to take control she will create a city that is one big house with herself as the permanent leader. The female body’s sexuality is uncontainable, just as was feared by the patriarchy. Their attempt to teach assimilation to the male image has only increased the female body’s power. She is not only uncontainable but she has the ability to mask herself as a man. To hide and blend into the image that men want to see and to attack from behind.

9 Bergen,
"Female Fetish
Urban Form",
84

10 Bergen,
"Female Fetish
Urban Form",
86

11 Bergen,
"Female Fetish
Urban Form",
86

III.

Abolition

“A er all, the etymology of ‘abolition’ includes Latin root words for ‘destroy’ (abolere) and ‘grow’ (olere)”
(Benjamin 168)

1 Benjamin,
“Race After
Technology”,
168

2 Benjamin,
“Race After
Technology”,
167

3 Benjamin,
“Race After
Technology”,
168

It has been established the ways in which gender, in terms of body politics, economic regulation, and control, is based on hierarchical gender constructions and forced performances of gender. Discriminatory design has produced social inequity in the built environment, some explicit in the way they set up the foundation for this oppression to take place and perpetuate it, others are resultants and more oblivious in their continued ignorance of the feminine experience. They stem from Historical record lacking in any significant representation of menstruators contributions and experiences that are upheld and perpetuated by biological determinist beliefs and continued underlying discriminatory language. There is a sense of false architectural benevolence that maintains the belief in architectus being the “problem solver” but while they remain situated within frameworks of the patriarchy architects are only working to “prop up unjust infrastructures” (Benjamin 168). These oppressive social politics and body politics are so embedded into the built environment, there needs to be a complete destruction and reconstruction of the way that we fundamentally approach architecture.

A radical reconstruction of the way that we approach architecture will require a willingness for designers to own to their impact and look critically at the harm it has caused. This “Retooling [of] Solidarity [and] Reimagining [of] Justice” (Benjamin 167) utilizing principles already written and being applied by Ruha Benjamin in Race After Technology and her efforts to activate more critical approaches to STEM education as well as other Black abolitionist scholars and activists working for radically, progressive change in societies infrastructure. This research and subsequent proposal of prototypal approaches to a new reproductive system is less about comparing it to old approaches, as one being good and one being bad but as a call for the necessity of a more critical process of making that is constantly in flux and is constantly being constructed on top of, deconstructed, and reconstructed. As Benjamin puts it, “Calls for abolition are never simply about bringing harmful systems to an end but also about envisioning new ones. After all, the etymology of ‘abolition’ includes Latin root words for ‘destroy’ (abolere) and ‘grow’ (olere)” (Benjamin 168). The same strategies previously applied to architecture or even adaptations of them cannot simply be reappropriated and utilized for our purposes because they still remain embedded in histories oppression and therefore, cannot work in a liberatory sense. The point is not to create a new hierarchy, but to get rid of hierarchy all together. There needs to be a complete upheaval of all the systems that play into architectural creation.

Provocations for Deconstruction

IV.

Is perhaps, our fear of menstruation, a fear of being outed as the other? Are we afraid of being identified as putting on a façade in order to shove ourselves into the masculine ideal? Does our menstruation leaking out of our panties or god forbid out of our pants, publicize the performance we are desperately trying to maintain? In "Leaky Performance: The Transformative Potential of Menstrual Leaks," Shauna MacDonald discusses this in particular part of her essay "Leakage: a loss of binary opposition, a negation of separation, a blurring of the ontological and epistemological categories we hold as natural and self-evident" (MacDonald, 341). Alongside this discussion surrounding the binary prison cells we are forced to place ourselves inside of, it is pertinent to note, I think, the ironic appropriation of "we hold these truths to be self-evident" as it is stated in the Declaration of Independence, a foundational proclamation of the patriarch's naturalized power, as if it was the only truth any of us could possibly accept.

OK, we have all leaked...

we may not have posted it on instagram or told our friends, but have you ever asked yourself why?

We fear our own exposure, but exposé as what? As human beings? As a living organism? The real exposure in our leaking menses is the exposure of the patriarchies flawed and closed logic of the body and violent repression of the female body in order to pedestalize themselves on their unearned thrones. If we allowed the female body to publicly leak, we would be allowing their own delicate system of pipes to spill out as well. The "general theme of 'power' that flows through menstrual meanings", (MacDonald 343) prevents a more open discourse surrounding the normality and even subversive potential of these menstrual leaks even within the community of female-bodied individuals. We have been socialized to participate in a system based on the characterization of someone as the secondary human. We have been systematically otherized in a way that puts us in daily fear of harm. When something such as menstruation, a signifier of our "uncontrollable sexuality" "points directly to the vagina", we choose to hide it for our own personal safety.

But this brings us to the conversation around choice, rather the charade of it. Where a man's choice has been positioned as acceptable, noble even, our menstruation is the opening into getting gaslit so we choose to hide it. When "Western thought is built on a system of binary opposites" in which the latter marked them as always in some sense subordinate or inferior... concepts linked with the same side of the dichotomy are considered inferior and fall on the "wrong side of power", we can start to understand our societal attitudes toward menstruation and this charade of choice. There is little (if any) choice involved

ask yourself if you find it scandalous that these people would even consider posting their blood on something as public as instagram

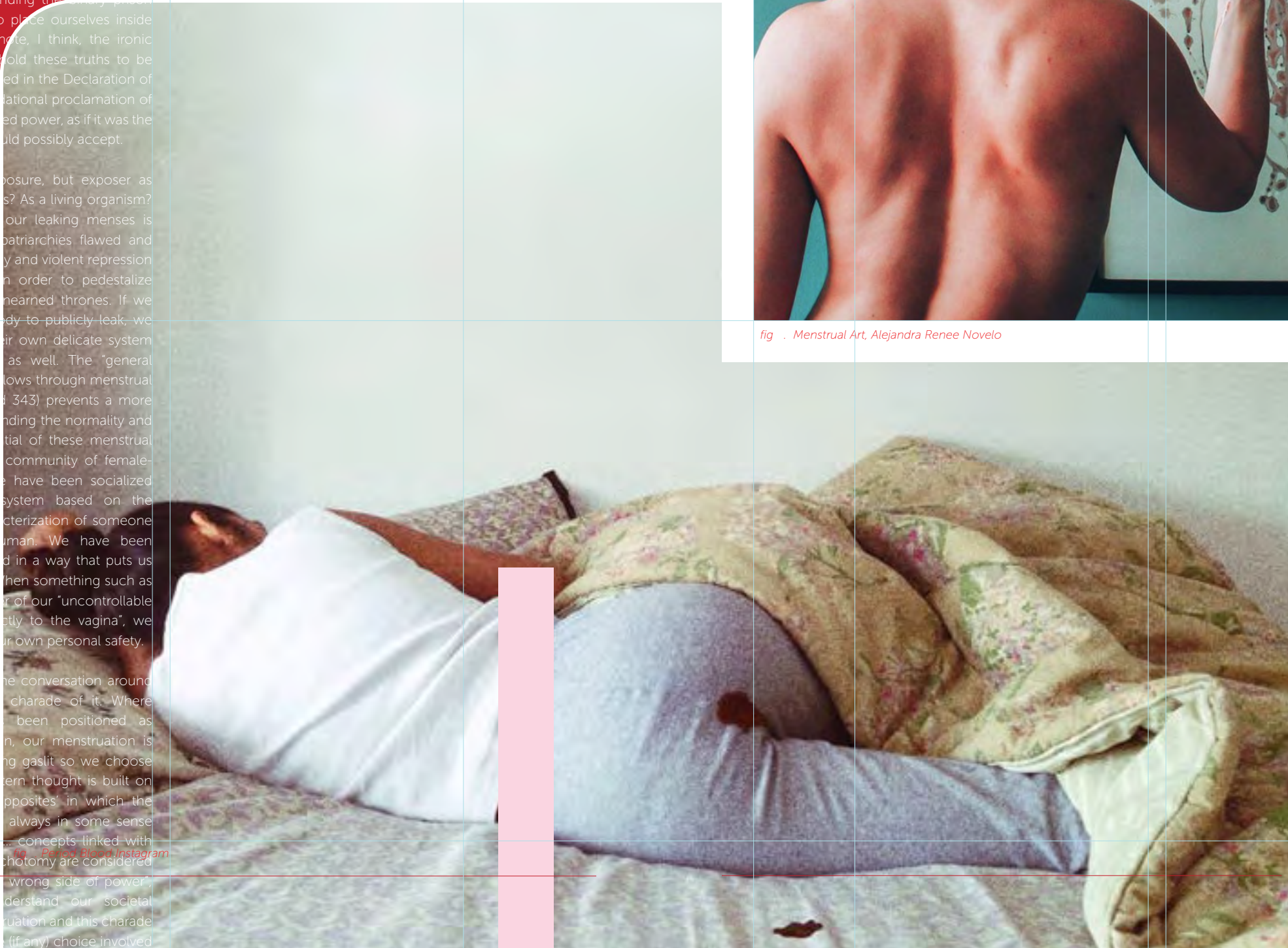


fig . Menstrual Art, Alejandra Renee Novelo

I know I would be scared

I can't speak for you but I can give you space to speak

The female body is incredibly powerful so much so that it becomes dangerous. It is dangerous for the patriarchy because it is so uncontrollable, but at the same time so undeniably natural. The masculine portrayal of the contained body is called into question by this looseness in the nature of the female body. The female body is, therefore, dangerous. It is dangerous to the patriarchy, but it is also dangerous for the person within the body as well. For the patriarchy still remains in control, despite its obvious lack of foundation, and this provides the patriarchy the platform by which he can perform domination over the female body, leaving her at his whims. The female body is violently attacked to keep her in her place and to keep the patriarchy in theirs. These attacks come both as physical attacks and figurative deconstruction. The physical attacks are much easier to see, while still not accepted as truth, but they can be seen. The figurative deconstruction comes in forms much more deeply ingrained into the female psyche and even larger scale, the social infrastructures that uphold patriarchal reign as rightfully in power. One of these being the placement of monetary value on everything so a rank can be given. At the surface of it, monetary hierarchy allows for one thing, or one person, to be more valuable or less valuable than another. But below the surface this commodification strips humanity from people. It strips the intrinsic value from a person and instead allows someone else to value people or not value them, with the backing of something tangible.

The female body has tried to empower herself, to rise above her patriarchally defined status. But within the existing capitalistic and patriarchal systems it is simply not enough. She will constantly be reigned into some sort of artificial ranking system and stripped of sense of self. The female body is the site of her power, but because the patriarchy is so afraid of it, the female body is also the site of sociopolitical control. The expression and freedom of the female body has the potential to be her liberation, but it has instead become another place of commodification and the continual extortion of her. The Patriarchy has found means by which to do this through regulating periods with a price tag, sex trafficking, pink washing products and marketing them at a higher price, and the gender wage gap (acknowledging that these are only just the tip of the iceberg). These are the obvious commodifications of the female body and sexuality. Places where men turned femininity into a product instead of a sense of a person's own humanity. But this extortion is much more deeply rooted and manipulative than just that. It is so deeply ingrained that even the female psyche internalizes her own commodification. Even when she tries to take control of her body's worth it is stolen from her.

Sex work and the nude female body should be the subsequent location of protest then. Owning your incredible sexuality and making that your job is empowering. It is liberation from a male operated economy. While the male gaze is still intense and objectifying, the empowerment of sex work is removed from the expectation or



Love Story
fig. 8

Judy Chicago 1972

need for that. Your wage is earned regardless of whether or not some disrespectful person whistles at you, he can or he cannot, money is made independently of that occurring. The male gaze is prioritized by the hegemonic masculine norms that the patriarchy would like to maintain. Uncontained female sexuality without the expectation of some sort of male attention in return is defiant of that, it begins to suggest that not everything women do is for men, that maybe, perhaps, men are not in fact the ultimate decider of the female bodies worth. So because in some sense, sex work has already been commodified but by the female body and her psyche herself, the patriarchy has criminalized it. This criminalization paves the way for extortion in this case. It puts sex work into the realm of the black market. Leaving it unregulated and unprotected. Money is still made of the female body but instead of her collecting the reward she is at risk of violence and being taken advantage of. The site of the female body could be empowered through sex work but is instead forced back into the hands of greedy patriarchy. Her liberation turned into another place of extortion controlled by men.

Christine Boyer describes this in Crimes in and of the city: the Femme fatale as urban allegory, as when the "feminine and the commodity cross paths. The spectacle is the commodity on display and the act of showing and revealing often becomes more important than the cause and effect of the story line, the narrative message, or the moral engendered. The femme fatale may have acquired new roles but her progress is often arrested as she was frozen into an image, contained within the camera that men still held" (Boyer 110).

While empowering sex work has a price tag, it is in the control of the female bodied individual herself to regulate and maintain. With the criminalization of it she becomes a commodity, an object that is shuffled around for male satiation. Her body so recognizably powerful that it has to be completely degraded to status of an inanimate object of attraction in order for the patriarchy to control it. Similar to the performance in the film noir genre, the freeing display of the female body would undermine the weight given to the male narrative by patriarchal ideals.

The sexuality of the female body still has the potential to be a site of sociopolitical liberation. While some of it requires policy and infrastructural changes, it is also reliant of space that allows for it to be safely practiced. Could spaces be liberated by the introduction or even prioritization of the feminine to also liberate the nude female figure? Does menstruation and a figurative allowance of the free bleed play an integral role in the creation of this space? I would argue that if let menstruation leak or flow openly, whether that comes in the form of public discourse surrounding menstruation or literal unrestricted periods, the fallacious need to criminalize sex and even further, to hide female sexuality would be exposed and the patriarchy would lose their credibility and power.

How to be a proper woman

1. Don't wear white or light colors.
2. Don't forget a tampon
3. But Don't let anyone see it (my favorite is up the sleeve if you know what I mean)
4. Don't be dramatic
5. Don't check in with your emotions
6. Don't let it leak
7. Don't use the bathroom too often
8. Don't post about it on social media
9. Don't let anyone hear you opening the pad
10. Don't use pads (bc that's gross)
11. Don't get pregnant
12. Don't have a period
13. Don't have sex, especially on your period
14. Don't attend communion
15. Don't touch plants
16. Don't touch jam
17. Don't go near any crops really
18. Don't use the "P" word, its just that time of the month works just fin
19. Don't pull the woman card (but if a man tells you that you're PMSing thank him for informing you)
20. Don't forget to get pregnant eventually though, for whatever will you do with a sweet child
21. And most of all, Do Not Tell Anyone.

ABOVE TO THE RIGHT: fig. 9 blood in glue experimentation, hoping to translate to resin.



VELLUM : OR AT LEAST THE IDEA OF IT

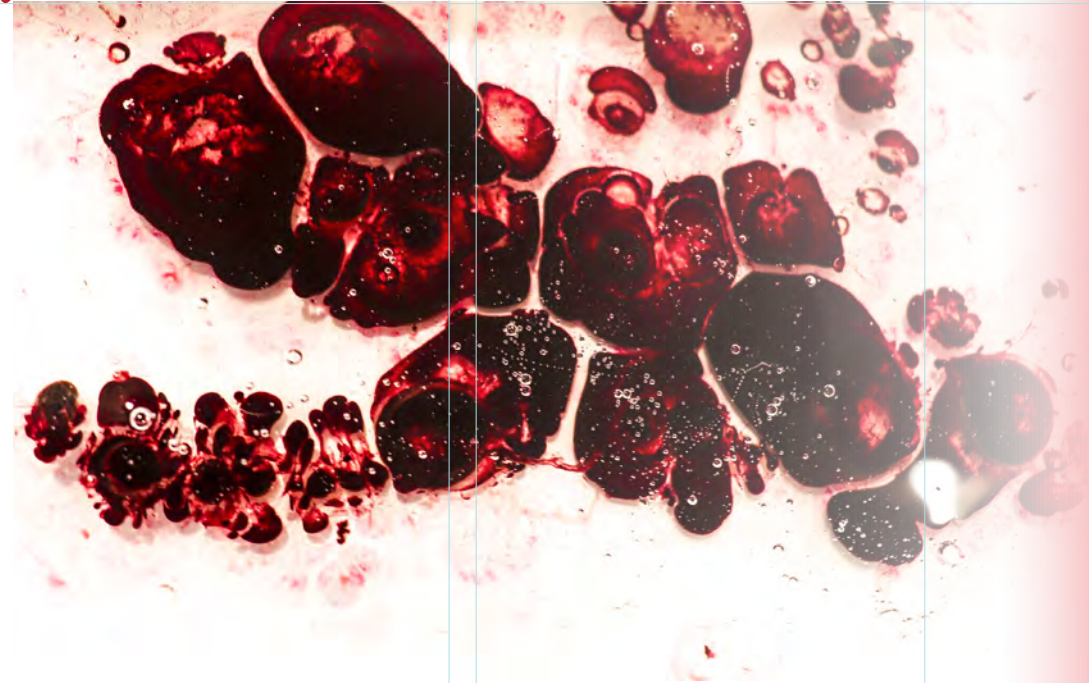
of respect present here. By choosing to contain our menstruation, "we believe we control it, just as the mind controls the body and the male the female." (MacDonald 347) We maintain the patriarch's precious dichotomies playing into their manipulation of our own bodily fluids. We tread the moment our menstruation leaks, we desperately wrap it up in order to make it as invisible as possible, exactly what the patriarch's would prefer. Our menses leaking could lead to a widespread normalization which ultimately would undermine the closed body idea; could undermine "the arbitrariness of our dependency on binary opposition and neat categorization... leaks dissolve bodily boundaries; undermining our metaphoric understanding of the body, as Lockford comes to understand through explicating a memory of wetting her pants as a child: 'that metaphor about the body being a container just doesn't hold water; it is a leaky metaphor, for it is moments like these where we come to learn just how excessive, how uncontainable human being and being human really is' (116)" (MacDonald 349). We could effectively render it false, I would say. Which is (unfortunately) dangerously threatening to the patriarch's remaining on top of their imagined power structure.

A fluid deconstruction or revolution could then be part of how the patriarchal regime is undermined. Menstruation is the connecting force that is central to an alternative ontological and epistemological framework of civilization. Menstruation lives in the liminal space between order and chaos. While describing Australian aboriginal culture, Christ Knight "connects menstrual synchrony to the aboriginals' symbology of the snake... representative of the logic of alternation, metamorphosis, and change, itself a concept arguably reminiscent 'of liminality'" (Macdonald 351). This potential conjoining allows for a deeper connection between human beings and bodies. Increased discourse and expression of these leaks is necessary to unlock this potential, as well as deep rooted social infiltration, but beginning with an open dialogue is a more manageable means of beginning the process. Physically, MacDonald suggests this is addressed through the embracing of menstrual sex, incorporating blood and bodies in an intimate blurring of boundaries, but much more deeply subversive forms of resistance are required than simply physical. The linguistic communication surrounding menstruation must be radically altered; "we need to purposely 'leak', to dare to speak out loud and positively about the blood that is natural and existing, to challenge the patriarchy about bodily fluids could begin to remove the shame associated with them" (MacDonald 352).

A leak or revolution is the system is the B

deconstruction: a symbol of underlying within its very framework. To reconnect with own leaks, our own menstrual flow, we could

I will show you mine in hopes it will make you less scared of yours.



ABOVE: fig. 10 depicted is some droplets of blood in glue, simply a process of admiration and display. this is me and I am it. here's my blood, do you want to show me yours?

I am going to tell you my dirty little secret. I was not supposed to tell, but I think we have all earned it.

I have a period.

Yes, I know, this is big news. Not what any of you may have been expecting. But it is the honesty truth. I am sorry to inform you all that I do not know at exactly what minute my period is coming, so sometimes in a very unfortunate circumstance for myself really, I mean how embarrassing right?, it leaks. I have ruined so many pairs of underwear.

But it does not end there. I know, Im sorry. You might have one too. You may already have or you may get it or maybe you once had one. She is a big unwelcome reminder every month. Because you have a period there are certain rules you must follow. We can't have everyone knowing you know.

begin to repair years of seemingly irreversible damage done to the female psyche via their body. This connection, a notion of what the patriarchal structure of their own power, ultimate being unraveled, even strength in menstruation

The combination of menstruation and anarchy, imagines that our menstruation is our super power. Menstruation be the inert potential of a woman, shrouded in secrecy, silence, and shame, as female bodied individuals, we must (Bobel 100), come to terms with our bodies and embrace her as an essential part of us, we have the potential to reject these sick games of the patriarchy and the revolution start and

Chris Bobel already has. In 1995, Courtney "Bloodsisters", widely considered one of the radical mens-

"Bloodsisters" is a pad girl base fueling a movement surrounding our period. We are a protection to our cultural

Y. Our health, ons of ing ting

road

group generating more creative projects to raise awareness surrounding menstrual girl-body politics. These include publishing zines, weaving a web girl network, terrorizing bathroom walls, giving healthy health workshops, organizing art exhibits, distributing alternative products, sharing n boycott, taking n lobbying, stitching n bitching and always with winged power."

The Bloodsisters reclaimed the language of the FemCare industry, co-opting "protection and wings" (Bobel 105). They reject the corporate exploitation of menstruation and claim strength. "The theme of taking control is perhaps the most pervasive in the discourse of radical menstruation. Without control... people are vulnerable to inhabiting a body alienated from the self, a body co-opted by corporate interests, a body disciplined by consumer culture" (Bobel 106). We must disentangle ourselves, where privilege and space allows, from the industry, rejecting to participate in the Tampon Tax and corporate definitions of shame surrounding the cycles of menstruation. Here it is important to note that a certain amount of privilege allows for a quick disentanglements

resin cast legs

B series (B13) LED lightbulb

lightbulb fitting

rockite or plaster cast base

lightbulb cord

Is perhaps, our fear of menstruation, a fear of being outed as the other? Are we afraid of being identified as putting on a façade in order to shove ourselves into the male ideal? Does our menstruation leaking out of our panties or god forbid out of our pants, publicize the performance we are desperately trying to maintain? In “Leaky Performance: The Transformative Potential of Menstrual Fluids”, Shauna MacDonald discusses fluids, in particular period blood, as they “represent a loss of binary opposition, a negation of separation, a blurring of the ontological and epistemological categories we hold as natural and self-evident”¹. Alongside this discussion surrounding the binary prison cells we are forced to place ourselves inside of, it is pertinent to note, I think, the ironic appropriation of “we hold these truths to be self-evident” as it is stated in the Declaration of Independence, a foundational proclamation of the patriarch’s naturalized power, as if it was the only truth any of us could possibly accept.

corporate exploitation of menstruation and claim strength. “The theme of taking control is perhaps the most pervasive in the discourse of radical menstruation. Without control... people are vulnerable to inhabiting a body alienated from the self, a body co-opted by corporate interests and body-regimed by consumer culture.” (Bobel 106). We must identify a context where an ideologed space allows, from the industry, rejecting to influence in the Feminist and corporate definitions of shame surrounding the cycles of menstruation. This is why we have to have a certain amount of privilege allows for a quick dissent and movement from the stigma that we are to radically free everyone from the reigns of capitalism and patriarchy. But we have to dig much deeper than just the FemCare industry that goods and services that impact the stigmas around menstruation and that must be considered as a part of the movement to free everyone. To reduce the movement simply to refraining from buying certain harmful products would be to ignore the many underlying connections, that must be faced. Economic and social marginalization combined with patriarchal ideology and patriarchy keep menstruators from getting out from under FemCare and their corporate controls.

In “Out for Blood” Rebecca Lockford discusses the results of an activism assignment attempting to cross a choice that has been considered taboo. She asked her students to create some sort of digital poster or video that freed female bodies from the taboos that restrict their lives. Through the challenge of menstrual management industries, like the FemCare industry, women have been taking on the eventually internalized fear of public exposure of their menstruation. Coupled with the rhetoric surrounding menstruation has also circulated justification for preventing women from becoming president or holding serious positions of power. The “advertisers depict the menstruating female body as unclear, unmanageable, and difficult to control” to effectively market panty liners, pads, and tampons” (Lock 95). This is a descriptive language that represses the female body and the patriarchy that has been able to maintain a semblance of control over her menstruation and ultimately her body as a whole. This lifetime of suppressive behavior has in turn created a culture of radicalized feminist activists that are fighting with menstruation on their side. Their periods are now their weapons by which to scare away the men. As deep as internalized misogyny runs inside of the female psyche, fear of seeing menstruation runs within the male psyche. While reclaiming our bodies and our minds is powerful and potentially even subversive to the

damaging and our menstrual

The blood that shield, and our bodies but also army

“Shannon” (2016) “Smear it on your time to start and not more and with which as we radical party. A more subversive idea of menstruation masculinity, a period party is up in friendship of community and transmen have never not supporter of over the world

Menarchy” is individuals, but to being an all scale liberation that dispropor individuals, for this quite elon activists” want develop a strong consciousness menstruation directed at the movement is that wish to go beyond. We are chains that change in the body in the time

This period party and even the binary-less can divided by the appearance of unique in our with open arms

Leaky Deconstructivism

We fear our own exposure, but exposure as what? As human beings? As a living organism? The real exposure in our leaking menses is the exposure of the patriarchies flawed and closed logic of the body and violent repression of the female body in order to pedestalize themselves on their unearned thrones. If we allowed the female body to publicly leak, we would be allowing their own delicate system of pipes to spill out as well. The “general theme of ‘power’ that flows through menstrual meanings”² prevents a more open discourse surrounding the normality and even subversive potential of these menstrual leaks even within the community of female-bodied individuals. We have been socialized to participate in a system based on the otherization and characterization of someone as the secondary human. We have been systematically otherized in a way that puts us in daily fear of harm. When something such as menstruation, a signifier of our “uncontrollable sexuality”, “points directly to the vagina”³, we choose to hide it for our own personal safety.

But this brings us to the conversation around choice, or rather the charade of it. Where a man’s choice has been positioned as acceptable, noble even, our menstruation is the opening into getting gaslit so we choose to hide it. When “Western thought is built on a ‘system of binary opposites’ in which the latter marked them as always in some sense subordinate or inferior... concepts linked with the same side of the dichotomy are considered inferior and fall on the wrong side of power”⁴, we can start to understand our societal attitudes toward menstruation and this charade of choice. There is little (if any) choice involved in the categorization of men spitting as being acceptable and period blood flowing into the crotch of their pants as a toxic pollutant to be managed. There is a very real imbalance of power and an unequal distribution of respect present here. By choosing to contain our menstruation, “we believe we control it, just as the mind controls the body and the male the female.”⁵. We maintain the patriarch’s precious dichotomies playing into their manipulation of our own bodily fluids. We dread the moment our menstruation leaks, we desperately wrap it up in order to make it as invisible as possible, exactly what the patriarch’s would prefer. Our menses leaking could lead to a widespread normalization which ultimately would undermine the closed body idea; could undermine “the arbitrariness of our dependency on binary opposition and neat categorization... leaks dissolve bodily boundaries; undermining our metaphoric understanding of the body, as Lockford comes to understand through explicating a memory of wetting her pants as a child: ‘that metaphor about the body being a container just doesn’t hold water; it is a leaky metaphor, for it is moments like these where we come to learn

1 MacDonald
“Leaky
Performance”
341

2 MacDonald
“Leaky
Performance”
343

3 MacDonald
“Leaky
Performance”
345

4 MacDonald
“Leaky
Performance”
346

5 MacDonald
“Leaky
Performance”
347

just how excessive, how uncontainable human being and being human really is’6”7. We could effectively render it false, I would say. Which is (unfortunately) dangerously threatening to the patriarch’s remaining on top of their imagined power structure.

A fluid deconstruction or revolution could then be part of how the patriarchal regime is undermined. Menstruation is the connecting force that is central to an alternative ontological and epistemological framework of civilization. Menstruation lives in the liminal space between order and chaos. While describing Australian aboriginal culture, Christ Knight “connects menstrual synchrony to the aboriginals symbology of the snake... representative of the logic of alternation, metamorphosis, and change, itself a concept arguably reminiscent of liminality”8. This potential conjoining allows for a deeper connection between human beings and bodies. Increased discourse and expression of these leaks is necessary to unlock this potential, as well as deep rooted social infiltration, but beginning with an open dialogue is a more manageable means of beginning the process. Physically, MacDonald suggests this is addressed through the embracing of menstrual sex, incorporating blood and bodies in the ultimate blurring of boundaries, but much more deeply subversive forms of resistance are required than simply physical. The linguistic communication surrounding menstruation must be radically altered; “we need to purposely ‘leak’, to dare to speak out loud and positively about the blood that is natural to our existence... honest communication about bodily fluids could begin to remove the shame associated with them”9.

A leak or fault in the system is the beginning of its deconstruction: a symbol of underlying instability within its very framework. To reconnect with our own leaks, our own menstrual flow, we could begin to repair years of seemingly irreversible damage done to the female psyche via their body. This connection is the reclamation of what the patriarch’s have always feared: exposure of their own performance. Their act as the ultimate being unravels as we find solace, even strength in menstruation

6 Lockford
“Talking Dirty
and Laying
Low”
116

7 MacDonald
“Leaky
Performance”
349

8 MacDonald
“Leaky
Performance”
351

9 MacDonald
“Leaky
Performance”
352

Bee Hughes
“Cycles”
2016-2017
theconversation.com



fig 11. cycles, Bee Hughes (altered color)



fig 12. cycles, Bee Hughes

The Menstrual Fridge

Menstruators describe how they create a community of camaraderie and a collective sense of solidarity through the shared experience of the period.

at the menstrual fridge we collect period blood. The blood is collected and stored safely and securely inside of the fridge. Our staff will carefully mark each vial so the blood remains separate.

Menarchy, a radical and reconstructive menstrual anarchy. Is there a subversive technology to the reclamation of our collective power from the act of a period?

ABOVE TO THE RIGHT: fig. 13 mini menstrual blood recycling center inside of a frat fridge



Jessica: 56 years old white woman who grew up in Germany

"And also many times I leaked through you know, sitting on a train, there was once, I asked a total stranger, a woman of course, if she could stand there with me a moment so I could just pretend to rearrange things a little bit while she stood there with me, so I didn't have to stand there all by myself, you know... and we just pretended"¹

In "Blood Stories: Menarche and the Politics of the Female Body in Contemporary U.S. Society", Janet Lee and Jennifer Sasser-Coen tell the stories of hundreds of women's first and many subsequent periods. Sharis the collective strength that comes from widespread reclamation for the menstrual act.

A young Monica

"One of my friends did start at school. I remember us being like: 'you started? Are you sure?' First of all she like bunched up a bunch of toilet paper because we didn't have anything and then that was, like, not working. We had those machines and this was a really ancient machine so we had no idea what was going to come out (laugh).' We actually found some money, it didn't have, like, the adhesive strip yet; it had pins, and so we were like, well, hey it's a pad, and she took it and used it."²

¹ Lee "Blood Stories: Menarche and the Politics of the Female Body in Contemporary U.S. Society", 178

² Lee "Blood Stories: Menarche and the Politics of the Female Body in Contemporary U.S. Society", 177



ABOVE: fig. 4 blood from some dear friends being entered into the menstrual recycling center

"the same as how I feel about regular blood, natural and completely human"

"a fun gooey time! love the blobs!"

"I honestly don't know why its considered more taboo than other kinds of blood"

"natural & cleansing"

"something totally natural, I love my diva cup! took me a while to get this comfy with it though!"

"it's a natural part of life!"

"that's humanity right there honey. none of y'all would be here without it"

oh we've all been there: feeling that sudden drop (iykyk I really cannot describe in any other way)

"it makes me apprecte my body and all the cool complex stuff it does"

In this ongoing experiment, I am collecting period blood and collecting period dates. Some are regular, whether because it is being regulated by the pill or you are just straight up lucky, but some are completely irregular in which case the subject will enter her period when it happens. Either way they are natural and incredibly beautiful and in this fridge and subsequent calendar is the beginnings of a revolutionary period party. A collective of strong, empowered, sometimes joyful menstruating individuals who are celebrating their periods instead of dreading their return. they look forward to the reminder each month of the cleansing, regenerative powers of her body, instead of living in fear of some kind of monstrous explosion.

When you just know the volcano has erupted, when you know that you better beeline for the bathroom before you are exposed.

All Party People participating must abide by tea house rules:

- no harassment
- no homophobia
- no sexism
- no mansplaining
- no **ANYTHING** without consent

Check your egos at the door please

The Oestrogen Tea Party supports tea time chatting. Some topics for discussion include: capitalist confrontations, protest, the social politics of meat, radical leftist ideas, potty party stories, plant talk, and female empowerment. This is by no means an extensive list, but ***we do kindly ask that “locker room” talk and really anything to do with sports please be avoided.***

How can a space be safe and inclusive, when there are people who will threaten those priorities? Those people would have to be coerced or asked not to attend, making the space inherently exclusive. Could we deter predatory men from attending simply by questioning their own toxic traits? Would they have to face up to their fears in order to enter?

We are not preventing them from entering, we are simply asking them to confront their own internalized misogyny in order to participate.

Be better and then you can show up.

Calling all Party People

***Sorry no added BOOBS...
but existing boobs yes please***

***But we do have beans! And other vegan,
vegetarian, and dairy free products!***



ABOVE AND TO THE RIGHT: fig. 15 place setting for the little tea party that was hosted in my backyard

75

before....



who knew some tea time chatter, with some fellow party people, could be so fun!



ABOVE AND TO THE RIGHT: fig. 18 place setting for the little tea party that was hosted in my backyard



at this tea party we find sharing and cooperation. tea travels around the table, snacks are passed, lots of conversation is shared.

almost all snacks were munched, "a perfect pre dinner snack", one party person states



a er.

The combination of menstruation and anarchy, imagines futures where our menstruation is our super power. Could our menstruation be the inert potential our bodies contain, shrouded in secrecy, silence, shame, and fear? If we, as female bodied individuals and “menstruators”¹, come to terms with our menstruation and embrace her as an essential and beautiful part of us, we have the potential energy to undermine these sick games of the patriarchy. But where does the revolution start and how? Chris Bobel shows us that it already has. In 1995 Courtney Dailey founded The Bloodsisters, widely considered to be the leaders of the radical menstruation movement. “Bloodsisters is an exciting launching pad girl base fueling action to combat the silence surrounding our female bodies. We are girls using our own feminine protection to work against the corporate and cultural constructions of menstruation. We are concerned with the serious health, environmental and psychological ramifications of the toxic feminine hygiene industry and are fighting to stop the whitewash on all fronts.	Menarchy: Reclaiming Period Power “Bloodsisters is an exciting launching pad girl base fueling action to combat the silence surrounding our female bodies. We are girls using our own feminine protection to work against the corporate and cultural constructions of menstruation. We are concerned with the serious health, environmental and psychological ramifications of the toxic feminine hygiene industry and are fighting to stop the whitewash on all fronts. Born out of a guerrilla girl recyclable pad distribution network, we are an ever growing group generating more creative projects to raise awareness surrounding menstrual girl-body politics. These include publishing zines, weaving a web girl network, terrorizing bathroom walls, giving healthy health workshops, organizing art exhibits, distributing affordable, alternative products, sharing n boycotting, tabling n lobbying, stitching n bitching and always with winged power.”	disentanglements from these systems and if we are to radically free everyone from the reigns of capitalistic and patriarchal control, we have to dig much deeper than just the FemCare industry. Class, gender, and race all intersect at the stigmas around menstruation and that must be consistently acknowledged as we work to free everyone. To reduce the movement simply to refrain from buying environmentally harmful products would be to ignore the many underlying oppressions that menstruators face. Economic and social marginalization coupled with patriarchal policy prevents many menstruators from getting out from under FemCare and other corporate controls. In “Out for Blood”, Breanne Fahs discusses the results of an activism assignment attempting to create a space that negates menstrual taboo. She asked her students to create some sort of radical space in order to free female bodies from the taboos that restrict their access. Through the creation of menstrual management industries, like the FemCare industry, women have been taught and have eventually internalized fear of public exposure of their menstruation. Coupled with “negative rhetoric surrounding menstruation has also circulated justification for preventing women from becoming president or holding serious positions of power..., advertisers depict the menstruating female body as unclean, unfeminine, and dirty in order to effectively market panty liners, pads, and tampons”⁵. Through a historical precedent of descriptive language that represses the female psyche into submission, the patriarchal systems have been able to maintain a semblance of control over her menstruation and ultimately her body as a whole. This lifetime of suppressive behavior has ironically created an army of radicalized feminist activists that are fighting with menstruation on their side. Their periods are now their weapons by which to scare away the men. As deep as internalized misogyny runs inside of the female psyche, fear of seeing menstruation runs within the male psyche. While reclaiming our bodies and our minds is powerful and potentially even subversive to the damaging effects of the patriarchy, reclaiming our menstruation is catastrophic.	
Born out of a guerrilla girl recyclable pad distribution network, we are an ever growing group generating more creative projects to raise awareness surrounding menstrual girl-body politics. These include publishing zines, weaving a web girl network, terrorizing bathroom walls, giving healthy health workshops, organizing art exhibits, distributing affordable, alternative products, sharing n boycotting, tabling n lobbying, stitching n bitching and always with winged power.”² The Bloodsisters reclaimed the language of the FemCare industry, controlling “protection, and wings”³. They reject the corporate exploitation of menstruation and claim strength. “The theme of taking control is perhaps the most pervasive in the discourse of radical menstruation. Without control... people are vulnerable to inhabiting a body alienated from the self, a body co-opted by corporate interests, a body disciplined by consumer culture.”⁴. We must disentangle ourselves, where privilege and space allows, from the industry, rejecting to participate in the toxic femininity and corporate definitions of shame surrounding the cycles of menstruation. Here it is important to note that a certain amount of privilege allows for quick	1 Bobel “The New Blood” 100 2 Bobel “The New Blood” 100 3 Bobel “The New Blood” 105 4 Bobel “The New Blood” 106	This lifetime of suppressive behavior has ironically created an army of radicalized feminist activists that are fighting with menstruation on their side. Their periods are now their weapons by which to scare away the men. As deep as internalized misogyny runs inside of the female psyche, fear of seeing menstruation runs within the male psyche. While reclaiming our bodies and our minds is powerful and potentially even subversive to the damaging effects of the patriarchy, reclaiming our menstruation is catastrophic.	
78 Provocation of Deconstruction		The blood that accompanies a period is our shield, and our connection to the earth, the egg, the embryo, the explosion	79

"Shannon Docherty's (2010) titled article "Smear it on your face, rub it on your body, it's time to start a menstrual party!"⁶ could not more accurately express the enthusiasm with which this movement initiates. Maybe as we radicalize, we join together in a period party. A more celebratory form of resistance: subversive to both masculine oppression of menstruation but also the way in which masculinity dominates protest. Where the period party is lacking in violence, she makes up in friendship and solidarity and sheer size of community. If all the women, transwomen, and transmen got together we could take over the world with our period party.

Menarchy is not just for menstruators, but for anyone who is willing to commit to being an active powerful supporter of large scale liberation of people from rigid binaries that disproportionately affect female bodied individuals in particular. Breanne Fahs puts this quite eloquently claiming that "menstrual activists want both men and women to develop a stronger and more nuanced critical consciousness about the social context for menstruation, particularly the shame narratives directed at women's bodies"⁷. The movement is a call to party

for all individuals that wish to participate within this idea and beyond. We want not only liberation from the chains that hold us down, but infrastructural change in the way that we regard the female body in the urban environment.

This period party will be a space of celebration and even more, an ambiguous, space of binary-less community. One where we are not divided by the shapes and sizes and physical appearance of our genitalia, but regarded as unique in our expressions of self and welcomed with open arms because of it.

"Shannon Docherty's (2010) titled article "Smear it on your face, rub it on your body, it's time to start a menstrual party!"⁶ could not more accurately express the enthusiasm with which this movement initiates. Maybe as we radicalize, we join together in a period party. A more celebratory form of resistance: subversive to both masculine oppression of menstruation but also the way in which masculinity dominates protest. Where the period party is lacking in violence, she makes up in friendship and solidarity and sheer size of community.

⁶ Fahs "Out for Blood" 96
⁷ Fahs "Out for Blood" 96

This period party will be a space of celebration and even more, an ambiguous, space of binary-less community. One where we are not divided by the shapes and sizes and physical appearance of our genitalia, but regarded as unique in our expressions of self and welcomed with open arms because of it.

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The Geopolitics of Beirut, Lebanon

Lebanon lies at the heart of the Middle East, lying at the connecting point between countries on the African continent and those in Asia. It also lies at a critical, geopolitical point where Arab conflicts meet those in Palestine-Israel. The Middle East as a whole has always been an important geographical location for its large sources of oil and natural gas reserves. A social contract has been defined by various external hands fighting for control of the regions resources in order to provide a semblance of economic legitimacy to their occupation¹. The rentier nature² coupled with the excessive presence of foreign entities trying to get their pick of the fuel coupled with growing sectarian fighting has led to the chaos that now wreaks havoc on the region.

Many of these are smaller conflicts contributing to the large chaos of the region where the Saudi-Iran war takes place is examined through a comparison to the Cold War. Saudi Arabia and Iran have not been in direct conflict with each other in their fighting for sectarian, geopolitical control of the region. In the same way that the US and the Former Soviet Union never declared war on each other during the Cold War, Saudi Arabia and Iran are not directly involved in war with each other but rather through the ally countries. Saudi Arabia and Iran have been fighting for this broad control of the region through alliances with the smaller countries in the region. This New Cold War³ in the Middle East is for control of not only a sectarian nature and for sectarian dominance (Sunni-Shia) but for the larger more ingrained control of the resources of the region. The pair creating a larger geopolitical conflict.

1 Ghoble
"Geopolitics of
the Lebanese
Crisis"
1

2 Ghoble
"Geopolitics of
the Lebanese
Crisis"
1

3 VOX
"The Middle
East's Cold War,
Explained"



fig 9. The Middle East Cold War, Sam Ellis

Origins of Saudi-Iran Conflict

(This by no means is extensive or representative of all the narratives that describe these warring nations, but is important for a broader contextual understanding of the Lebanese political degradation.)

Prior to WWI the Arabian Peninsula, what has now come to be known as the Middle East, was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. They were interconnected tribes not formal countries, but after the war, the empire collapsed and the tribes started to fight for power. Two emerged, forming more formal countries in the area: Saudi Arabia and Iran. Both of which were based on the discovery of oil rich land which led to alliances with the US for these resources. Iran was struggling much more than Saudi Arabia due to the foreign hands trying to get their piece of the oil reserves: the Russians and the British. Both, Saudi Arabia and Iran, were becoming westernized and capitalized on for exploitation by the rest of the world. Each had a U.S. implemented monarchy at the time, but the Irani people did not have nearly the same affection and respect for their leaders as those in Saudi Arabia. This led to the Iranian Revolution in 1979⁴. The people overthrow the Shah, the U.S. appointed monarch and this is when the real tension between the two nations begins for the Saudi Arabian government was fearful that a similar event would take place in their country.

At the same time both were experiencing religious turmoil. Both were predominantly Islamic nations but Saudi Arabia was majority Sunni and Iran was majority Shia. Saudi Arabia was previously claiming to be the center of the Muslim world, mainly because their two holiest sites, Mecca and Medina, resided inside of their borders⁵. After the Iranian revolution, the new supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, claimed that his people rising up against Western threats made them

the more legitimate center⁶. There is a common Western misconception that the Sunni Shia split is comparable to the Protestant Catholic split, when in reality it is not anywhere near as violent. They are historically incredibly peaceful and coexist quite well with each other⁷. The Sunni-Shia divide is a religious “dispute over who should succeed the Prophet Muhammad as the leader of the Islamic faith”⁸. Sunni and Shia are the main sects within Islam. They are in alignment in almost all major principles of the religion except at the point of succession. The conflict is nuanced and deeply rooted in religious supremacy that is important to the broader Middle East conflict and specifically to Beirut, but in Beirut and Lebanon the divide is less so between these two Islamic sects but a more politically divisive Christian Muslim struggle for control.

There was much more trust of the monarchy in Saudi than in Iran and in 1979 that unrest broke loose with the Iranian revolution⁹. They overthrew the powerful regime and Saudi Arabia feared the same action in their own country. Then the revolution started to spread into other nations in the region. The Iranians started to export their revolution. While the Sunni Shia split was not the reason, it does play an important role in the spread of these revolutions and their divided backings. The Iranians started to back mostly Shia groups in other countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia to overthrow their own governments, thus prompting Saudi Arabia to double their efforts to fight the spread of these revolutions. Iraq was historically used as a border between these two larger powers but as the revolutions gained power so did Iraq and they eventually went to invade Iran. When Iran was winning Saudi provided aid to the Iraqi people. Once again placing Iraq as the buffer region between Iran and Saudi Arabia so that Iran could not access Saudi. This war went on until 1988 with almost a million casualties. But the proxy war taking place in Iraq did not end there¹⁰.

When the US invaded Iraq in 2003 and overthrew Saddam Hussein, the US had no idea what it was rashly walking into. Neither Saudi Arabia nor Iran wanted the country overthrown as it acted as a buffer for both. Despite Saudi building it up indirectly against Iran, they recognized the catastrophic impact the loss of that separation would cause. When the US could not produce a replacement for Saddam, it put the country into absolute chaos and caused a civil war. Militias started taking control: Sunni and Shia alike. Iran and Saudi started to back the Shia and Sunni militias respectively. These militias, thus became another proxy for the two nations to war between. This trend continued with the Arab Spring, which were anti monarchy protests that spread throughout the rest of the middle east in 2010. The rise of turmoil across the region led to

4 VOX
"The Middle
East's Cold War,
Explained"

5 VOX
"The Middle
East's Cold War,
Explained"

6 VOX
"The Middle
East's Cold War,
Explained"

7 Pruitt
"Islam's
Sunni-Shia
Divide"

8 VOX
"The Middle
East's Cold War,
Explained"

9 VOX
"The Middle
East's Cold War,
Explained"

10 VOX
"The Middle
East's Cold War,
Explained"

The Lebanese Capital

increased involvement of the two countries all across the Middle East. Both backing opposing groups fighting in different countries, including revolutions in Lebanon. The pressure that Saudi and Iran put on these fights started to deteriorate and take its toll on these significantly smaller countries who were less quipped to bear the burden of years of wars. This extensive network for civil wars exhausts resources and starts to ignite a more intense rivalry between Saudi and Iran. These wars are still going on and their unpredictable nature over makes it hard to predict how they will play out over time.

Beirut being the capital and therefore, economic epicenter, has become the funnel by which all of these geopolitical conflicts intersect at: their meeting point. The entire country was at war but Beirut becomes a key battle ground by which the international interventions and political corruption culminated and eventually leads to the explosion of the city that occurred August 4 of this year. The city becomes the focus of rivaling militias which are “the key actors in the destruction of Beirut (between 1975 and 1976) and attach new meanings to the city’s built environment. Practices such as blocking streets, piercing buildings to create passages, partitioning neighborhoods... all played a part in the tactics and strategies used to bifurcate-physically and ideologically – this urban environment”¹¹.

The city became an everyday battleground during this civil war. The city was fractured into “myriads of bordered territories protected by increasingly organized militias”¹². The city became a series of checkpoints, altercations, sniper positions, and overall anxiety. This fragmentation of the capital city began to produce the complex spatial qualities and started to define the discussions around the sovereignty of the state itself. The city continued to grow and the urban fabric was continually defined by this anxiety and fear of war both ongoing and to come. Fregonese refers to this geopolitical fracturing as the “urbicide” of Beirut. It feeds into the Western exceptionalism gaze which produces imagery of an ungovernable state, one out of control, but those same eyes lack an empathetic understanding of the underlying collective trauma the city is experiencing. As more and more of these territories were defined, some of which were a single building controlled by a militia, the Green Line which divided the city of Beirut in half was starting to be drawn, demarcating specific geographic barriers of the war. The urbicide of the city characterized not only the redefined urban fabric but also the “ties between the city and its civilian inhabitants who were not left untouched either, as residents had to cope with the consequences of heavy artillery and carpet bombing”¹³. This kind of collective trauma should not go unnoticed as it will continue to define the inhabitants quality of life in Beirut and also emphasize the impacts of the explosion on August 8.

As the politics of the city begin to unravel, the people of Beirut became increasingly disillusioned with their government. As the city starts to rebuild and cope with the destruction of war, political priorities do not improve. The mismanagement of money and prioritization of exports and trading over the well being of the people there continuously characterize the city and much of Lebanon. The chaos within which the

11 Fregonese
"The urbicide of Beirut?"
310

12 Fregonese
"The urbicide of Beirut?"
319

13 Fregonese
"The urbicide of Beirut?"
320

Gentrification & Protest

residents of the city were forced to live within would define not only the spatial politics of their lives but also the emotional stability of the city as a whole.

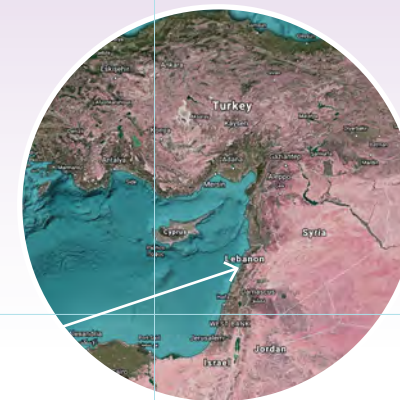
The Beirut port even more narrowly experiences these layers of political corruption, negligence, and gross disconnect in empathetic solutions. The city of Beirut was divided by this Green Line and the port lay at the crux of it.

"The best response to Black Saturday was the free what was called 'the Fourth District', which was still under the Phalanges militia's control, and to open a way to the harbour of Beirut, so that work there doesn't remain under the Phalanges mercy; and so I took a pen, and drew a line on the map, all the way from the Martyrs Square to the port" (Late leader of the Lebanese Communist Party George Hawi, quoted in al Issawi, O., el Saadi, A., & Siblini, H., 2001)

The port itself has come to stand as a political altar between government corruption and citizens residing within the city. The country was left fractured by a divided government with the implementation of the sectarian system of government put in place to carve the country's economic pie between battling religious factions. The port became a political middle ground in the warring city divided by the "Green Line", the geopolitical divide referenced by George Hawi. The line drew demographic redistribution with many Christians settling on the east and Muslims on the west. The line was drawn as part of the Civil War which took place from 1975 until 1990. Beginning in the southern suburbs, it progressed to the west gate of the harbor, leaving the port as one of the only places to remain neutral. The city itself became the site where sectarian tensions and regional geopolitics became part of urban space. These physical lines of separation were not solely drawing out the politics of the city but also dividing people and distributions of the public's right to space.

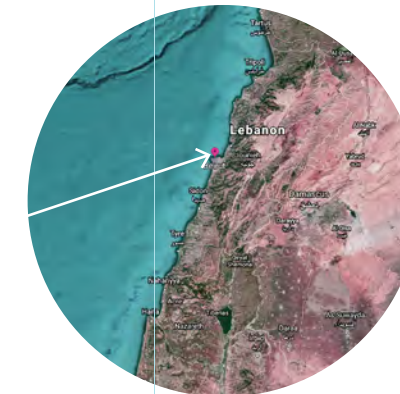
The port has historically been adjacent to the city's most predominantly gentrified neighborhoods. Similar to NIMBYistic practices of urban politics in the United States, the Beirut Central District underwent a large investment operation in the early 1980's that was highly controversial and opposed by residents. The residents' protest to the government legislature did not end here. The port ended up at the fulcrum of public anti-government protests in 2015 and 2019, infuriated over the rights to access public services and resources, lack of government accountability, and economic mismanagement.

Zooming in



how lebanon sits in the middle east

fig 2 . Google Earth Image



where beirut sits in lebanon

fig 21. Google Earth Image



locating the port within beirut

fig 22. Google Earth Image

An Explosion of Masculinity

This masculine dominated control is about the defining aspects of masculinity within the gender binary and societal standard of definition that they are the ultimate "handler" of a situation even when they are not in control at all. While this is not exclusively male, it starts to manifest into a physical form when specific men are in control. In the case of this explosion, there is no conclusive evidence yet of who is at fault but the prime minister and his cabinet have resigned and blame is being thrown around at all levels of authority from the highest of prime minister all the way down to those managing port activities.

At the crux of this gross negligence lay the port and its collection of explosives and detonators. The explosion only laid bare the cities lost sovereignty and distrust in their government with a massive crater as evidence. The stockpile of ammonium nitrate came to be in the hanger on the Beirut port at the end of 2013 when a Russian cargo ship destined for Mozambique stopped in Beirut and was seized by the Lebanese authorities. A few months later, according to the New York Times, "in the first of many documented warnings to the government, a port security officer alerted the customs authority that the ship's chemicals were 'extremely dangerous' and posed 'a threat to public safety'¹⁴. Hundreds of people knew about the contents of the Hanger and the threat to public safety that it posed but negligence and corruption for the sake of political gain kept it under wraps and it was not addressed. The port has long been a site of political parties trying to get a cut of the ports trade imports and exports, especially when the economy started to sink. The port's history has been a site of desperate efforts for revenue making it "a gateway for contraband in the Middle East, allowing arms and drugs to slip through virtually unimpeded"¹⁵. While the money is coming in, it is not going towards any investment into the city or the public sector but rather into the pockets of various political parties fighting for their cut of the profits.

Despite the warnings to the government, the military, and customs authority at the port, the ammonium nitrate was never removed. Leaders spent years shuffling around responsibility and claiming they did not need it or that it was not in their jurisdiction to remove but ultimately passing blame around.

14 NYT
"How a Massive Bomb Came Together"

15 NYT
"How a Massive Bomb Came Together"



Absolutely nothing was done about it.

The only information that prompted any sort of action, was notice of Hanger 12's door being broken and was wide open. The fear was not directed towards an explosion but rather of the potential for terrorists to steal the substances being stored inside. So on August 4 the government finally acted and sent a team of welders to fix the hangar. There is still no conclusive evidence to point specifically to the welding as what ignited the ammonium nitrate but with that being the only known source of ignition occurring that day, the assumption seems rightfully made.

fig 2 . aerial photo of Port @rabzthecopter via The New York Times
the egg the embryo the explosion 97



fig. 4 Recorded moment of the explosion in Beirut ENEX



fig. 25 Port Explosion Cloud, Nadar Itayim



fig. 26 Shockwave captured by Karim Sokhm

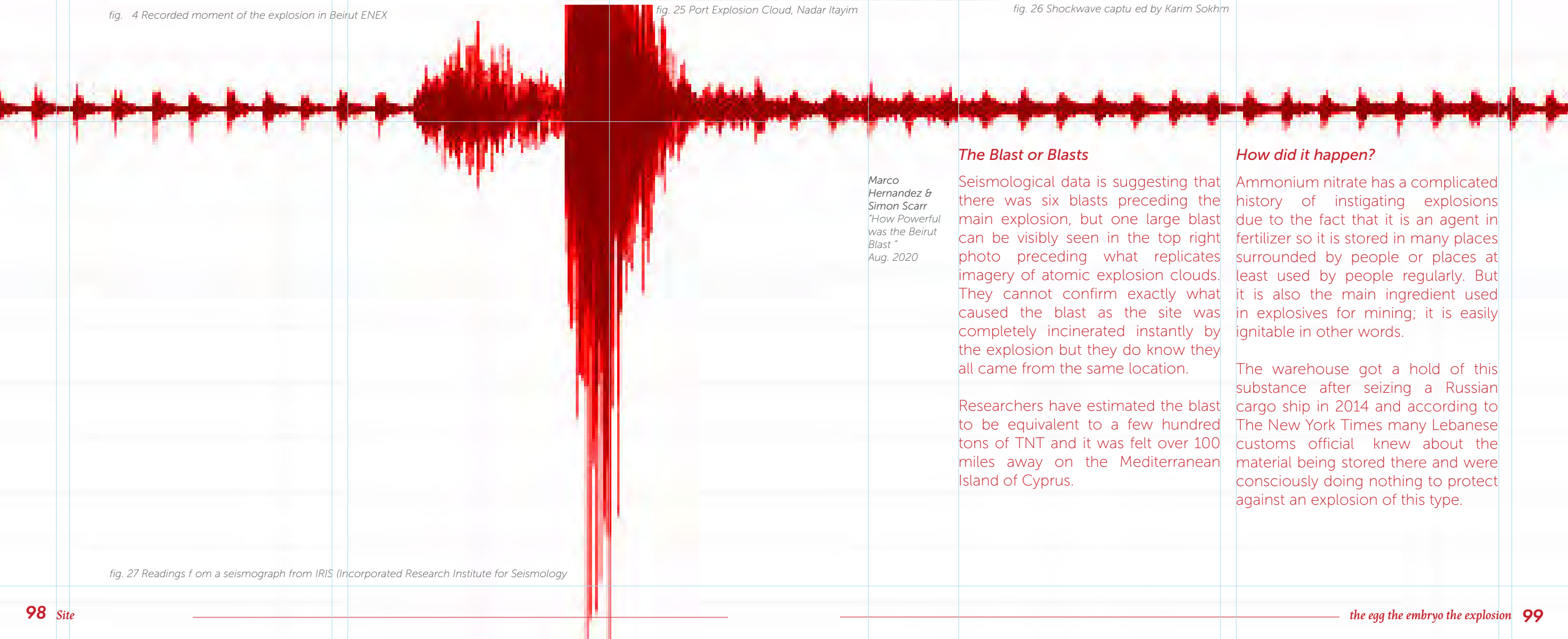


fig. 27 Readings from a seismograph from IRIS (Incorporated Research Institute for Seismology)

Marco
Hernandez &
Simon Scarr
"How Powerful
was the Beirut
Blast"
Aug. 2020

The Blast or Blasts

Seismological data is suggesting that there was six blasts preceding the main explosion, but one large blast can be visibly seen in the top right photo preceding what replicates imagery of atomic explosion clouds. They cannot confirm exactly what caused the blast as the site was completely incinerated instantly by the explosion but they do know they all came from the same location.

Researchers have estimated the blast to be equivalent to a few hundred tons of TNT and it was felt over 100 miles away on the Mediterranean Island of Cyprus.

How did it happen?

Ammonium nitrate has a complicated history of instigating explosions due to the fact that it is an agent in fertilizer so it is stored in many places surrounded by people or places at least used by people regularly. But it is also the main ingredient used in explosives for mining; it is easily ignitable in other words.

The warehouse got a hold of this substance after seizing a Russian cargo ship in 2014 and according to The New York Times many Lebanese customs official knew about the material being stored there and were consciously doing nothing to protect against an explosion of this type.

The Consequences of Toxic Masculinity

The Patriarch, same in fact that has ruled through the Civil War decades ago¹⁶, assumed they had control, they assumed their closed body was airtight at the expense of hundreds of lives. They assumed without every making a single effort to contain it. The assumption of male control so strong even the patriarchs themselves fall into the trap. In this case the male baseline assumption blew up their face (literally). On August 4, 2020, 2750 tons of ammonium nitrate exploded on the edge of the Beirut Port. A city in fragile states of turmoil, corruption, economic crisis, and still in recovery from civil war , exploded in minutes. Footage from surrounding buildings and boats at sea show initial smoke capturing the cities attention immediately followed by a massive blast seismologists have equated to a 4.5 magnitude earthquake. In an instant over half of Beirut was destroyed with yet another generation of Lebanese left with a collective trauma.

An entire city suffering from Insomnia, Depression, and crippling Anxiety. This is not new for the Lebanese. Children born of Gen Z are only the only Lebanese that this trauma is new for. The explosion only reignited long buried emotions and triggering memories for the rest of Lebanon. One Lebanese women, Laudy Issa, reflects on the explosion and her families horrifying experience.

"I write this while silently crying, watching the funeral processions of hero fighters who were sentenced to their death when official asked them to put out the fire that had started at the Beirut port without informing them of the presence of 2.750 tons of explosive ammonium nitrate near it...

I live outside of Beirut and was editing articles that have now become irrelevant when the ground started to shake. Moments later, the loudest blast I had ever heard erupted.

My older brother, visiting from Dubai after 8 months apart, and I stared at each other for a moment before springing into action.

'Where's mom?' He asked in panic. She was parking the car.

She rushed up the stairs yelling our names, 'Israel bombed us! They must have hit the electricity company here!'

Given the intensity of the shockwave and sound, her thought process seemed reasonable. We live near Bsalim, where a power station had been targeted by Israel before in the year 2000."¹⁷

The city, while not expecting an explosion to occur that day, was not unfamiliar with explosions in their cities. Residents across Lebanon, but in particular in Beirut have lived almost every day fearing the next explosion. It is a reality not an exception. War, poverty, starvation, and general destruction of their cities is

often written off as a burden of immigration or attacks by foreign nations, but this explosion could not be passed off as easily. The government knew. They knew and the people knew that they did. Their shame was only addressed through their instant resignation. Issa's generation lived in anticipatory fear of a war to come, but her parents lived through one during the Civil War: the explosion triggering those same traumatic emotions.

"It frightens me to watch older generations deal with the effects of the Beirut blast almost robotically. While we were still processing what happened, they were picking up brooms and covering broken windows with newspapers and old Lebanese flags lying around the house.

While watching the news on the night of the blast, I yelled out while crying, 'How will these people rebuild their lives? They have nothing left. The country was already in ruins. What happens now?'

'Do you see why we say things will never change in Lebanon?' my mother asked. 'This is what we lived through during the Civil War.'¹⁸

People are echoing the sentiment that it's almost insulting that it wasn't an Israeli strike, rage building up like never before at the criminal negligence of Lebanese politicians. This blast could have been easily avoided, and nothing that the ruling war lords could do will ever make this anger go away because they knew what was there and what could happen. But they ignored it." Their toxic masculine ego blew up the city and they did not even stick around long enough to apologize. This explosion blew up an entire port full of grain, of shipments, and blew up buildings, homes, and streets, but the explosion took with it much more. In seconds, a city's trust, a city's small threads of hope were vaporized. The Beirut that exploded that day should not be memorialized. People need to heal, not be triggered by the same traumatic memories that have haunted them for the past several decades.

Masculinity is not necessarily the cause, but the power structures that uplift and uphold toxic hegemonic masculine culture surely played an enormous role.

16 Issa
"Another Generation of Lebanese collective trauma"

17 Issa
"Another Generation of Lebanese collective trauma"

18 Issa
"Another Generation of Lebanese collective trauma"

sad doggies and cute puppies are not enough

In past disasters of this nature, the objects of the site, the buildings, are cleaned, memorialized and recognized. Here, those things don't need to be remembered let alone do they want to be. The Beirut that was here before is not one to glorify. Instead the hole itself, the moment of death and potential rebirth shall be cared for and tediously tended to.

24 hours and the world forgot



Zulfi ar Ali Bhutto
"Tomorrow We inherit the Earth: Videos in Numerology"

fig. 28 4.Hour Collage

"It is time for the earth to open and release its children so dead martyrs may rise and join the ranks of the living, it is time for us, it is time for us to inherit the earth"

on August 4 she died... in 45 seconds this site experience both a death and birth, but who can be born? what will be born?

not another arms of an angel, not another tone deaf housing project, sorry brad pitt, you tried

why did you forget? did you even remember that you forgot until now?



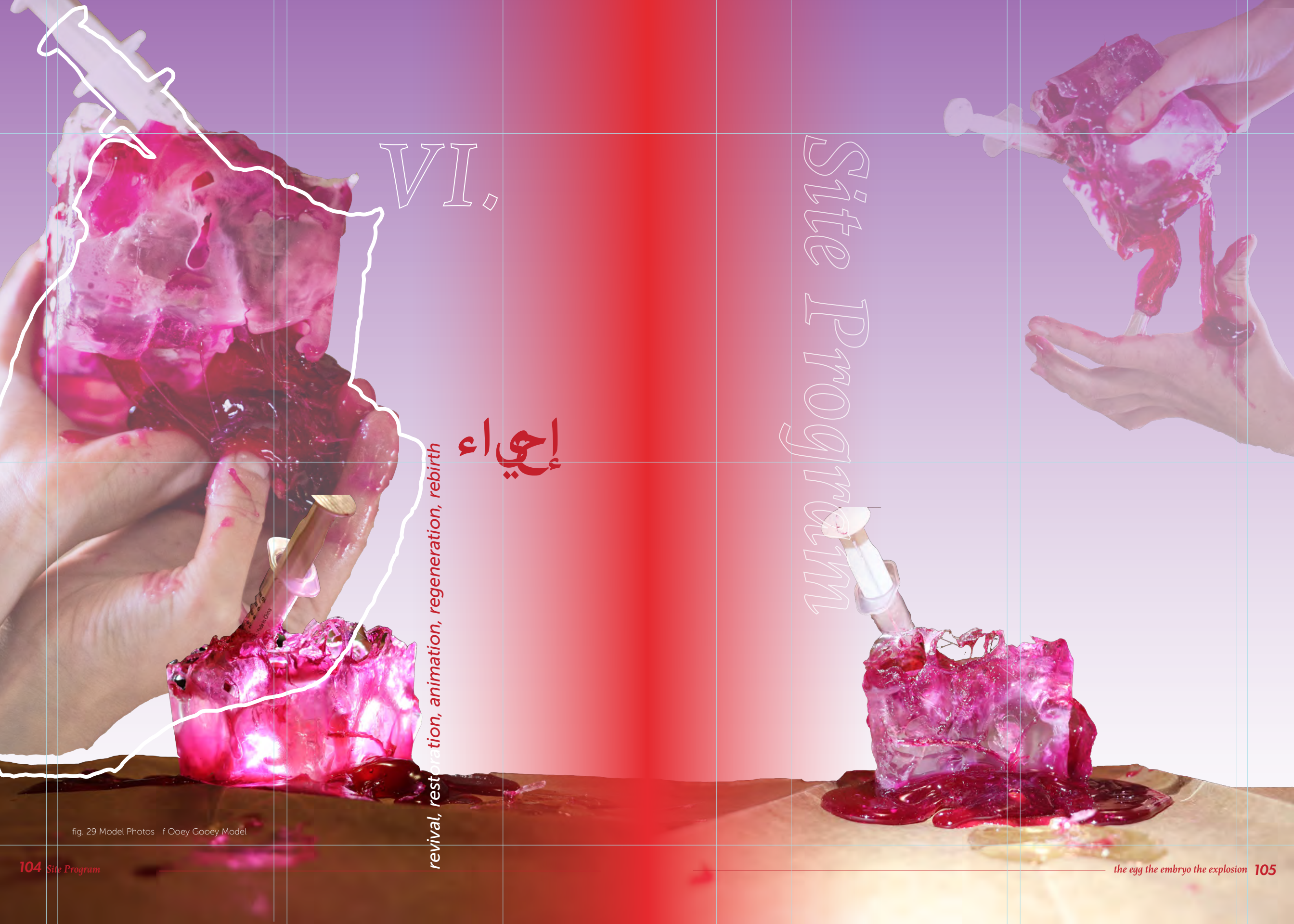
"In a world where the sounds of air raids are as common as the azan, the disappeared outnumber those of us accounted for, and demons are celebrated as heroes, heroes marked for their bravery, where nations are divided by arms folded or hanging loose, and bullet holes become crowns on a martyrs skull, where the leaders of your tall like mountains

When we have become so sure of our impending downfall That we watch for the people lusting for colonizations, destroying our neighbors homes and use its people as target practice When isis becomes a horde of lost anglo-saxon views and not the name of a great goddess

And when an imperialistic force mistakes its occupation as liberation and human beings are called collateral damage

It is time for modern civilization to crumble as it was always destined to so we may rise from its ashes"

//Faluda Islam, Tomorrow We Inherit the Earth



VI.

إحياء

Site Program

revival, restoration, animation, regeneration, rebirth

fig. 29 Model Photos f Ooey Gooey Model



عود

بی شرف

2

1

4

3

BIRTH

5

LOOSENING

DECENT INTO CLEANSE

CONTRACTION

SECRETION

A programmatic intersection of childbirth and spa ritual. In a site that was both immediately forgotten and does not want to be remembered. We care for the hole, tending to its every crevice to tend to the unseen trauma experienced by those who attend.

fig. 30 Program Change

calm

clean

VII.

Erasure

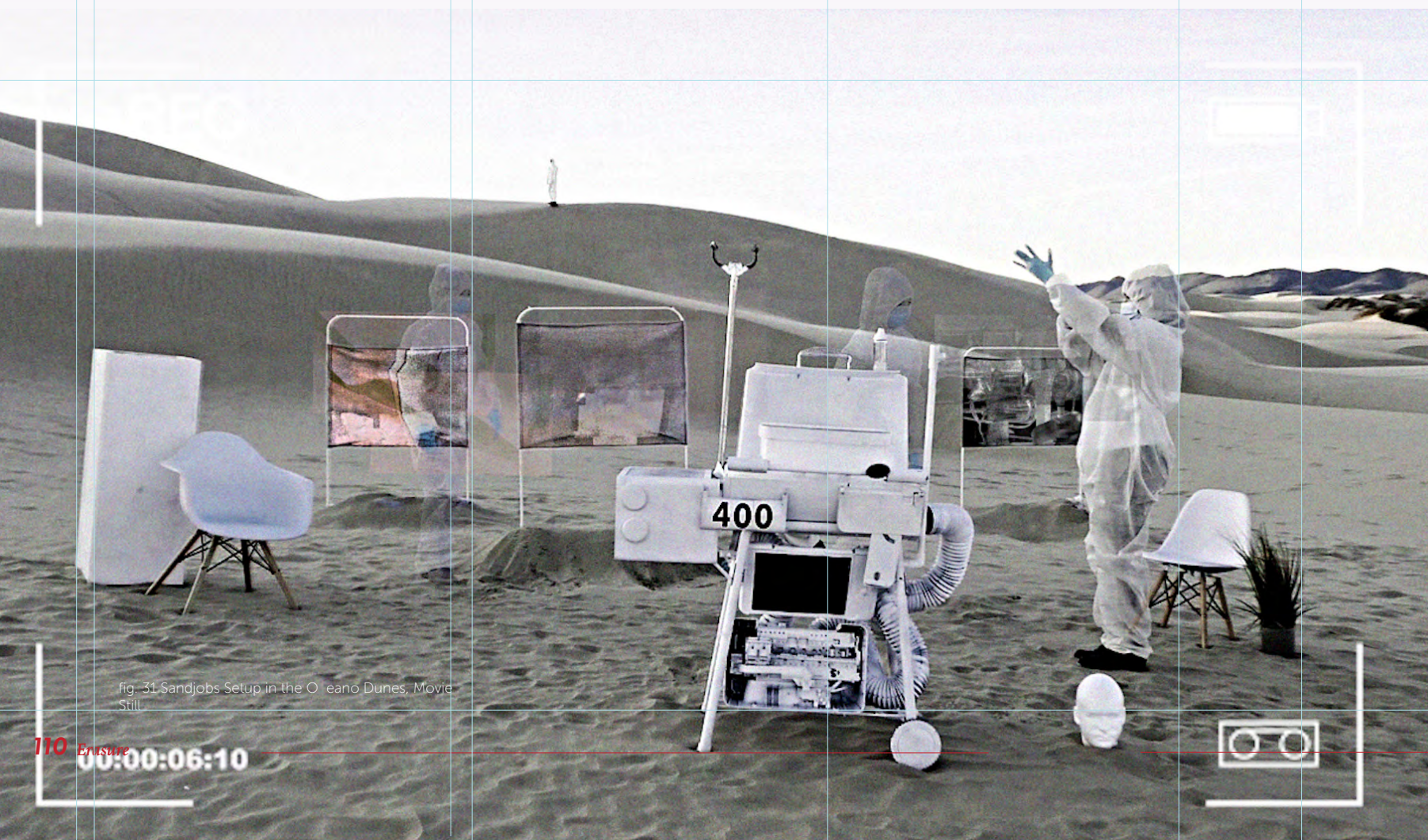


fig. 31 Sandjobs Setup in the Oceano Dunes, Movie Still

SANDJOBS

In a time where space has been completely turned on its head and interaction reimagined because of certain degree of universal trauma being experience, Studio 400 had to suit up, sanitize, and watch the show through the screen. The show imagined the transformative potential of liminal space and how can the erasure of traditionally understood notions of place start to allow for a kind of radical reconstruction and active repair. Within the void that is left, whether by explosion, loss, or a global pandemic, there is room for a possible reimagining of what design and sense of place could be. There is an opportunity to rebuild from a kind of blank landscape. While the scars of trauma are still embedded in space there can be a group act of radical care and subsequent reconstruction that is quite hopeful.

the egg the embryo the explosion



NOT A BOOK SHOW

fig. 32 Sandjobs Int o Movie Stills



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My Femininity
and maybe yours

My Femininity

IT

The egg the embryo the explosion will always be a little bit gooey, its gooeyness has moved from the literal physicality of a gooey substance to a deconstructive consistency of the female gaze. That which is representative of the radical community care, mutual aid, accumulatory temporal space, and space that grows and changes as it is needed to grow and change. The female gaze is gooey, all encompassing and never stagnant. The amorphous nature of the female body allows for compassion, for empathy, and quite simply care. The project is gooey because it is quite simply alive. The egg, the embryo, the explosion is forever growing and accumulating. It is the sticky oozy womb that gives space for life to carry on....

WILL

ALWAYS
BE A

LITTLE

GOOEY

fig. 33 Model Photos of Ooey Gooey Model

What does an architecture made through the female gaze look like?

The program becomes a space of healing that occurs through abolition and recreation. In the void, the loss, there is the possibility to reimagine what grows out of the events. The hole is the monument to the loss and it cannot be filled but the memorial grows around, over, protectively, the hole. The memorial grows to become a different narrative than what led to the horrors of August 4.

Introduction

To create a fundamentally new architecture, and more specifically, one that is created through the female gaze and lens, requires not only a new architectural product but a new architectural process. This process must come from each of us. It is my femininity and it is yours working for ourselves and working for each other. The process is entirely separate from masculinity and not in opposition to it necessarily. It is a resistance to its practice, but this new process should not just be the other binary, it is without binary. The female gaze, my femininity, and yours is gooey; it encompasses a respect for oneself, but also a deep empathy and compassion for others. There is no clear distinction between what one person needs or experiences, but rather all these needs and experiences exist on an overlapping and tangled spectrum. No person's experience is the same, but it is not completely isolated either. The gooey female gaze recognizes this co-productive, co-existence of each of us and thus, recognizes that only a co-liberation is possible. Goo, slime, blobs, overarching plasma, substances that are not quite solid and not quite liquid are sticky and they are blended as are our experiences.

Architecture created through the female gaze is no different. This architecture is about making space for different needs to be addressed in different instances. There is no stagnant purpose for a building to serve and the creation should not pretend as such. Feminine architecture does not make presumptions about how we should act or how we do act. She considers not only the female presence but the presence of human beings, of the unique qualities and experiences people add to the process of creation. Elizabeth Gross discusses the thing and its emphasis on making in "Architecture from the Outside". She rejects the criticism of feminine architecture as the excess or the decorative and instead places that excessiveness in relation to the essentially anti community, "the community, collective of those who have nothing

in common. This concept of community of the lost, of strangers, of the marginalized, and outcast is borrowed from the work of Alphonso Lingis, and especially from his concern with the community not as that which is united through common bonds, goals, language, or descent, but as that which opens itself to the stranger, to the dying, to the one with which one has nothing in common, the one who is not like oneself".¹ The residual community, as she refers to it is what the feminine addressing and what the masculine leaves out, disregards. The masculine's narrow definition of even community is neglectful and violent. It makes people invisible and architecture the righteous monument. But architecture should reach into its own excesses. It should reach out to those people deserted and give space for them to be together. Gross argues for asking, "following this understanding of the place of the excessive transgression, how to engender an architectural 'bestial monstrosity', a radically antifunctional architecture, an architecture that is anti-authoritarian and antibureaucratic".² The feminine rejects the systematic functioning and the hierarchical and artificial constructs of order that only seek to perpetuate patriarchies and becomes a messy matrix of excess, of endless creation.

"Architectural discourse and practice must not forget its connection to the imoule to shelter and covering fi st provided by nothing but the mother's body. The very concept of dwelling is irresolvable bound up with the fi st dwelling, itself a space of residues or after effects of the placental and body membranes. Rather than return to more primitive material or openly avow this primitive maternal connection, establishing a parallel between the placental universe and the social space in which housing provides shelter.. Architects may well find something else of value in this maternal origin: something of immense expenditure, an economy of pure gift, of excessive generosity, which, even if it cannot be repaid, architecture could perhaps produce elsewhere, in design and construction".³

The creation of feminine space, or now feminine process, becomes a new reproductive system of architecture. It is almost as if the site's existing conditions, materials, and events as well as the pasts memories, infrastructures, and holding places, become the embryo that life proliferates from. The past and present do not disappear but become another layer in the accumulation of time and memory. A construction of temporal space and spatial time. The feminine process privileges growth. It does not prescribe activity, but makes space for it.

"The thing is our provocation to action and is itself the result of our action. It functions as a promise, as that which in the future, in retrospect, yields a destination or in effect another thing".⁴

1 Grosz,
"Architecture
from the
Outside"
151-152

2 Grosz,
"Architecture
from the
Outside"
154

3 Grosz,
"Architecture
from the
Outside"
164

4 Grosz,
"Architecture
from the
Outside"
169

Reproductive System

The consequences of designing systems on the basis of existing patterns in society coincide with the result of inadequate representation in design and decision making processes. They fall back on the default: men and the masculine perspective. Existing architectural practices of justice that simply created a system similar to what Benjamin coins as the “New Jim Code.. [that] allow racist [and also, therefore, misogynistic] habits and logics to enter through the backdoor of tech design [and architectural design], in which humans who create the algorithms are hidden from view”.⁵ Architectural practices currently claiming to be working to produce spatial qualities and conditions of justice and equity have not broken free from processes tainted with histories of racism, misogyny, and capitalism and therefore, have only created a new face to old oppressive practices. Thus, creating simply a “New Jim Code”.⁶ Only hiding the oppressive social constructions surrounding race, gender, sexuality, class, and hierarchy under more years of implementation and embedding it in the built environment even further and deeper, to the point where it is almost subconscious, which makes it even more difficult to point to the specific evidence of where it went wrong. This cultural coding of oppression makes these practices seem inevitable rather than constructed and therefore, possibly deconstructable. In many instances we have been able to wash over and forget the ways that neighborhoods were designed to be inaccessible to anyone outside of a certain amount of privilege, the ways that resources have been distributed in areas of cities based on racial lines, and, in most specific relevance to this text, the way the female body has quite literally been prescribed onto space itself to the point where it cannot be disentangled.

Up to this point in the narrative, this work has been to first establish the way men's oppression was constructed and upheld. And, second, the existing presence of discriminatory design practices that either specifically or subconsciously uphold hierarchies and thus, reproduce these social divisions and power relations. This work has progressed to not compare itself to masculine processes or center their involvement in the work. A feminine process does not need to be placed in relation to masculinity in order to be understood. Long standing traditions of adaptation and reform have only worked to perpetuate existing systems of oppression and thus, an architecture that is to produce equity and

justice must come from a completely deconstructed and reconstructive process. A process free of designated program and space but prioritizing growth and spaces of care.

This process has been applied at the site of the explosion in Beirut in the form of a Reproductive System. The Reproductive System is a shift from architecture as an outcome to a practice or tool in supporting growth and in Beirut, protecting the space needed to cope. The process takes time and attention because if “we are not simply “users” but people committed to building a more just society, it is vital that we demand a slower and more socially conscious innovation”.⁷ This Reproductive System of Architecture could be applied and practiced in many realms but is being specifically prototyped here in response to a vital need and a moment where reinvention is possible. The explosion left loss, a void, and potentially room to reimagine what this place could be and what it could represent.

The Reproductive System of Architecture is a form of resistance applying principles of Abolitionist Toolmaking as outlined by Ruha Benjamin. In *Race After Technology*, Ruha Benjamin discusses the transformative potential of “Abolitionist Toolmaking” as a radical process/approach to the way we fundamentally approach STEM education. This toolkit, of sorts, is produced to provide a guiding framework for the implementation of this Reproductive System. The tools are not isolated but must be co-productive in critically examining each other, to include diverse representations and narratives, and always have a decentralized and demystified built environment. The toolmaking is a way to “cultivate [an] ongoing practice of unflinching accountability”.⁸ The strategies are grounded in solidarity: stressing that co-liberation is the only way for anyone to be uplifted. Solidarity is about our linked oppressions and the ways in which all oppressions are related. We are all harmed by the upholding of a white cis hetero patriarchy.

Abolitionist toolmaking is the production of co-dependant and co-existent approaches and practices in creating architecture of justice. These tools should never be isolated in their practice and there is no linear process to their application, but rather can be intermingled and

5 Benjamin,
“Race After
Technology”,
167

6 Benjamin,
“Race After
Technology”,
167

7 Benjamin,
“Race After
Technology”,
185

8 Benjamin,
Race After
Technology”,
187

used as the need arises. Ruha Benjamin urges us, as designers, to avoid the pitfalls of jargon and “buzzwords” that imply a solved approach that works everytime. There is no “five-steps... to human-centered design”. She specifically calls our attention to the common lean on claiming empathy. Empathy should always be present but it is not the answer. The thought is not all that counts. These efforts require work and active participation. They require critical thinking: critically examining your own inherent biases and the biases existing around us even when it is uncomfortable. Architecture is late to the game. These practices and efforts have been worked on and theorized for years, the Reproductive System proposed here is another desperate cry to finally act. How do we act? Ruha Benjamin, Elizabeth Grosz, and so many others have already told us.

First, it is vital that this process is always slow and carried out with great care and intention. Here, in this project and on this site, Auditing Arachnids carry out the narrative of this slow process of creation. They are slow, soft robots carrying out some of the labor upon the direction of people in the city. We reject the way capitalism and efficiency do not allow the time and space to be more socially conscious. Especially, in Beirut, to come in and take over the site by some heavy handed construction would be not only oppressive, but unproductive in memorializing for healing. But also to allow for the unflinching accountability to do its job. To slow down the process of creation and look more critically at the effects each step of the way has, allows for more correction and adaptation as the need arises. There are many questions to ask along the ways but Benjamin provides us with a few:

9 Benjamin,
“Race After
Technology”,
187

“1. What are the unintended consequences of designing systems at scale on the basis of existing patterns in society?”

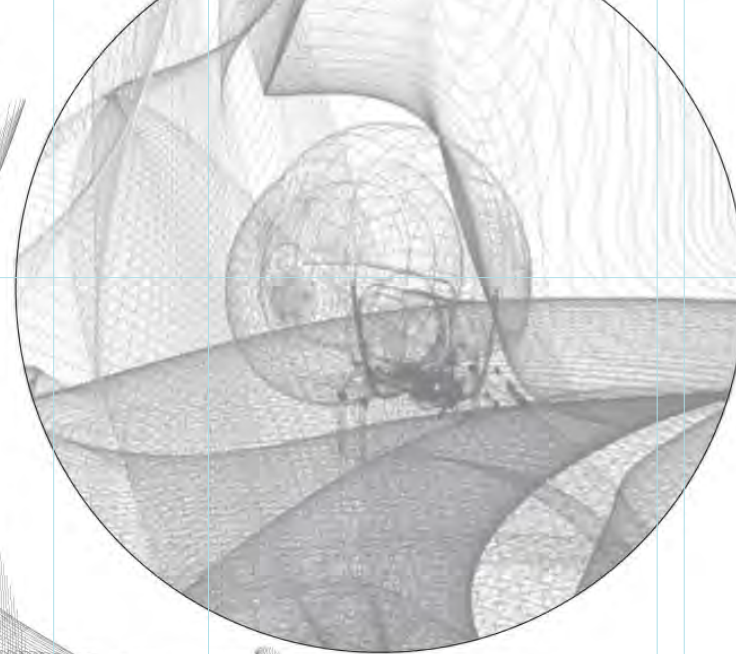
2. When and how should [architecture] prioritize individuals over society and vice versa?”

3. When is introducing an [architecture] the right answer-and when is it not?”⁹

Accountant Arachnid *the overseer*

The accountant remains a constant, ever present and watchful. Have a thought, bring it here.

maybe tomorrow...



This brings us to our first tool, one that Simone Brown coins while participating in the LAPD Spying Coalition, *sousveillance*". *Sousveillance* is the "active inversion of power relations that surveillance entails".¹⁰ It inverts who is typically seen and who is typically watched. *Sousveillance* provides access of oversight to public eyes and public voices. The **Accountant Arachnid** acts as the peoples eyes and ears. Overseeing the construction of space around the crater. They watch, listen, and record the progress. Occasionally reporting to people throughout the city or gossiping while giving someone a ride to the store or home after spending the day at the crater. Input can come through the Arachnid and disperse through other Arachnids on site and alter their work. Need a bed for the night, she is on it. Need a room to cry with your girls, she can put in the request. Need an ear to listen, she can be that for you, although you should probably also get a room with friends she might not be the best conversationalist.

¹⁰ Benjamin, "Race After Technology", 188

for now, guard the hole

2 years

Where do these stories go? How are they translated? For the spiders, they know how to weave. The narrations of life in the city, of the pain of another trauma, of anger, of joy, of friends who supported you find their way into the process through the weaving. Colored threads and different patterns talk through the stories of the city. The spaces they create give space for them to exist and memorialization to them happening. The Scribe Arachnid participates in the act of recording all the narratives coming through from the Accountant: needs, dreams, expectations, criticism, memories, anxieties, silence. The Scribe tells and records stories through weaving, showing care for the place and people along the way. Taking from Ruha Benjamins, *Race After Technology*, "A more holistic approach to framing is vital, the problem extends well beyond retooling social science communication. It calls for a justice oriented, emancipatory approach to data production, analysis, and public engagement... the master narrative must be abolished – including the subplot that says 'that a technology is loyal to the master'".¹¹ The Scribes hears all the narratives unfiltered and takes them all in and performs them all. This may lead to knots or reweaving certain parts of the web but the stories are all present in some form layered and nested in with each other.

¹¹ Benjamin, "Race After Technology", 193

maybe, smaller sleeping rooms?

little stuck here :/

Scribe Arachnid collecting narratives

The scribe weaves her way through the web, making corrections as humans give the egg the embryo the explosion instructions and also occasionally forgets she is inside and weaves herself in.

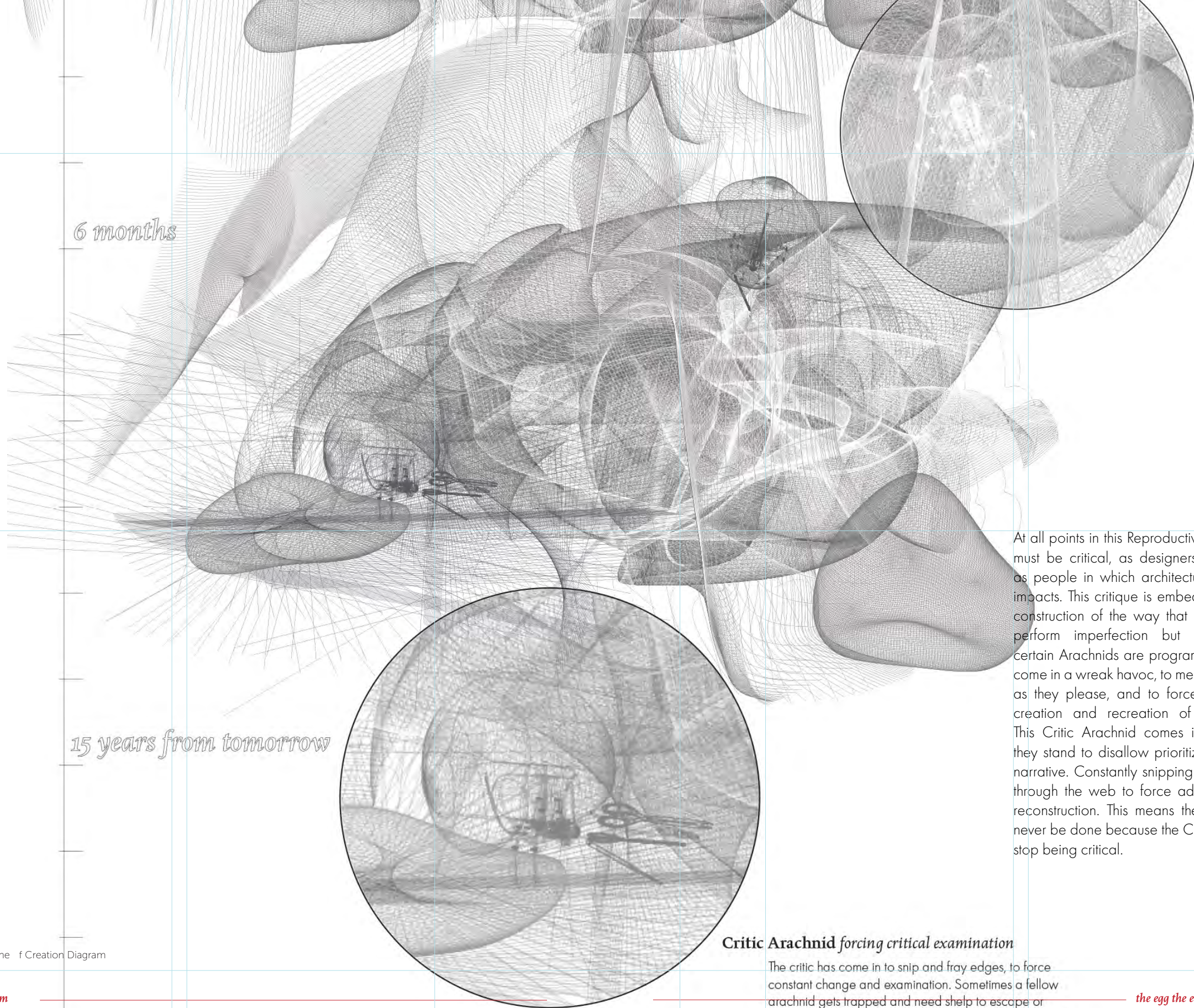
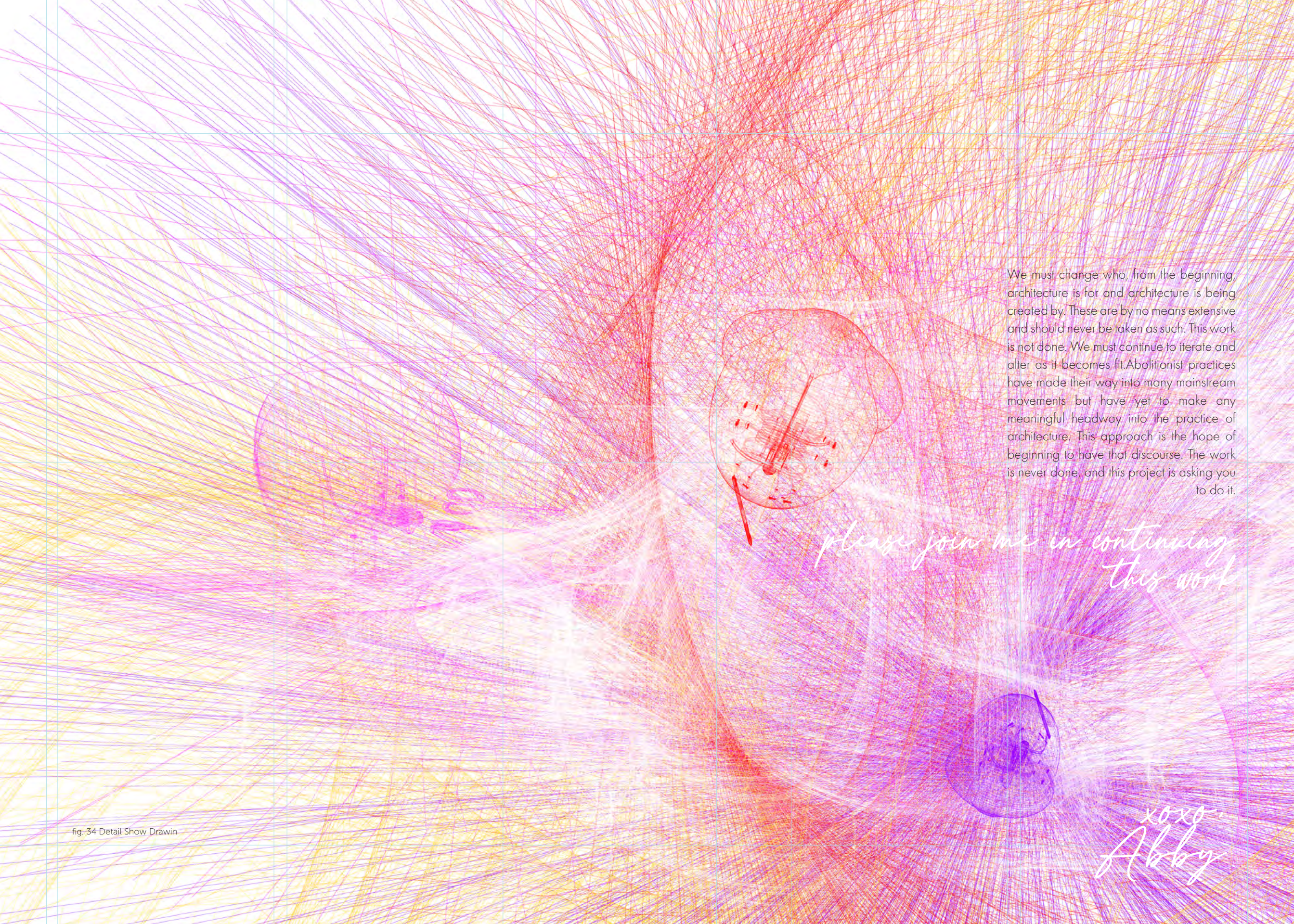


fig. 33 Timeline of Creation Diagram

At all points in this Reproductive System we must be critical, as designers, as citizens, as people in which architecture inevitably impacts. This critique is embedded into the construction of the way that all Arachnids perform imperfection but in particular certain Arachnids are programmed to only come in a wreak havoc, to mess up the web as they please, and to force the endless creation and recreation of the growth. This Critic Arachnid comes into question, they stand to disallow prioritization of one narrative. Constantly snipping and slashing through the web to force adaptation and reconstruction. This means the growth will never be done because the Critic will never stop being critical.

Critic Arachnid forcing critical examination

The critic has come in to snip and fray edges, to force constant change and examination. Sometimes a fellow arachnid gets trapped and need shelp to escape or maybe humans down below jsut needs a trim for the end of their blanket.



We must change who, from the beginning, architecture is for and architecture is being created by. These are by no means extensive and should never be taken as such. This work is not done. We must continue to iterate and alter as it becomes fit. Abolitionist practices have made their way into many mainstream movements but have yet to make any meaningful headway into the practice of architecture. This approach is the hope of beginning to have that discourse. The work is never done, and this project is asking you to do it.

*please join me in continuing
this work*

*xoxo.
Abby*



fig 5. Uncertain Journey, Chiharu Shiota

12 Eun-Ju,
"Weaves a
Wonderland"

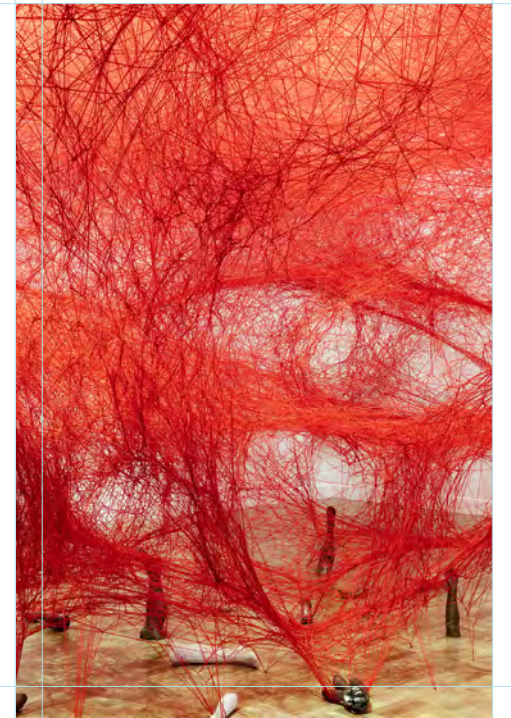


fig 36. A Presence Embodied, Chiharu Shiota

The installation works of Chiharu Shiota attempt to bring physicality to the intangible such as memories, anxiety, dreams, and silence. Her work brings life to the intangible presence within an absence after tragedy. She "talks about an individual that once occupied a place and then disappears"¹² through a physical manifestation of their absence. She marks this epoch and its influence on the rest through this web of red string. The string both vibrant from life and exploding in a moment of death. The life cycle is intertwined into this mapped art piece.

The string is entirely held up by other string. Layers and layers of emotions creating a kind of temporal space without the need for some other structure to uphold it.

Case Study 2

VIII

Could this process of creation, of architecture, be less about building one thing and more about the creation itself being a way to acknowledge and give space to mourn the tragedy and trauma and also be a way to heal?

13 Tamari & Yassin, "Framed/Unframed: Women Representations in Palestinian Art Practice"

14 Tamari & Yassin, "Framed/Unframed: Women Representations in Palestinian Art Practice"



fig. 7 Penelope from True Tales and Fairytales, Raeda Sa'adeh

The photograph was displayed in the Framed/Unframed: Women Representations in Palestinian Art Practice as part of a collection of work from female artists. The collection displayed, "changes in the intellectual and visual approaches underlying representations of the female form" 13. This piece in particular was part of a sub collection of work discussing the both collective and individual experience of loss and pain. Raeda Sa'adeh portrays the "story of 'Penelope' who sits amidst the ruins of her destroyed home patiently knitting from a gigantic ball of yarn".14 It holds senses of hope and resiliency despite and from the circumstance she is within.



fig. 38 Yarn Bombed Tree



fig. 39 Yarn Bombed Tank

Yarn bombing or “guerrilla knitting”, became a form of soft public protest as a way of beautifully placing the work that historically kept women imprisoned in the home on public display for public use. The creations have been placed in places as simple as public parks over trees and park benches, but have also been situated on contexts of political contention making a bolder more charged statement.

Knitting creates acknowledgement, visibility perhaps, but it is not a solution. There is no radical repair but maybe just some care. Care should be the start, the end and everything in between. This thesis should be if nothing else full of care where it has so often been forgotten.

Here, the feminine architectural process eliminates the underlying assumptions entirely by literally creating voids as memorialization. There are no underlying assumptions by not telling it what to be. This thing created relates the void to the explosion through a gentle process of creation. The thing is less about the thing itself and more about the process of making it, happening alongside, parallel to the healing of a city in need of the space to do just that. This new feminine process of architecture, in this case, is a reincarnating performance of creation. One that is open. It will be a decentralized memorial of sorts. It begins with a recollection and rerecording of the past and imprinting it on the site. Followed by the radical repair. Caring tediously for the hole and the void of what was lost so as to set up a foundation to be able to be reborn in the future. The process is slow as is healing.

The recovery and also the recognition comes from this subtle creation process. The gentle spindling of the spiders as they weave their way through the mess of what happened. Trying to navigate the turmoil, the trauma. They work slowly. Stringing together the events of the past, the events of the explosion, the events of the present, and eventually imagining events of the future. One cannot predict what the city may need but as we work to make something beautifully messy out of the chaos could something not be reborn? Regenerated? And possibly Reimagined?

This process is slow. While maybe this little refuge stands tall, glowing reflecting the current and previous events of the site, the growth of the cocoon from the steel of the site and the gradual repair of the earth itself won't be done for maybe decades, centuries.

The program is always radical care but evolves and transforms based on ever-changing needs of people and place. The present program cannot be known until it is birthed. But, the feminine space itself is a process or framework approach and menstrual empowerment through acknowledgment or non erasure, the non silencing,

Making visible what was already beginning to go unseen,
And completely rebirthing and regenerating what was.

"Does making proceed through the hierarchical assembly of preformed parts into larger whole, and these latter into still larger ones, until everything is joined up and complete? Or is it more like weaving a pattern from ever unspooling threads that twist and loop around one another, growing all the while without ever reaching completion?"

1 Grosz,
"Architecture
from the
Outside"
151-152

15 Ingold, "Of
Blocks and
Knots", 2013

16 Grosz,
"Architecture
from the
Outside"
169

17 Ratto,
"Critical
Making"
252

18 Ratto,
"Critical
Making"
254

Is making a matter of building up or carrying on?

In the latter there are initially no parts and no wholes. Rather the form of a thing emerges from the process itself, within a field of forces established through the engagement of the practitioner with materials that have their own inclinations and vitality"¹⁵

This reproductive system of architecture sets out to produce space that is permeable, that does not function as a finished object but rather as a spatial process. The thing does not claim to predict future needs, it cannot be the container of determined expectations, but instead as merely a facilitator of making space for the unpredictable futurisms that will occur in this place. "The thing is our provocation to action and is itself the result of our action".¹⁶ The thing does not remain fixed, it is a reflection of things being made. The site's existing conditions, materials, and events as well as the past's memories, infrastructures, and holding places, become the embryo that life proliferates from. The past and present do not disappear but become another layer in the accumulation of time and redefined collective memory. A construction of temporal space and spatial time is formed.

This idea of unrelenting questioning of design becomes an act of Critical Making. Matt Ratto in Critical Making: Conceptual and Material Studies in Technology and Social Life, is concerned with this process of making as being a "mode of materially productive engagement that is intended to bridge the gap between creative physical and conceptual exploration".¹⁷ A process of making that is not product oriented but process oriented, prioritizing the development of prototypes or captured moments rather than finding a singular solution. The prototypes imagery displayed in the end of this work is not final and cannot necessarily speak for itself but rather must be examined in conjunction with critical discourse and knowledge production that prioritizes justice and equity. The focus is on the act of creating itself rather than the prototypes that are constructed as an "activity and site for enhancing and extending conceptual understandings of critical socio technical [and political] issues".¹⁸

The thing grows out of the place of the explosion itself, maybe weaving into the site over time. It creates a relationship between the void, the loss, and the explosion. It is not trying to fill the void, one cannot just put a tampon in it, but to capture the past present and future in both the ethereal qualities and spatial implications.

August 4, 2020

5:40 PM

At 5:40 PM on August 4 workers began welding a broken door in a warehouse filled with ammonium nitrate.

6:00 PM

Around 6 PM, smoke was seen rising from the warehouse firefighters were dispatched to the port following alerts of fires ravaging the building.

6:05:15 PM

Within minutes, a small explosion was felt in the city alerting the rest of the people to a disturbance, but this was "regular" or at least not surprising. Small tremors could be felt fairly regularly from Israeli bombs and were all too common for many during the Civil War not too long ago.

6:05:30 PM

But within 30 seconds the biggest blast the city had ever experienced made its presence known.

6:05:45 PM

The nitrate exploded, shattering almost the entire city. Windows, cars, entire buildings, and people were ripped from the ground.

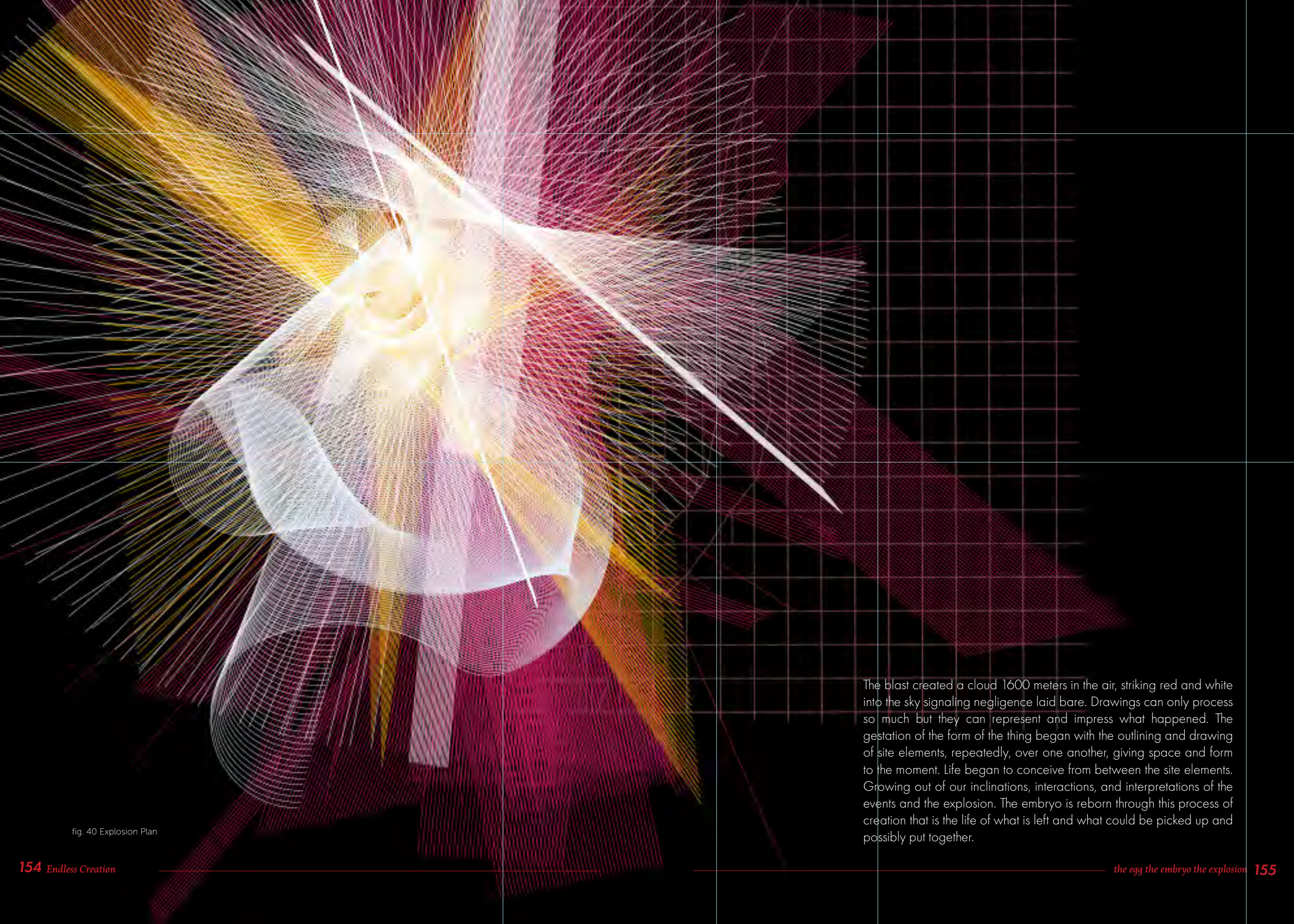


fig. 40 Explosion Plan

The blast created a cloud 1600 meters in the air, striking red and white into the sky signaling negligence laid bare. Drawings can only process so much but they can represent and impress what happened. The gestation of the form of the thing began with the outlining and drawing of site elements, repeatedly, over one another, giving space and form to the moment. Life began to conceive from between the site elements. Growing out of our inclinations, interactions, and interpretations of the events and the explosion. The embryo is reborn through this process of creation that is the life of what is left and what could be picked up and possibly put together.



19 Ingold, "Of
Blocks and
Knots"
2013

fig. 1 Va No VA Creation Drawing

There are two elements at play in this memorial, of sorts, one being the explosion itself, the literal moment that years of toxic masculine oppression exploded and violated the landscape, but also the void left behind. The void is the memory of the loss, of the absence of innocence lost, if there was any to begin with. Years of shrouded violence, oppression, and neglect were laid bare in forty five seconds.

So what is to be here?
How can we even begin to tell it what to be?

Possibly, "the form of the thing emerges from the process [of active discovery] itself, with a field of forces established through the engagement of the practitioner with materials that have their own inclinations and vitality".¹⁹ The spiders, my femininity and yours, are this life force of the materials themselves, born out of their continued strong will. The memorial is tethered to the site of the silo, of what was in the void and radiating away from the hole. And in this absence and loss is the collective memory that is important to recognize. This location of tether is the holding place of the power disbursed as this new life of the site.

To create a feminine space means to return to the very basis of what it means to create architecture and essentially start over. If what I have been doing is reconstructing everything we know about architecture and exposing it as the violent, oppressive perpetuator of toxic masculinity it seems as though a complete recreation of the fundamental way in which we approach architecture is necessary. Much like feminism, this cannot simply be adjustments within the already constructed framework. While we exist within the masculine framework, especially in this place, it does by no means imply that this is the framework we must be working with. A feminist architecture is not manipulating what is existing. That is working exactly how it was made to work. It is not broken. It is not flawed in its application, although arguably in its founding logic. A feminist architecture is abolishment it is not reform. We need a new approach.

This new feminine process of architecture in this case is a reincarnating performance of creation. One that is open. It will be a decentralized memorial. It begins with a recollection and rerecording of the past and imprinting it on the site. Followed by radical repair. Caring tediously for the hole and the void of what was lost so as to set up a foundation to be able to be reborn in the future. The process is slow as is healing.

Design Moment



fig. 42 Explosion Site rendering



fig. 43 S ft Landing Rendering

It can be a soft landing place to pay respects, to mourn, to be in the company of others who are also dealing with the trauma of the explosion. The spiders will take you to the crater, they will pick you flowe s to lay beside it. Or just hold your hand while you cry.



fig. 44 Healing and Embrace Rendering

It can make space for healing. For weaving your own stories into bracelets. The spiders can make you a room to drink tea and catch up with friends distanced. Give a spider a hug to release some serotonin on a rough day. Hug each other here.



As people and life heads, maybe a walk would be a nice release. Take a walk with friends through the spaces and walkways woven. Or maybe you need a ride. Hop on the back of a spider and they can take you where you need to go.



fig. 46 rest and Recover Rendering

After all this, take a rest. The spiders can make blankets and beds. The memorial can be a soft landing and a safe resting place. Get your sleep, we know it's hard.

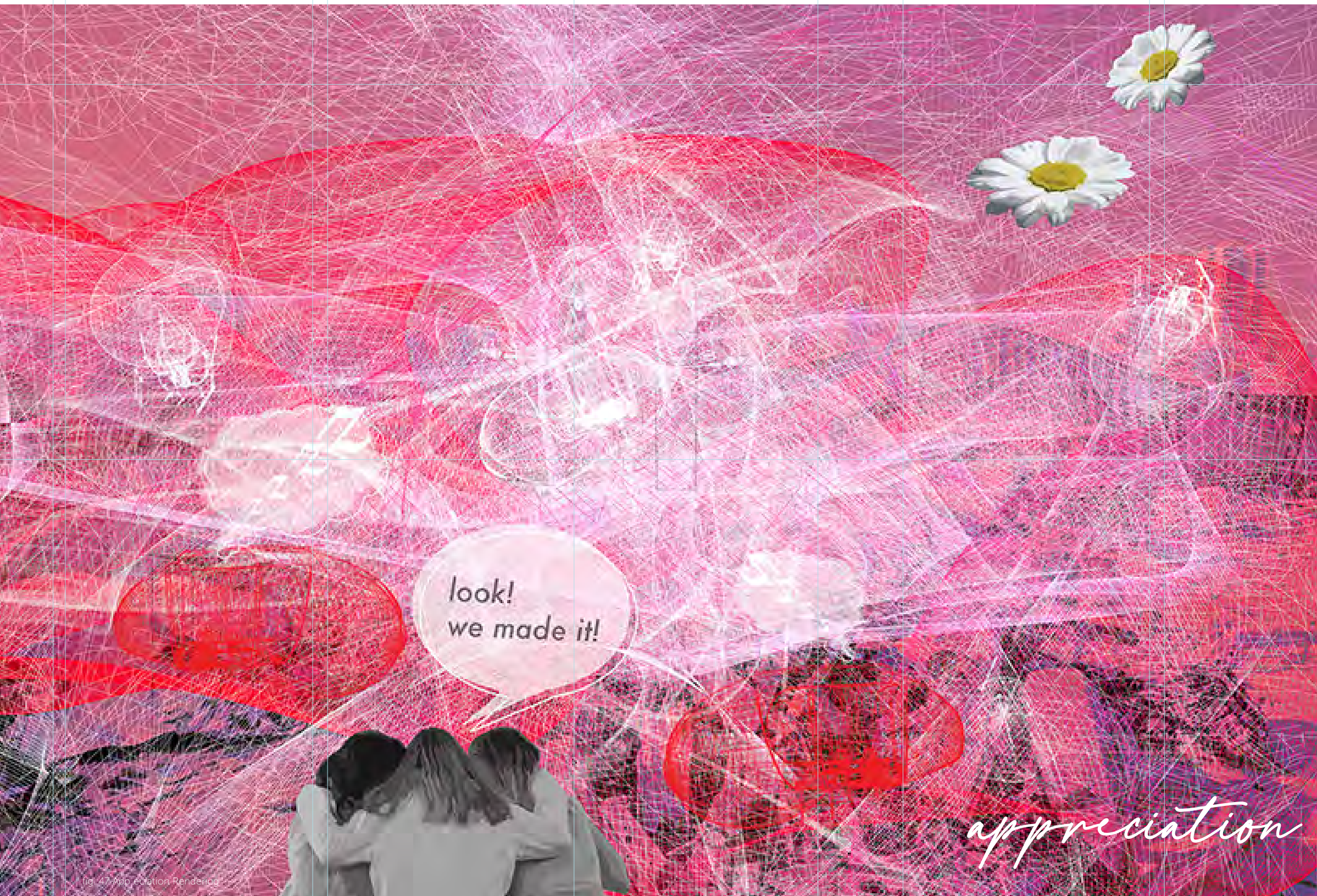


fig. 47 Appreciation Rendering

Sometimes your work, our work, the work gets too much. It overwhelms us or we get tangled up in it we are too close to see how far we have really come. We have done so much. We have put in the work and we are learning. But we are also alone. If you get too tied up your friends can be there for you, to cut you out and help you stand back and give yourself the recognition you deserve.



to the humans,

Take your time

fig. 48 © the Humans, Rendering

The spiders are not always what is needed. Today we recognize the loss, the subsequent trauma and sadness, but also the hope in tomorrow. It's just us. The spiders stepped out to give everyone space to sit in the moment.

The architecture itself is not female liberation. Architecture cannot alone empower women, but it can make space to allow for it. Architecture can and should turn inwards and question its own complacency in upholding these violent tendencies of the cis hetero patriarchy.

The making becomes a matter of carrying on instead of simply building up. A radically anti-functional architecture, an architecture that is both anti-authoritarian and antibureaucratic is given space to be born. The thing becomes a messy matrix of excess, of endless creation. The thing cares for the site parallel to a city healing.

to forever be continued...

fig. 49 Detail Show Diagram Drawin

*sincerely,
Abby*

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fig. 6 Abigail DeVore, Table setting for tea party, 2020.

fig. 7 Abigail DeVore, Collage of news articles on soy boobs, 2020.

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"Im NoT sOld oN thE TitLE"

"I keep asking myself, at what point does human behavior cease to be 'natural..'"

"I love the power of this statement."

"I'm all for preaching to your choir, but If you want to create a dialogue to educate people I think you lose some of your audience this way. I think the people you lose are the ones that need to hear you most."

"She is intentionally being offensive with this passage, I vote to say "fuck it I'm going to offend a lot of people" and she writes what she wants to write"

"a sort of zinger to close the passage to leave the reader with a taste in their mouths"

"love this gutter moment it really looks like the book's legs are spread and shes on her period"

"HAH I fuckin love this"

"!!!"

"end homes 2020 I want to go back to living outside"

"Godd\$*n this research essay is just making me realize the Greeks were crazy as F%^K"

"do it, you're not an impartial historian might as well speak your piece"

"this is taking me back to reading the help in middle school and being scarred by the detailed miscarriage chapter"

"abby its SO sticky"

"I experience menstruation too, I've been told I got grumpy as I got older"