People Are Important Too

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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ABSTRACT

Architects have the opportunity to foster relationships with people in a very interesting way, a way that only architects can. We are one of the only generalist professions left that has the chance to step back and see the greater whole behind the small window in front of us. However, in order to do this, we must not focus on architecture solely through the narrowed lens of designing and constructing buildings. We must redefine architecture. We must recognize and value our skills as designers and use them for a greater good. We must see ourselves as difference makers, impacting space and place. We must see people as important too.

In my thesis titled “People Are Important Too,” I take the opportunity to reflect on my personal “why architecture” belief system and educational experiences, while comparing that with the careers of three world renowned, socially responsible architects: Marika Shioiri-Clark, Liz Ogbu, and Santiago Cirugeda. In the analysis of these three individuals, I question the belief systems behind their architectural practices and how they are able to reflect these beliefs into the work they do, thus laying the ground work for me to understand what a future in community engaged architecture can look like.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Wes Janz, who served as my advisor for this project. Not only has he been instrumental in my educational experience at Ball State University and the College of Architecture and Planning, but he was also crucial in developing this project into a piece that I could learn from and find myself in. Without his help and extreme patience, I would not be where I am today, and “People Are Important Too” might still be a failed attempt at a design project.

I would also like to thank Nick Satterfield, my professional world mentor, who first instilled in me the realities of community engaged architecture during my internship at the architecture firm he works for in Louisville, Kentucky. From the onset of my internship, he pulled me into the exact kind of work I hope to pursue in my own career and showed me that architects can successfully engage the community, especially with the partnership of local organizations.
HOW DID I GET HERE?

Oh Man, Has My Thesis Been an Adventure

Graduating senior, honors student, thesis. All three go hand in hand. As an intimidated senior in high school, reveling over my acceptance into the Honors College at Ball State University, I was immediately receiving words of encouragement from teachers and mentors about this scary thing called a thesis that I would have to complete upon the culmination of my education. As a Freshmen, Sophomore, and Junior at Ball State, I marveled at the ideas of what kind of project I could do or paper I could write that would make the thesis process more enjoyable and less terrifying. Then, as a Senior at Ball State, reality hit, but only just a little, when the Honors College asked if I would be completing my thesis by the Spring of 2015, which was supposed to be my graduating semester. Thankfully after switching my major and affording myself another year of study, I would have another year to think about my thesis and figure out what I wanted to do. And so of course, I chose the path of procrastination. Because in all actuality, I had no idea what kind of project I could do or paper I could write that would accurately depict the lessons I have learned in my now five years of college. I did not have the slightest idea how one project or paper could be powerful enough to portray my crazy education journey. And yet, that was an expectation I had to meet, or so I thought. The pressure was on. But the fact remained: I still had no idea.

Maybe I should start with what I do know. Last summer, I had my first real life, adult world experience in the field that I have committed the last four years of my education towards: architecture. I was one of two architectural interns at Luckett & Farley, an architectural and engineering firm in Louisville, Kentucky. Nervous, anxious, terrified, excited, all of these are words that could have accurately described what I felt like when I started the summer. I moved to a new city, knowing as many people as I could count on one hand, and having not a clue what I was about to get myself into. New jobs are one thing. New cities, new roommates, no friends, and no idea how aggressive the drives are; now those are things that can scare you away from new adventures really quickly. But I was up for the challenge. Throughout my internship,
I engaged in a number of different project environments, working on everything from distilleries to nursing homes, and having responsibilities ranging from pre-design to post-production. However, it was not because of the traditional architecture work that I fell in love with the career I am pursuing.

As a part of my internship, I was paired with Nick Satterfield, a colleague and now friend, who is engaging in the non-traditional side of architecture work that fits under the umbrella terms of community engagement and social responsibility. I had the pleasure of meeting Nick during my time as a third year architecture student with Professor Wes Janz, and it was through discussions I had with both Nick and Wes, that I knew I wanted to pursue a career in socially minded architecture. Nick’s roles and responsibilities in the Smoketown neighborhood, one of Louisville’s most economically distressed areas, included master planning efforts, grassroots engagement, and graphic work for grant petitions. He has involved himself in a number of different local organizations and made friends with various government officials and workers to create a bridge between the community members and the community they want to develop for themselves. After explaining to Nick my interests in the type of work he is fulfilling on a daily basis, he immediately plugged me in in every possible way, so that my internship with Luckett & Farley would be truly rewarding and push me towards a career path doing the type of architecture I want to do. Therefore, I became involved with YouthBuild, a national organization with a chapter in Louisville that works with drug and alcohol addicted youth between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four to bring them off the streets and into the classroom, where they can prepare to take their GED exam and also learn hard construction skills, so that once they are done at YouthBuild, they can return into the community as productive members of society. YouthBuild finds value in the people that society has deemed undesirable and shows them that they have worth and value, if they are willing to work hard and first see themselves as important. Nick Satterfield sees worth and value in the work YouthBuild is doing as a community partner and non-profit organization, and therefore the relationship between the two makes form a strong bond that will help build Smoketown up. While the work I did was simply creating graphic imagery for their $1.4 million grant campaign, it was this grant that would allow YouthBuild to fully complete their Louisville campus. It is this campus where students will learn to be strong construction workers, pass their GED, and engage the community. It is these students that will invest back into the community of Smoketown. Among the basic lessons I learned: when one party or task seems insignificant, it is the chain of events to follow that prove its worth. Architects can make a difference. We just must be willing to reach beyond our typical tasks and have a little faith.

At the end of the summer, I approached Nick about his willingness to help me with my senior
honors thesis. At this point, I had also asked Wes Janz to serve as my advisor; however, I knew Nick’s advice working in the field would also be incredibly beneficial in developing my thesis into the best possible project or paper I could create. With both of them on my team, there was no way I could fail, as I was being afforded some of the best knowledge I could ever ask for. However, the success I would hope to achieve through my thesis most certainly did not come easy.

I began my thesis bright-eyed, ready to take on the world of architecture. In my original thesis proposal I wrote, “I would like to use this experience and base my honors thesis project in a continued relationship with YouthBuild Louisville and my coworkers at Luckett & Farley, to formulate a few small moments where architecture can make an impact on a community...There are two specific ideas in which I hope to explore how small movements can bring life back into a community. Those two ideas are as follows: a playground and an urban grocery store.” I actually think that quote can be pulled from my final draft of my original honors thesis proposal, because I also started wanting to work on a bus stop as well, in addition to the playground and urban grocery store. Three projects, one semester, and one thesis. Not only did I want to design the playground, urban grocery store, and bus stop, but I wanted to engage the students at YouthBuild by embracing the construction education they are receiving, and empower them to be the designers of their own community. My hope was to spend time traveling between Louisville and Muncie, hosting design charrettes at YouthBuild, and bringing their ideas back to my personal design drawing board. Before doing any of this though, I had lots of research to do.

And so I hit the books and scoured the Internet, searching for whatever information I could find about Smoketown. After all, I could not design for Smoketown without knowing the history of the neighborhood. Information was slightly hard to come by; however, I did not let that get in the way. I was determined to learn more about the community I fell in love with last summer. Thankfully, I came across the “Vision Smoketown Survey Report,” which provided information on the history, demographics, and desires of Smoketown Louisville. It was in this survey, that I realized a playground and urban grocery store both aligned with the needs and desires of the community. This was the justification I needed. Now to the socially responsible part.

From there, I tore through resources, trying to understand the significance and importance of community engaged architecture and socially responsible design. This would be vital in understanding why I was approaching design the way that I wanted to, rather than simply explaining the final product of my efforts. I need to understand the why, not the what. My project was not going to be the first of its kind, which meant there must be a knowledge base out there to provide me with further understanding of exactly what I was up against. I found articles on engaging youth in the design process. I found scholarly journals
regarding placemaking. I found resource after resource dignifying the idea of "socially responsible architecture." However, that is just it. Article after article, journal after journal, website after website; all of them saying essentially the same things. Placemaking is necessary in order for people to find pride in the places they live. Youth, who are typically forgotten, are important in order to really understand the depth and breadth of a project’s influence. Community engaged architecture concerns the opportunity to offer a voice to the people our architecture is serving. And the list of sentences, words, and phrases used to say these same things were repeated over and over in every article I could find. What a broken record.

After all of this research, I thought I would somehow be fulfilled. I thought I would have a better understanding of why I am so drawn to socially responsible architecture, and how this would affect the outcome of my project. I thought I would appreciate the direction of my thesis. But that was certainly not the case. Instead I was feeling empty. My research was empty. My project was empty. My reason for why I pursue architecture even felt empty. And yet that was the exact opposite feeling I intended to have more than halfway through my final semester of my college career at Ball State University. I had spent five years pondering what might come of the culmination of my education. Never did I think that culmination would end in emptiness.

And so it was back to the drawing board. Time to analyze why this project was not entirely satisfying the end of my education adventures. Did I spend too much time in research, and not enough time in design? Did I allow my doubt and fears to get in the way of what I wanted to accomplish? Did I not take the time to engage the students at YouthBuild soon enough? So many questions, with so few answers, all leading to extreme frustration. I felt like my head was spinning in circles, trying with many failed attempts to justify what I had spent two and a half months of my semester researching and creating. Where was I going to go from here? How was I going to recover in order to complete my last task as an Honors Student at Ball State University? Could I possibly portray my entire college experience in one paper or project, that I now only had a short time to finish?

And then I realized one of my many problems. I had taken on more than I could ever accomplish. I was holding my thesis to an unattainable expectation, with the challenge that I could design an urban grocery store, a playground, and a bus stop in one semester, all while engaging members of the community to select the sites for each project and participate in the overall design process. I thought that my thesis had to present a culmination of all that I had learned over the last five years, when in all actuality I simply needed to learn. And so now we have arrived at the second of many problems. I was not learning anything. In all of my research and all of my discoveries, all of my gained knowledge was not teaching me anything about how to actually engage members of the community in architecture or how to design with social responsibility in mind. After all of my digging, I had a
list of ways to engage the community, as if socially minded architecture has some sort of perfect formula to follow in order to be successful. But that is just it. People are not a formula, and so community engaged architecture can not be a formula. However, a formula was all I had come up with.

So with the new drawing board came a new approach. Scholarly journals and research articles could not show me what it truly means to engage people in the process of architecture and design with their needs in mind. Therefore, I would need to look at professionals in the field who engage local people and knowledge. Nick Satterfield’s career is constantly teaching me about pairing with local organizations to successfully engage those who want to make a difference in the community they live. Research on rising architectural professionals would show me how to make a living around the framework that people are important too, no matter where your project is located or what your project is. I could read many articles justifying socially minded architecture; however, none of this has true meaning unless someone is acting upon these ideologies. Marika Shioiri-Clark, Liz Ogbu, Santiago Cirugeda, Nick Satterfield. These are the individuals acting upon their beliefs that architecture can value people’s knowledge. These are the individuals laying the groundwork for a future in architecture that finds people important. These are the individuals who would teach me what it truly means to fully engage a community in design. So it is these people I would study.
LIZ OGBU
Social and Spatial Innovator with an Emphasis in Green Design

WHO IS SHE? Liz Ogbu is an activist, an urbanist, an environmentalist, and a designer. From the onset of her career, she has been the voice of challenged urban environments globally, fighting for social innovations that aim to impact underserved communities directly. She served as both an inaugural fellow at IDEO.org and the Design Director at Public Architecture. It is through these two world-leading non-profit design groups that Liz Ogbu has gained the most recognition and broadened her socially responsible architecture portfolio. From there she led design workshops at the Clinton Global Initiative Annual Meeting and founded her own firm, Studio O. Included in her socially responsible architecture endeavors are loyal clients and collaborators such as: Center for Sustainable Global Enterprise (Cornell), Jacaranda Health, Nike Foundation, HealthxDesign, envelope a+d, and Pacific Gas & Electric. However, she does not stop at educating and serving just her clients and collaborators. While Liz Ogbu’s work speaks powerfully to her passion for cultivating growth and advocacy in communities across the globe, her voice speaks just as strong. Ogbu has taught at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco, California for a number of years, in addition to holding faculty positions at UC Berkeley and Stanford’s d.school. It is through her education endeavors that Liz Ogbu shows her commitment to bringing socially responsible architecture into the classroom, teaching students to recognize the relationships between design and community involvement. She continued to push this educational envelope through her participation as a workshop leader at the 2012 Social Entrepreneurship World Forum in Rio de Janeiro; her publications in Places Journal, Core 77, Journal of Urban Design, and Metropolis; and her exhibition work at the Cooper–Hewitt National Design Museum, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and Rotterdam Viennale. To say she is well-recognized, well-versed, and well-noticed would be an understatement.

WHY ARCHITECTURE? School is intended to be challenging, thought-provoking. We pursue an education, not so that we are reassured in the knowledge that we already have, but to gain additional

"Since exploring the connection between social issues and urbanism has been part of how I have framed my understanding of architecture, it’s part of my designer DNA.

-Liz Ogbu ("Design Ethos")"
resources beyond our current capacity necessary to enter into the profession of our choosing. For Liz Ogbu, this is no exception. Just like many rising architecture professionals, the root of Liz Ogbu’s answer to the why architecture question came from her experiences in collegiate education. Ogbu received her Bachelor of Arts in Architecture from Wellesley College, a private, women’s liberal-arts college located just outside of Boston, Massachusetts. Wellesley College is a top-notch school in the sciences, specifically with a well-recognized engineering program. For Ogbu, who was previously aware of the challenges set forth to women in the male-dominated engineering profession, Wellesley College presented a unique opportunity to challenge existing stereotypes and pursue a well rounded education. "The ability to gain a strong liberal arts foundation is unique’...’And that same ability to link the social and the arts with the sciences is something that has also benefited my architecture training. I find that it’s allowed me to have a much broader definition of architecture and has served me well when I look at how design can engage more complex environments. In my work, I have to look at the world as a system, not silos. My education helped prepare me for that framework’” (Campbell).

Stemming from this education experience and combining it with her work as an inaugural IDEO.org fellow, Liz Ogbu addresses her further understanding of architecture as a professional and personal ideology through her TEDxTalk entitled “Why I’m An Architect That Designs for Social Impact, Not Buildings.” It is in this brief TEDxTalk that Liz Ogbu brings to life her architectural ideology as it has developed in the recent years.

through experience and the pursuit of global equality. For many architects, it is easy to describe the work they do on a daily basis in a few brief words. Some may err on the large scale of hospitals and educational institutions, while others pursue smaller scale careers in residential design and small businesses. However, for Ogbu, answering this question was rather difficult. “For me, for the longest time, this has actually been a hard question to answer. Usually I hem and haw, and then I often say I design community centers. Partly because a lot of my work is with communities, and so it is kind of true. And community centers is a typology that people can relate to, so they are like ‘oh yea, great, cool,’ and then we move on with the conversation. But the truth of the matter is, I actually don’t design community centers...I’m an architect that doesn’t design buildings. The things that I design, the things that I build are actually opportunities for impact” (TEDxTalks). This idea of designing opportunities for impact is up there amongst other phrases like public interest design, social impact design, and community based design. And yet rather than being empty phraseology used to elevate design above its actual intentions, Liz Ogbu has the perception of architecture necessary to create depth behind the words and the experience to prove it.

Further expounding upon the idea of designing opportunities for impact, Ogbu presents the idea of the three hats one must wear to design opportunities for impact. The first is that of the expert citizen, making room at the table for citizen experts. An expert citizen is one with training in a specific discipline, whereas a citizen expert is one with the experience of living and working in a specific community. It is because Liz Ogbu has a clear understanding of the difference between these two individuals and the knowledge they both present, that she is able to pursue successful community engaged architecture. At no point does she discredit the knowledge of the people groups she is working with, but rather she elevates their knowledge as important and critical in creating architecture. She values what they bring to the table, and therefore as herself an expert citizen, she makes sure there is room for their ideas to be heard. Next, she pursues the position of the storyteller. After hearing what the citizen experts have to say in regards to what they need or how design

must function to best serve them, Liz Ogbu makes sure that she is not the only person to hear what they have to say. In this role, architecture is no longer a position of designer, creator, and maker. Architecture is advocacy. Architecture is the voice shouting from the rooftops that there are people who need our help and need to be heard. Therefore, Liz Ogbu commits herself to tell these stories through her publications, TEDxTalks, portfolio highlights, and educational lectures. Finally, the role of the translator. "As for the translator hat...it's basically take the things that I hear when I listen at the table, and the stories that I know that I need to tell to create impact, and combining them into something that is a tangible reflection of all of that, that allows us to move forward with whatever social issue it is that I am trying to address" (TEDxTalks).

As an architect interested in community engagement, Liz Ogbu not only understands her role in the process, but also the characteristics of the people she is designing for and how definitions can greatly impact our success in designing with social responsibility. Often times, architects use words like "community engagement" and "designing for diversity" as highlights to what we hope to achieve, but often do not know how to define accurately in order to move forward. In an article co-written by Christine Gaspar and Liz Ogbu entitled "Using Our Words: The Language of Design for Equity," they write, "A common language is critical if we are to move beyond just doing good to achieving equity as well as to enabling accountability for how we practice and what we create" (Ogbu). The journey of the article presents a series of unaddressed


"Let me see if I can explain to you what it means to design opportunities for impact. It often means that I am wearing one of three hats: that of the expert citizen, that of the storyteller, that of the translator."

-Liz Ogbu (TEDxTalks)
terms in the design field that are significant in designing successful opportunities for impact, beginning with the simple-to-understand and ending with the more complex and least addressed. One of the greatest needs in community engaged architecture is the need for diversity, as it is believed “there are real barriers keeping talented people out of the field, and that we must work to reduce and eliminate those barriers” (Ogbu). However, we must understand that diversity goes far beyond the color of our skin, and rather involves ethnicity, sexual orientation, field of study, gender, socioeconomic status, type of expertise, etc. In addition to diversity, Gaspar and Ogbu address the differences between equality and equity, and how we must aim for equity in the end. Equality is access to opportunity and how it is distributed. Equity “is concerned not just with opportunity, but also with the barriers that make those opportunities unequal” (Ogbu). When recognizing the differences between these two commonly interchanged words, it is important to understand that the illusion of equality pales in comparison to the realities of equity. “Our work should also strive to create greater equity in society and to eradicate barriers that prevent some from accessing resources. It means that how we do the project and what the result of the project is really matters” (Ogbu). Finally, the ideas behind privilege and power come to fruition. Often times the stigma surrounding power and privilege prevent an open dialogue about what having these two traits means to both the designer and the user. However, there is an inevitability behind who has power and privilege and whether or not it is used for the greater good. “Privilege is an intense word, but it underlies everything we do in this field. The act of bringing a resource into a community that has not had access to that resource is entirely predicated on one group of people being privileged enough to offer that resource...However, as a field, that means that we are not training ourselves to responsibly and humbly enter a community with a frank discussion of privilege... Whether or not we seek privilege or power, we have it, and we have to address it” (Ogbu). So will we begin to address power and privilege for good or leave it as a topic of avoidance?

Although her language is appealing and her choice of descriptors for why architecture is fascinating, it is what lies at the core of it all that makes Liz Ogbu’s message as a socially responsible architect valuable beyond words. People. The reason she pursues a career of socially responsible architecture. The reason she challenges our architectural vocabulary and what words actually mean in relation to what we should be doing with our design skills. The reason for her why architecture. People.

HOW IS SHE FULFILLING THE WHY? It did not take Liz Ogbu long to realize her desire to make a global impact through socially responsible architecture, and therefore she placed herself in positions that would allow her to do just that. The project she is most well known for and that she discusses at length in her TEDxTalk is the Day Labor Station design and research she completed while being the Design Director for Public Architecture. Her cause: the hundreds of thousands of individuals who work a day’s labor for a day’s wages across the United States. Her solution: providing them with a sense of place that would give them a sense of value and worth. The work of a day laborer is typically not valued, not glamorous, and not dignified. However, among the conditions that causes their work to be less valued is the informal nature of the places where they meet and wait. Street corners, store parking lots, gas stations and convenience stores scream with signs “Day Laborers Here,” as these are the places they wait with the hope and anticipation of being hired. In the eyes of Liz Ogbu, this system is doing a complete disservice to the day laborers being hired in these locations, and therefore, she wanted to find a way to provide them with shelter and resources. “The structure is adaptable, based on the realities of the ways in which the day labor system operates. It provides a sheltered space for the day laborers to wait for work as well as community resources such as meeting space and classroom” (“Day Labor Station”). However, more important than the physical structure, was bringing attention to a people group that goes entirely unnoticed on a daily basis. Her project and her travels across the United States shed light on an issue we would much rather deem distasteful than recognize as an opportunity for impact.

In regards to her work as an inaugural IDEO.org fellow, Liz Ogbu worked as the designer, strategist, and human factors lead for a project with the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves. In this project, located in Tanzania, Ogbu worked on a team of individuals analyzing the effectiveness of cookstoves and developing ideas for products that could be sold with the cookstove in order to make them more effective and widely adopted. However, Ogbu and her team quickly realized that the cookstove as a piece of technology was not working successfully for the women in the communities they were engaging, and therefore no amount of new product designs could make the cookstove more marketable and adoptable. Therefore, the research and strategic planning had to take a turn from designing for the cookstove to designing for the cook. It came to a point that it did not matter that “Clean cookstoves have the potential to improve health by reducing exposure to smoke from traditional fires and stoves, improve

livelihoods through increased savings from reduction of fuel use, and benefit the environment through a decrease in emissions" ("Five Shifts"). What mattered was that design was not successfully serving the user, therefore their human-centered design methods proved the necessity of looking at the people first, and the product second.

SO NOW WHAT? Liz Ogbu is one of the world’s most renowned socially responsible architects. Her work and her ideas have taken her all across the globe, seeking out opportunities for impact and finding ways to create positive interventions in communities that are underserved, underrepresented, and undervalued. Her perspective drives the socially responsible architecture movement sweeping through architecture schools across the nation. When discussions of social and environmental justice arise in the classroom, it is almost impossible to avoid her TEDxTalk “Why I’m An Architect That Designs for Social Impact, Not Buildings.” On the outside, she seems flawless. However much of her work tends to have a sense of impermanence to it, if and when it is built. Her temporary structures and in depth research portfolios prove the benefits of socially responsible architecture, but is this enough? In her own words about the Day Labor Station Project, Ogbu says, “In terms of an architectural project, this was a bit of a failure. We launched it right before the economic collapse and although I flew all around the country at the invitation of cities who were really interested in this as a novel solution, when the collapse hit, as you are closing schools and cutting services, it was simply politically untenable to spend money on illegals” (TEDxTalks). If one of our leading examples of socially responsible architecture cannot find the means to build permanent projects with lasting and drastic effects on the communities she serves, how are the rest of us going to fare? Will we be able to make a lasting difference in the realm of advocating for people through architecture, or will we be left with installation pieces that only prove why socially responsible architecture works and not how it works long term?


WHO IS HE? Santiago Cirugeda is a hero first, and an architect second. He champions the idea of self-build architecture, weaving through legality issues to bring architecture to people who need it. He has committed his entire professional career to local activism and recapturing public space in Spain so that it may be returned back to the public. In every fabric of his architectural pursuits, Santiago Cirugeda puts people first, challenging the laws and restraints set forth by Spain’s ever-changing government system that has put people last. He completes these initiatives at a number of different scales. At a smaller, more local scale, Cirugeda runs his own architecture firm, Recetas Urbanas, which in English means “Urban Prescriptions.” Through this firm, Cirugeda is able to put pressure on the current standards of architecture in Seville, Spain, his hometown, to provide both legal advice and architectural services to non-profit or guerilla groups across the country that know what they need but are unsure of how to make it happen. For collectives across Spain, Cirugeda is the first person they run to in a time of need and unrest. On a larger scale, he is

"Contemporary architecture is all about 'what a beautiful building'... 'what a pretty project'... But architecture is more than that; it should be functional, cheap. It should be a reason to come together - and that's what we've done."

-Santiago Cirugeda ("Santiago Cirugeda")
one of a select group of individuals that founded the National Network of Collective Architecture Groups. Across Spain, there are architects just like Cirugeda that are working around the constraints of the legal system to provide resources to those who need it most, and it is through this initiative group that similar architects are brought together to collectively share advice, projects, and materials across the country. “A rebellion is underway. Led by a new breed of architect that puts people before icons. Architects using the tools of their trade to restructure their surroundings and redefine their profession” (Al Jazeera English). Rebel architecture is waving through Spain, and Santiago Cirugeda is the guerrilla architect at the forefront of it all.

WHY ARCHITECTURE? Some people get an adrenaline rush from riding roller coasters, cliff diving, or bungee jumping. Others love to watch scary movies, visit haunted houses, and chase major storms. For Santiago Cirugeda, his adrenaline rush comes from the illegal nature of his self-build architecture work, or so it seems. With each project he completes and each challenge he accepts, he also harbors all risk associated with operating outside construction and planning laws. He says, “When I see people preparing something, be it education, social, anything...if they’re doing it outside the administration - that’s my weakness” (Al Jazeera English). Unfortunately for the people of Spain, working outside the administration is a choice they are forced to make, as the government provides little to no resources for architectural needs outside the selfish nature of the banks. Fortunately for Santiago Cirugeda, this means the presence of guerrilla architecture is only continuing to grow, fueling his passions further and further. From urban skeletons of partially constructed buildings to crumbling and abandoned factories that deserve attention and revitalization, illegal architecture has the opportunity to grow and expand until the government finally takes notice. In Cirugeda’s own words “The decision to work illegally means a different approach. So we’re exploring self-building and other techniques on the edge of the law” (Al Jazeera English). The government has backed architects and collective groups like Cirugeda and Recetas Urbanas into a corner so far that there is no other choice but to fight back until they make a lasting difference. Cirugeda and others like him are even developing other uses for the sites where their guerrilla architecture is located, so as to further justify the presence of the movement they have created.

The decision to work ILLEGALLY means a different approach

They will stop at nothing to go unnoticed. “We didn’t ask for a construction license because the official procedures take ages. So we invented this self-building

workshop...to justify this not as a construction site, but as an education experience. We are still in legal limbo...” (Al Jazeera English). So many hoops to jump through and so much hard work to complete. Is this exhausting work? Definitely. Is there the chance of being arrested? One hundred percent. Is Santiago Cirugeda still determined to make Spain a little bit better of a place, in spite of it all? Absolutely.

Imagining a career riddled with uncertainty is something most architects would shy away from instantly. The only challenge many architects want to accept is how to design the most aesthetically pleasing building. On the contrary, Santiago Cirugeda strongly disagrees with the profession’s obsession with aesthetics. “Contemporary architecture is all about ‘what a beautiful building’... ‘what a pretty project’... But architecture is more than that; it should be functional, cheap. It should be a reason to come together - and that’s what we’ve done” (“Santiago Cirugeda”). For the community organizations and guerrilla groups Cirugeda works with, aesthetics mean nothing. These groups are fighting for their right to space and occupation of the built infrastructure in Spain. If at the end of the day they have a place to call home, regardless of what it looks like, that is what is most important. Therefore, Cirugeda uses recycled, low-in-cost materials as a way of maintaining relationships with these individuals, providing them with spaces they can then use to make the community a better place to be. They are easy to build with, and incredibly sustainable, therefore making it possible to provide these organizations with exactly what they need. Does this mean that the architecture Santiago Cirugeda creates is often aesthetically appealing? To some, no. “People tell me my architecture is ugly. Interesting - but ugly” (“Santiago Cirugeda”).

"When I see people preparing something, be it education, social, anything...if they’re doing it outside the administration - that’s my weakness.”

-Santiago Cirugeda
(Al Jazeera English)
Cirugeda”). However, it is not what it looks like that matters most. What matters is that Cirugeda is listening to the voices of the people who need his help and fulfilling those needs. In regards to his own architectural endeavors, Santiago Cirugeda says “So I call it ‘built jurisprudence.’ They’re no longer just ideas or wishes” (Al Jazeera English). Design becomes a reality, all thanks to Santiago Cirugeda’s willingness to work around the judicial framework set forth in Spain.

**HOW IS FULFILLING THE WHY?**

Because Cirugeda is consistently working around the confines of the judicial system in Spain, his projects are often impermanent and constructed in a brief amount of time, so that the structures are making a statement and being occupied before the government has a chance to shut down the operation. Once local officials are made aware of the projects Santiago Cirugeda and other collective groups are creating, they will most often come in and take them down. However, this is done only after members of the community have already seen what is happening and had the chance to participate in this guerrilla architecture movement.

Among his most famous works is La Carpa, otherwise known as the Big Top, which Cirugeda constructed alongside theater director Jorge Bifu Barroso. This creation, intended to be an independent art space that would constantly evolve and develop based on those occupying it, is no exception for Cirugeda when it comes to occupying left-behind pieces of land. “La Carpa was never really intended to be permanent, yet its creation required extraordinary self-sacrifice. Barroso, director of the Varuma theatre group, spent a year living onsite (in the araña) to secure their claim to the land: ‘It was pretty tough,’ he recalls. ‘I had no electricity, no water. I was being robbed every couple of days - it felt like I was in prison’” (De Sousa).

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While Barroso was making an extreme sacrifice that many would be unwilling to do, it did not go unnoticed. “The occupation allowed them to gain a preliminary land concession from authorities, and from there, La Carpa began to grow. By the time it closed, Barroso estimates tens of thousands had attended concerts, theatre performances, live music and workshops there” (De Sousa). So many lives touched, and all it took was a seemingly random collection of small buildings and temporary structures to make a difference. “Two second-hand circus tents, a two-storey building made from shipping containers, a skate ramp, and the iconic araña – another container, this one mounted on four, half-bent metal legs like a post-nuclear spider (certainly not your average office space)” riddled the site with excitement and spaces to harbor new, artistic talent (De Sousa). Each of these separate components is representative of the temporary nature of Cirugeda’s work; however, even though the structures are thrown together in a short amount of time, this does not mean that the thinking is casual or limited. The araña, or Spider, is a window into the idea of occupying empty space, but in an elevated manor so that the empty space on the ground still remains. As a unique building typology, the Spider shows the possibilities of lifting certain spaces off of the ground, so that there can be free movement underneath or within. Not only does the Spider create an opportunity for turning unwanted land into reclaimed public space, but it can be assembled and disassembled in just under twenty-four hours with the help of only a few sets of hands. “The Spiders have the capacity of being installed and uninstalled in one day. With just two people, one construction stair set and a medium size crane, it is easy to construct it. However, it is recommended to do it with more friends since the experience and the action of doing it are worth it” (“Spiders”). Although the structural system appears complex, it is clearly explained in project information sheets provided by Recetas Urbanas thus enabling others to replicate it quite easily.

If they’re doing it outside the administration – that’s my weakness

While La Carpa has a purely artist space feel to the overall occupation, the Nest allows for both bringing the artists to the space and then providing them with shelter. “What distinguishes the Niu from all the other spaces belong to the Bolit – as well as from all the other institutional spaces related to artistic practices – is that it works not just as an exhibition and production space, but also as a temporary artistic residence (for national and overseas artists invited by the Bolit for short


“When I see people preparing something, be it education, social, anything...if they’re doing it outside the administration – that’s my weakness.”

-Santiago Cirugeda
(Al Jazeera English)
stays). The immediate consequence of this action is that the operating hours does not restrict the Niu, an aspect that results unusual for an institutional space (“The Nest”). While the temporary structure is mainly for research and intervention, having the artist residences presents a window of opportunity not previously available to the Bolit. As if the structure itself was not already interesting enough, considering that it was located on the rooftop of a former police station in La Rambla, the coordination with the local governments made for a rather fascinating story. “The most experimental and greatest achievement was not to install the structure and the 4 modules on the balustrade of an old building; it was to solve, in just one day, all the paperwork and processes related to the responsibilities that the City Hall of Gerona demanded from us, due the disputes between the political parties. This left the team of Recetas Urbanas, the whole responsibility for the legalization of each of the interventions that were related to the project, including the ones for the developer, the public supervisor and the self-builder (“The Nest”). Everything fell on Santiago Cirugeda and Recetas Urbanas, which meant that parts of the project did not get to come entirely to fruition. The artist residentces were not completed as planned, the functioning length of the project was shortened to one and a half years, and the neighbors around the project repeatedly attacked Cirugeda and the project in general.

Cirugeda has one of the most exhausting careers in architecture out there, and for what? A used car and rented apartment are all he has in his name. He is nationally renowned for his work in countries across the globe, except the country he calls home. He is in a never-ending uphill battle, fighting against the government that has taken everything away from his people. Cirugeda said it best himself. “Wouldn’t it be easier to do a normal job? You do your work and you get paid...but it wouldn’t fill your life. Neither your personal nor your political life” (Al Jazeera English). So he continues to fight.

However, what I find most striking, and quite frankly the most alarming, about his career is that long days and sleepless nights are never validated in any government change or judicial restructuring. We say that architecture can make a difference, but can it? We believe architecture has the opportunity to provide hope and healing to those who need it most, but is that actually possible? With a career like Cirugeda’s, it seems as if inevitably the answer is no. In order to change the profession, architects must stand up for what they believe in. And yet, it seems as if Cirugeda is shouting to the point of having no voice, and no one is responding. This rebellion that is underway in architecture needs to grow stronger. Cirugeda cannot fight the government alone. He needs all the help he can get. And those coming up in the profession right now, those like myself, must be willing to step up to the challenge. Because people need our help.


MARIA SHIOIRI-CLARK

Inspire the Next Generation through Empowering Global Change

WHO IS SHE? Marika Shioiri-Clark is a rising architecture professional who utilizes her skills as a designer and her desire to impact communities globally to battle inequality in health and wellness across the world. Shioiri-Clark received her Bachelor of Art in Urban Studies from Brown University and then pursued her Masters of Architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. In addition to attending two of the most prestigious universities in the country, Marika Shioiri-Clark was a summer fellow at Public Architecture in 2007, a US National Commission for UNESCO Traveling Fellow in 2008, an Ideas Scholar at the Aspen Institute in 2009, and an inaugural fellow at IDEO.org in 2011. Her experiences are expansive and her motivation is evident, but what is most important is what she has done with the resources provided to her in order to make a difference.

WHY ARCHITECTURE? In her TEDxTalk entitled Empathic Architecture, Marika Shioiri-Clark addresses the very core of her reasons for “why architecture” as it relates to her general philosophy on the profession currently and how it is looking upwards towards holistic social responsibility. She says, “The idea of empathic architecture. The word empathy is you know, trying to put yourself in someone else’s shoes, how do you sort of understand someone else’s needs. You might say, well doesn’t most architecture or all architecture try to do that? I would actually say probably not” (TEDxTalks). Immediately, she pokes holes at what the profession should be doing and has forgotten along the way. Although she recognizes the emptiness that can be present in pop-architecture-culture phraseology like empathic architecture, she also addresses the power behind movements like empathic architecture and our purpose for architecture and design today.

Well doesn’t most architecture or all architecture try to do that?


justice. "I've heard architects say that we are the last 'generalist' profession - able to look critically at different types of problems from a holistic, macro-level perspective. I like this way of thinking about an architect's skill set: With this sensibility architects can design buildings to have a stronger impact on people beyond aesthetics and physicality. I see a real potential for this design perspective within the social sector, where the power of architecture is just being realized" (Holmquist).

In addition to recognizing architecture's need to change and mold into a profession for the people, Marika Shioiri-Clark also poses the option of architecture by the people. Currently, the juxtaposition between architecture, designers, and users exists in such a way that the architect and the user are on opposite ends of the spectrum. When addressing the most important question "who is my client," typically the response is me first and in the center, and the greater society later. Shioiri-Clark believes that the architect and the user exist in the same position, if first we employ methods of empathic architecture and community engagement.

**designer = user**

Within the ideology of empathic architecture, Shioiri-Clark says "The designer is actually taking time to embed themselves within the community that they are designing for, and therefore they know their client because they are actually the client themselves as well" (TEDxTalks). It is this statement that best sums up the work Marika Shioiri-Clark is doing to become a global difference maker.

**HOW IS SHE FULFILLING THE WHY?**

During Shioiri-Clark's time as a graduate architecture student at Harvard GSD she became incredibly frustrated with her inability to relate to what she was doing and why she was doing it. Amidst the talented design students and world-renowned professors, architecture school at Harvard was one in which the focus

was on creating beautiful objects, rather than beautiful places and spaces for people to occupy. Her personal philosophy pushed through, and her desire to look for something beyond Harvard GSD grew. Therefore, when school could not provide the opportunities necessary to pursue architecture with meaning and purpose, Shioiri-Clark found her own ways.

After completing her first year of graduate school at Harvard GSD Marika Shioiri-Clark and a few of her classmates founded MASS Design Group, an architectural non-profit dedicated to creating global change. After conversations with Partners in Health, Shioiri-Clark became the lead designer for the Butaro Hospital project in Northern Rwanda, pictured above, MASS Design Group’s first project. However, not only did she become the lead designer. She also became a member of the community. Shioiri-Clark decided to take time off school from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and move to Northern Rwanda, so that she could be constantly surrounded by those her architecture would be serving. During her time working on this project, Shioiri-Clark lived on-site. By living in such close proximity to
the construction site, she was able to develop in parallel both the designs of the hospital and her relationships with the users and local fabricators. Shioiri-Clark describes this on-site living as the most critical decision they made in the design process, as it allowed her and her classmates to engage and design with the community needs first. It was also through these relationships that Shioiri-Clark was able to take into consideration lessons that would have otherwise been incredibly difficult to learn had she not invested herself in the culture of place.

The decision to live, work and breathe amongst the Northern Rwandans was not the only facet of the Butaro Hospital project that portrayed the philosophy by which Shioiri-Clark and MASS Design Group focused their efforts. After all, this was not simply a live and learn type of effort. This was a live, learn and do project. The first issue to be addressed through the Butaro Hospital project was the design of Rwandan hospitals as it related to the spread of airborne diseases, specifically tuberculosis. Due to the overwhelming trend of double loaded corridors, with the hallways functioning as waiting spaces, airborne illnesses readily festered in the tight gathering areas, making transmission easy. This made for a true design problem. Through simply eliminating all rooms on one side of the hallway and allowing waiting spaces to be on the exterior, where fresh air passed fluidly, Shioiri-Clark’s design drastically reduced the spread of tuberculosis. In addition to cutting down the spread of airborne illnesses, the design generated for the Butaro Hospital directed construction materials and methods to the local culture. “To design the hospital we made use of local materials – such as volcanic rock from the Virunga Mountains – and labor intensive practices to deliver appropriate and sustainable design as well as stimulate the local economy through employment. This approach reduced the facility’s price tag to roughly two thirds of what a comparable hospital would typically cost in Rwanda, saving 2 million dollars in construction fees but also providing 4000 jobs” (Murphy). However, it was not just providing jobs and cutting costs that made employing the locals a truly remarkable process. It was the local dedication to perfecting their craft and working to create better building practices for the future of Rwanda that were incredibly inspiring to Shioiri-Clark, her team, and all those looking from the outside in on the Butaro Hospital Project. The architectural design was important. The construction methods were important. But the people were important too.

SO NOW WHAT? With all of this in mind, the question becomes so what? We have an activist architect who is constantly working towards global empowerment and health improvement, a hospital that created a lasting impact on the spread of airborne illnesses, and a community that thrives in their building construction methods all because a group of individuals invested in advancing their craft. It is hard to look at any of these results and find

However, for arguments sake, there are a few holes to be poked in the career Marika Shioiri-Clark is living through. She is a graduate of Brown University and the Harvard Graduate School of Design, both schools with very high prestige and even higher price tags. How does a first year graduate student have the finances necessary to leave graduate school and move to Northern Rwanda? Could it be possible that she is capable of doing the work she is doing, simply because she has resources provided to her through a wealthy background? Are her actions reflective of a pure heart for people, or a pity generated through financial wealth? So many questions, with maybe no answers.

I cannot speak intelligently to her financial standing during the time she left Harvard GSD to move to Northern Rwanda; however, I can speak to the current non-profit she founded and her living conditions with her husband in Cleveland, Ohio. Vanity Fair wrote an article about Marika Shioiri-Clark and her husband Graham Veysey titled “How One Couple Turned a ‘Toxic Corner’ of Cleveland into a Development Hotbed.” The general position of the argument was that Shioiri-Clark and Veysey moved into the Cleveland Hingetown neighborhood to “develop and cultivate their ideal neighborhood” (Chilcote). As a result of their development efforts, Hingetown was no longer riddled with prostitutes and drug dealers, but instead public art, bike racks, new apartments, and families.

So how is it that someone who works so hard for global equality would disregard the drug dealers and prostitutes that society deems as “less than human,” so as to create the ideal neighborhood? Is equality only a social responsibility elsewhere, but not in our own homes? The Butaro Hospital in Rwanda represents an immersion into culture that is indicative of how architects can fully engage communities. The Hingetown Neighborhood Redevelopment represents a community endeavor gone astray. We must be careful how we use our skills and strengths as designers, so that our ideas do not become out of control.


MY EDUCATION: VERY SMALL NUTSHELL
Education can be a really funny thing. In the moment, it is horribly frustrating and full of hurdles. It is time consuming and seems to take over every facet of your life, all for a few drawings and a pristine model. And a social life? Yea that practically does not exist, and spending time with friends usually means late nights in studio. Or at least that can be the feeling during the days as a student in the College of Architecture and Planning. I have stacks of beautifully printed boards and a collection of dusty models to show for the last four years of my college career. Sure, my grade point average and my academic standing say that my education has served me well. But beyond these physical objects and letter grades that represent weeks of hard work and dedication are the hundreds of lessons and crazy adventures that define my education. In the moment, these lessons are hard to recognize. The crazy adventures only seem crazy because life is going one hundred miles an hour while we are standing in the middle trying to catch up. However, as I now stand back and reflect on the last four years of my time as an architecture student in the College of Architecture and Planning, I realize that the moments of frustration are actually moments of strength and the challenging hurdles are actually rewarding lessons.

THE DINOSAUR PODS... As a second year student in the College of Architecture and Planning, I was just beginning what would be a long road to discovering my passion within architecture. At this point, I was still a little hazy on what architecture even meant, as I had spent the last few years of my life believing I was going to be a graphic designer. And now in one fell swoop I was going to be an architect instead? Let the major change and identity crisis sink in. I stumbled around blindly for quite some time, knowing that I just needed a grounded studio professor to show me what architecture is all about and what it means to design a building. Deep breath, I was going to be just fine. Or not.

I received my first studio professor, the one that I was told would have a great impact on how I would approach architecture throughout the rest of my college career. Gernot Reither. I received my first studio project, the project that
would help me challenge my architectural knowledge. Research wood cells. And then, I had my first panic attack. How exactly did researching wood cells for six weeks have anything to do with architecture? Better yet, how could this research on wood cells effectively help me design a farmer’s market in Downtown Muncie? I was beyond frustrated for most of the semester. On a daily basis I questioned why I would ever leave the safety net of the art department to come over to the College of Architecture and Planning to pursue a degree in architecture. I pondered how what was I was doing would actually be appropriate in the professional work force.

And I still could not figure it out. So I continued to push through, research wood cells, and design a farmer’s market. The struggle bus drove me all the way to the end of the semester and straight into a brick wall of confusion and fear that I had changed my major to the wrong thing. To show for the semester of struggle and chaos, I have what I call my dinosaur pods, and the dozens of iterations I went through in order to reach this conclusion for a farmer’s market. Diagrams, drawings and renderings all attempted to explain the mess inside my head, with some success.

Although I worked diligently, fought with my professor, and shed blood, sweat and tears over my first ever architecture school project, what I was left with was incredibly empty. I spent an entire semester focusing on good design, and was left with these mediocre forms that I could only justify through their relationship to wood cell generation. I focused so much on design that I forgot about the people that would be occupying the spaces underneath and within my design. I narrowed my eyes to the lens of good architecture, only to toss by the wayside the clientele of this farmer’s market. I ignored the existing building fabric, and instead generated what I could only fathom as being good design at the time. But what is “good design?” A completely subjective pairing of words that we stamp our projects with based on aesthetics? A title we proclaim when we create a space that is structurally sound? Good design could be a lot of things. My dinosaur pods were not any of those. However, good design or not, there was another lesson to be learned, and that was the significance of research. Never would I have been able to accomplish what I had, had I not valued the importance of sitting down and delving into research before picking up a pencil or computer mouse. As architects, we need to understand the place, the people, and the project we are designing for. Although I disregarded the place and the people, I found the
project I was designing through a rigorous six weeks of generating knowledge on the development of wood cells. It was this level of research discipline that would carry me into my future years in the architecture program. Did I adopt Gernot Reither’s eye for design and style for graphics? No. Did I walk away still learning a lesson that would impact my future? Absolutely. For that, my semester was at no point in time a waste, but rather the first of my exciting challenges to come.

It was during my third year as an architecture student that I really started to discover what architecture meant to me and how I could design in the way I knew I was capable of. I have always had a passion for people and serving them with every fiber of my being. I participated in “physical labor” mission trips, where I engaged in construction projects to serve the community with whom we were sharing the Gospel. I volunteered at both the local Boys and Girls club and nursing home, with the hope of putting a smile on someone’s face each and every day. I served as a member of the Executive Council for the Ball State University Dance Marathon for two years, benefiting the children and families at Riley Hospital for Children, and providing them with the resources necessary to run the Palliative Care Program. None of this is to boast about my volunteer service or brag about my ability to serve people. All of this speaks to my personal beliefs that people are important and people should be heard. People are just my thing. Through both of my studio professors, Wes Janz and Olon Dotson, I learned how architecture can speak to the notion of people being important too, and I just knew I had found the perfect way to combine my two biggest passions: architecture and people. However, these lessons and discoveries did not come easy, and they were certainly not outwardly obvious.

Wes Janz assigned us with the first task of our third year in the architecture program: immerse yourself in the solid waste stream of Muncie, select something, and do a material study. Many of us took this challenge quite literally. I went dumpster diving, and my best friend stood on the outside of the garbage bin and watched. It was fascinating what we could find in the dumpsters of Downtown Muncie. The things people are willing to throw away. Styrofoam sheets, antique
bricks, you name it, we probably found it. First lesson of the semester thus far: do not wear flip-flops into a dumpster unless you are willing to pay the price for whatever you step on. Apparently I was willing to take this risk, and I most certainly paid for it in the form of contributing to the solid waste stream by leaving my flip-flops behind. Oh well. The best part was yet to come. After a week of digging and donations, I found myself the proud owner of eighteen different folding chairs. Some were clearly from church basements, and others had a rich history starting at a volunteer fire station. Regardless, these folding pieces of furniture served as the gateway for my investigation into the solid waste stream. The only additional item I afforded myself was 50-pound black zip ties. And so the playing and researching began. I started by unfolding all the chairs and stacking them into what I determined could only be defined as sculptural art. I zip-tied them all together, and brought Wes into the hallway to show him my proud creation. Needless to say, this was not exactly what he was looking for. So I cut all the zip ties and tried again, this time focusing on the folding chairs’ ability to work in unison. I created a folding row that, if looked at really abstractly, could be some sort of operable building skin system. I did not work out the logistics of this technique, but I was pretty confident I could make it work. Weeks of investigation led to an extreme fascination with the solid waste stream and what it can represent.

For our next assignment, Wes tasked us with the design of a public
restroom facility. We titled the project Number 1, Number 2. Yep, I am not kidding one bit. Classmates were designing a facility for the Center of Urban Ecology in Indianapolis and constructing an urban classroom at Arsenal Tech High School, while we were designing a bathroom. Pretty glamorous, right? In addition to designing a public restroom facility, we also had to pair it with an additional program that would be more likely to bring people to the building. These requirements started to develop the project into something I could work with. Before designing any initial design concepts, we had to make a decision. We had to choose where we would site our public restroom facility. Our choices: our hometown or the largest slum in Mumbai, India – Dharavi. While many started to challenge themselves with the task of designing internationally for a slum like Dharavi, I reverted back to my hometown. I developed both projects for awhile, and teetered between the two, hope I would be able to make a decision; however, I eventually went with my gut, and my gut said to stick to my hometown of Greenfield, Indiana, and so that is what I did. And I had the perfect site in mind, or what I would soon come to realize would be perfect. As a child I participated in 4H and spent much of my summer free time at the county fairgrounds. The standard route of the annual 4H Fair Parade went past a mobile home park just beyond the fairgrounds. I cannot begin to count the number of times I drove past this mobile home park. However, it was more than just a mobile home park. It was the place many of my students at the Boys and Girls Club called home. After deciding that I wanted to pursue the idea of play and engaging students on a playground structure as my additional program, the mobile home park full of kids became the ideal location. In addition, I came to believe that the lessons learned from my solid waste studies could be of benefit. Although I did not source recycled materials, I sourced local knowledge as a means for construction, a method, like folding chairs, I had never thought to engage. Adjacent to the site of the mobile home park is a facility that repairs and maintains the parts and pieces necessary to construct water towers. Never in my many years of participating in the 4H Fair Parade did I ever take notice of
this facility, and yet it has been there the entire time. So what would be more perfect than a play structure built from the same material used to create water towers and by the people who spend everyday of their life doing it. Immediately, the ideas started flowing and I produced a series of drawings and diagrams illustrating this play landscape that engaged the multiple facets of play. For six weeks, I engaged in the design of this playground and I could not have been more proud of the outcome. Or could I have been?

I received a lot of praise for this project. It is the closest I have ever come to fully employing the ideals and methods of socially responsible and community engaged architecture. However, if given more time, there are many ideas I would I could further explore. I assumed things about the people, the place, and the process as they would affect my overall design, and therefore, do not have what could be a fully developed solution. I created what I believe would be an easy-to-assemble structure based on the knowledge of the people that work at the water tower maintenance facility; however, I did not ask them about their skills and I did not specifically seek their expertise, I just anticipated that they had it. So to say there is room to grow would be an understatement. If I could pick one project from my undergraduate degree and expound upon it with enough research and validation for design so that it could be built, this would be it.

GROWING GREEN...To end my senior year, I participated in a design build project. For the first time, I
would get the opportunity to see something that I helped design come to life, and I could not have been more excited at the onset of Spring Semester. When Professor Tim Gray told us in the Fall Semester of 2015 that we would be creating the design documents for a mobile greenhouse, I stepped up to the challenge as if it was any other standard, studio design project. Yes, we had a real client who is an urban farmer in Indianapolis. Yes, we were running our studio like an architecture firm, calling businesses for product information and organizing tasks in teams, of which I served as the general Project Manager. Yes, we had a grant of just under $50,000 to use for construction. Still, the project felt like anything else we had completed in the College of Architecture and Planning; a project that we would pour our heart and soul into that would never actually be built. However, this would not be the case. This time, we would get to see our dreams become a reality. We stared bright eyed at the equipment in the Design Build Lab as we realized that our hands and these tools were all we had to make our dreams come true. There was no time to be intimidated by the grandeur of our design vision. We had to jump in, and learn along the way. What I was not expecting from this entire process was the attention to detail that building a greenhouse required, and the dependency on other people and companies in order to get tasks completed. Obviously putting different materials together to create an end product would be vital to creating the solid structure that is our greenhouse. However, as I stand back and look at the greenhouse as a whole, there are moments that we never could have prepared for and details that we never could have fathomed necessary. It was a learning curve to overcome along the way, but one that highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the entire studio in order to jump hurdles and move on to the next task. As for the dependency on other people and companies in order to get tasks completed, it was imperative that we formed strong relationships with those providing us with materials, and place orders in a timely fashion. Even if all fourteen students were ready to get work done, it is not
possible to get that work done if the materials were not sitting right in front of us. So we continued to learn, continued to challenge ourselves, and continued to overcome obstacles, all in the name of having a mobile greenhouse to deliver to our client at the end of the semester. And that is exactly what we would do.

However, we missed something along the way. We created an incredibly powerful building typology, and yet we failed to tap into its immense potential as a socially responsible work of architecture. During the previous semester, I had done significant research on the presence of food deserts in Indianapolis, specifically in the areas surrounding the Center for Urban Ecology on Butler University’s campus where the greenhouse will be located upon completion. Unfortunately, on the east side of Indianapolis, the availability of fresh fruits, vegetables, meats and cheeses is incredibly scarce, with the only accessible food source coming most commonly from convenience stores. Because of this food shortage, the opportunities presented by urban farming initiatives speak to a powerful message that the community can sustain itself and grow out of lack of available resources. I researched the Compass Green Project, an outreach greenhouse initiative that goes around to schools on the West Coast, teaching students the importance of urban farming and how to grow your own fruits and vegetables. Therefore, I saw the possibilities of a fully mobile greenhouse early on. However, for some of my classmates and my professor, seeing the greenhouse as an outreach initiative only served as a glamorous way of portraying the greenhouse in a new, positive light. This need for social responsibility did not bleed into every aspect of design, with the shelving system being the most prominent of issues. While our shelving system is entirely fabricated by hand and based on the module set forth for us through the dimensions of the planting trays, the shelves lack the capacity to be in position and holding plants while the greenhouse is driving down the street. Therefore, the potential for a fully mobile, outreach greenhouse is completely eliminated, as all plants and shelves must be removed and strapped into place before travel. So what should present itself as an opportunity for guerrilla architecture to intervene where food is needed, is instead left with the laborious process of removing and repositioning the interior before moving. We were so close, and yet so far.
SO NOW WHAT? I had a professor that used to ask us this question all the time, even stamping our assignments with this question circled. I am reminded of this question now as I have reflected on what now seems like a much larger nutshell of my education and the work of many prominent socially responsible architects. When I compare my education to those who are leading the field of community engaged architecture, my experience pales in comparison. I am no Marika Shioiri-Clark, with the ability to take a year off from the Harvard Graduate School of Design to move to Rwanda and build a hospital with the locals. But that is ok. I am not Santiago Cirugeda, living through constant legality vs. illegality concerns. But that is ok. I am not Liz Ogbu, traveling the country from city to city on the city’s expense, just to talk about the potential of a day laborer station. But that is ok. If I led the exact same lives as Marika Shioiri-Clark, Santiago Cirugeda, and Liz Ogbu, then I would not be uniquely pursuing my own perspectives on architecture. While these individuals are incredibly knowledgeable and have career paths that can be learned from, there are groups of people that they have not yet reached and knowledge bases they have yet to tapped into. There is still plenty of work left for me to do. There are still opportunities out there that architecture students or professionals have yet to explore. There are still people that need to be valued.

So from these individuals and my own education, I have learned that I must push forward, constantly changing my own perspective and never wavering what I believe. I have discovered that by moving to Detroit upon graduation, I will be faced with endless opportunities to see architecture grow and give to a city that has had the life sucked away. I must say “yes” to any of these opportunities, and soak up like a sponge any chance I get to simply explore the possibilities of architecture. If there is one thing these individuals—Marika Shioiri-Clark, Santiago Cirugeda, and Liz Ogbu—have in common, it is their willingness to always say “yes.” No group or project is too unreachable, no project too large or small. “Yes” is always the answer, because people are always important. If I were to stay stagnant in my outward approach to a life of pursuing architecture, then there are groups of people that may stay stagnant in their current conditions, without anyone ever valuing them as important too. If I were to walk away from a career focused on fighting social and environmental injustices right now, our future in architecture may never be fully challenged and revised. If I were to give up right now, there would be people that would not be heard. People deserve to be heard. People are important too.

PEOPLE DESERVE TO BE HEARD
PEOPLE ARE IMPORTANT TOO
WHY ARCHITECTURE?
WHY DID I DECIDE TO PURSUE ARCHITECTURE?
Bethanie Martin

Whenever I tell people I am an architecture student, the initial response is always the same. "Wow, isn't that hard," I hear. I usually just shrug my shoulders and explain that architecture is a different kind of hard. I remind the person asking the questions that studio is not a scary place, but rather the hallowed grounds where all design projects begin to come to life. I try to convince them that little sleep and multiple all-nighters is just our way of grasping what our hearts want to design and what our minds set forth as a limit to structural integrity. And after all the justification, I still hear echoing back, "yee that still sounds hard." So we somehow reach the same conclusion we began with, and that is this: majoring in architecture is hard.

Before I have the chance to grapple with this most common misconception that I encounter on a daily basis, the next question comes. "Well if majoring in architecture is so hard, why did you decide to pursue it?" The "why architecture?" question is one no practitioner or student ever wants to answer. In response to the impending arrival of Jeanné Gang to Ball State University to speak about her world-renowned architecture portfolio, one student said, "I hope that no one asks her how or why she got into architecture. No one cares." This statement struck me, and not in a good way. Why is it that we cringe at the thought of hearing why architecture? How is it that we manage to live almost every day focusing on what we do and not the why we do it? This very issue is addressed through Simon Sinek’s golden circle. The idea of the golden circle revolves around how we approach what we do, commonly as a limit to structural integrity. And working from the exterior ring of "what" and working towards the innermost ring of "why." Often times, many will never reach the why because we start with the what and how first.

"At its core, engaging social issues in architecture and urbanism is about us embracing a human-centered approach to design; creating dialogue with and learning from beyond the design disciplines; having a willingness to not only be a designer but also instigator, listener, facilitator and storyteller among other things; and being willing to tackle – and even fail at - these challenging issues."

-Liz Ogbu
("Design Ethos")
According to Sinek, most people function under the mentality of what first and why later. However, what separates a good leader from that of a great leaders is their ability to recognize the why first. “Every single person and every single organization on the planet knows what they do, 100%. Some know how they do it … but very very few people or organizations know why they do what they do. And by why I don’t mean to make a profit. That’s a result. It’s always a result. By why I mean what’s your purpose, what’s your cause, what’s your belief Why does your organization exist? Why do you get out of bed in the morning? And why should anyone care” (Briginshaw).

What’s your cause?
What’s your belief?
Why should anyone care?

So with the support of Sinek’s argument, do architecture students and professionals oppose the why architecture question because we would rather talk about what we do and how we do it? Or could we perhaps fear that we do not have an answer for why architecture? For some, unfortunately the latter may be true. Architecture may be nothing more than a means to make a profit. For others, the pursuit of architecture comes at a cost of creating what is beautiful before what is necessary.

For me, architecture is about people. I value people. I always have. I believe it is crucial to combine the skills of design and humanity, so that a bridge may be built between architecture and social justice. Architects have the opportunity to foster relationships with people in a very interesting way, a way that only architects can. We are one of the only generalist professions left that has the chance to step back and see the greater whole behind the small window in front of us. However, in order to do this, we must not focus on architecture solely through the narrowed lens of designing and constructing buildings. We must redefine architecture. We must recognize and value our skills as designers and use them for a greater good. We must see ourselves as difference makers, impacting space and place. We must see people as important too.

After much consideration, many life experiences, and an eye for observing the people and places around me, this is the general understanding I have come to determine as my why architecture. By no means is this philosophy developed in its entirety. It is, though, the best representation of who I am as of right now, which I can only hope will evolve and grow over time.


