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Social Design Lab Conference

DESIGNING THE SOCIAL

Interrogating what “the social” constitutes in the field of architecture, Designing the Social explores its philosophical, material, spatial and pedagogical limits. For its inaugural conference, the Social Design Lab (SoDL) at the National University of Singapore looks at how the social is activated through design, specifically how the raw material of social life might be transformed into accessible and actionable design frameworks.

The speakers will delineate and debate how “the social” is shaped through multiple, and often contradictory, design practices. These practices involve the cultivation of communities, care and repair infrastructures, organisation of action-based collectives, and the visualisation of such practices through documentation and display. We ask how architecture, design and social practices can collectively manifest new forms of sociality. We seek diverse modes of belonging, and identify creative modalities of care in today’s complex urban and ecological milieu.

DESIGNING

THE SOCIAL

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

8:00-8:30 AM	Registration
8:30-9:00 AM	Opening Address Associate Professor Lillian Chee
9:00-9:30 AM	Panel 1: Reworking Broken Systems
9:30-10:00 AM	Professor Hélène Frichot: Lessons in Planetary Expressionism and Social Becoming
10:00-10:30 AM	Professor Lori Brown: Taking Action for Change: Feminist Methodologies and Feminist Spatial Justice
10:30-11:00 AM	Nancy Levinson: Repair as Social Design
11:00-12:00 PM	Tea Break
12:00- 1:30 PM	Panel Discussion: Moderated by Assistant Professor Dorothy Tang
	Networking Lunch

1:30-2:00 PM	Panel 2: Designing Through Lived Space
2:00-2:30 PM	Dr. John K.C. Liu: Reimagining Community Design
2:30-3:00 PM	Ar. Marianna Janowicz: Inclusive, public, democratic. Social Design in the practice of Edit.
3:00-4:00 PM	Professor Peggy Deamer: Organizing/Work
4:00-4:30 PM	Panel Discussion: Moderated by Assistant Professor Joshua Comaroff
	Closing Speech Professor Jeff Hou

REWORKING

BROKEN SYSTEMS

ROOMS FOR BIRTH, STONE
QUARRY ART PARK, 2025
PHOTO: LAURA REEDER

IMAGE CREDITS: LORI BROWN



GRAFFITI, LONDON,
ATTRIBUTED TO BANKSY.
[MAGNUS D VIA FLICKR UNDER
LICENSE CC 2.0]

IMAGE CREDITS: NANCY
LEVINSON



"LOVE LETTER TO
BALTIMORE," A MURAL BY
ARTIST SCOTT POWERS,
ADORNS A WAREHOUSE FOR
RECLAIMED MATERIAL IN
SOUTH BALTIMORE. [PHOTO
BY BRENT STURLAUGSON;
COURTESY OF BRENT
STURLAUGSON]

IMAGE CREDITS: NANCY
LEVINSON



(SPEAKERS)

PROFESSOR HÉLÈNE FRICHOT
PROFESSOR LORI BROWN
NANCY LEVINSON

(MODERATOR)

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR DOROTHY TANG

LESSONS IN PLANETARY EXPRESSIONISM AND SOCIAL BECOMING

PROFESSOR HÉLÈNE FRICHOT

Keywords: Planetary Expressionism, Forms of Expression, Creative Practice, Social Becoming, Affect Theory

On a planet suffering profound duress – as coral reefs collectively express their sadness though mass bleaching events, as lively urban compositions are razed to the ground, as collective enunciations of the social fall mute – I ask: how might we learn with planetary expressionism to make our repairs and practice the arts of maintenance? In fits and starts, the world expresses itself. Expressionism is the movement that explicates, that animates, that unfurls myriad natureculture compositions.

Expressionism, in Gilles Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, articulates the relationship between substance, attributes and essence: "substance which expresses itself, attributes which are its expressions, and the essence which is expressed."

Deleuze further insists that "the essence of substance has no existence outside the attributes that express it": expresses, expressions, expressed – expressionism might be situated as the motor of a collective social becoming.

Expressions are the agitated mixtures of material bodies entangled with conceptual flights of thought unfurling as a fabric of immanence. Between sadnesses and joys, expressionism and its spectrum of changeable affects require an ethico-aesthetics that can lend itself to situated acts of creative practice and political engagement.



BIRTHING IN ALABAMA: DESIGNING SPACES FOR REPRODUCTION INSTALLATION, MAKING HOME DESIGN TRIENNIAL, COOPER HEWITT SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM, 2024-2025

My research practice focuses on pressing political and social concerns and ways architecture can be involved in responding. Central to my scholarship is the intersection of power relations that directly influence spatial and social relations. For this talk, I will discuss two areas: first, feminist methodologies in architectural practice, with practice broadly defined, and will discuss the recently published *The Bloomsbury Global Encyclopedia of Women in Architecture, 1960-2020*, with Dr. Karen Burns, our theoretical and political motivations, as well as our aspirations for the project. Second, I will discuss feminist spatial justice with particular focus on reproductive healthcare and reproductive justice through my scholarship and advocacy, examining abortion clinics and more recently, birthing centres.

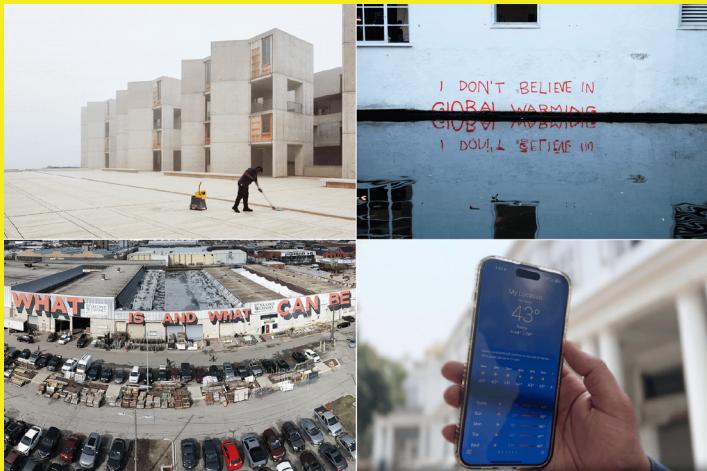
Through both types of spaces, I work with providers to both raise awareness of the challenges doctors and others encounter providing care, the influence of law and policy, and ways in which, as an architect, I have worked to respond in collaboration with those on-the-ground.

From the beginning of my research career, my scholarship and advocacy have been and continue to be motivated by ways to expand architecture's role in responding to some of society's most pressing issues and the continued absence of women's contributions to the built environment. By taking on one of the most politicised spaces—reproductive healthcare, and specifically abortion clinics—my work requires the discipline of architecture to become politically engaged and responsive. I am deeply committed to design praxis where my scholarship has real-world application for change. This is what motivates my feminist methodologies and feminist practice.

Keywords:
Feminist Methodologies,
Spatial Justice,
Reproductive Justice,
Women

REPAIR AS SOCIAL DESIGN

NANCY LEVINSON



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SALK INSTITUTE, 2016. [PHOTO BY LEONID FURMANSKY; COURTESY OF LEONID FURMANSKY]; GRAFFITI, LONDON, ATTRIBUTED TO BANKSY. [MAGNUS D VIA FLICKR UNDER LICENSE CC 2.0]; WEATHER APP SHOWING TEMPERATURE AT CONNAUGHT PLACE, NEW DELHI, MAY 2024. [@INOLDNEWS | MANON VERCHOT VIA FLICKR UNDER LICENSE CC 2.0]; "LOVE LETTER TO BALTIMORE," A MURAL BY ARTIST SCOTT POWERS, ADORNS A WAREHOUSE FOR RECLAIMED MATERIAL IN SOUTH BALTIMORE. [PHOTO BY BRENT STURLAUGSON; COURTESY OF BRENT STURLAUGSON]

In the past decade, "repair" has become a motivating force in design pedagogy and practice, as architects everywhere seek to respond to planetary climate crisis.

Places Journal has published widely on the subject, including the series *"Repair Manual"* and *"Field Notes: Repair."* These series explore a challenge that is at once philosophical and practical, impossibly large and acutely specific: How might professions premised on growth and consumption — new buildings, new landscapes, new cities — adapt to the exigencies of repair, reuse, and degrowth?

Drawing on themes and issues from these series, I will focus on three scales of repair — on repair as a project, involving the renovation of individual buildings and landscapes; on repair as a paradigm, understood as a new framework for organizing pedagogy and practice; and on repair as a politics, entailing the interconnection of professional practices with public policies and programs in order to achieve large-scale social and environmental change.

Keywords: Repair, Reuse, De-growth, Climate Crisis



THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE
LANDSCAPE RENOVATION PROJECT
AROUND THE AIRPORT TERMINAL
IMAGE CREDIT: JOHN K.C. LIU

DR. JOHN K. C. LIU

AR. MARIANNA JANOWICZ

PROFESSOR EMERITA PEGGY DEAMER

(SPEAKERS)

DESIGNING THROUGH LIVED SPACE

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
JOSHUA COMAROFF

(MODERATOR)

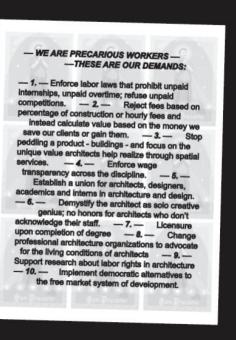


YILAN SZEYUAN AIRPLANE
HANGAR - POWER OF
REPETITION IN GROUP
STORYTELLING.

IMAGE CREDITS: JOHN
K.C. LIU

D.A.M.P. (DRYING AND
MOISTURE PERFORMANCE)
SHOWN AT THE DESIGN MUSEUM
IN 2023. FELIX SPELLER,
2023.

IMAGE CREDITS: EDIT
COLLECTIVE



THE ARCHITECTURE LOBBY
MANIFESTO (GRAPHIC DESIGN:
SEAN YENDRYS, 2014)

IMAGE CREDITS: PEGGY
DEAMER

REIMAGINING COMMUNITY DESIGN

This presentation will be in four segments dealing with the current thinking on community design from a reflection of over thirty years of practicing social engagement in planning and design.

The first segment is a short story about design action empowered by local knowledge in a small fishing village. Without any intervention by outside professionals, fishermen created one of the most comfortable and beautiful places on the dike of a river.

The second segment is the experience of organizing for community empowerment by a multidisciplinary team at the National Taiwan University Building and Planning Research Foundation. It will focus on the connection between professional participation and community participation.

DR.
JOHN
K.C. LIU

Keywords:
Community Design,
Social Engagement,
Community Empowerment

The third segment will present three cases each addressing a specific issue in community design. They are collective storytelling, reciprocity and mutuality, and designer-user interface. This discussion will demonstrate the significance of the “social” in community design.

The fourth segment will summarize an argument for an empowered socialite as a method for community design. This will include issues of collectivity, non-linearity, wholeness and problem-solving actions and sustainability of community power.

Moving forward, “community” is propositioned as the focus of design action requiring new thinking on engagement methods that have relied mostly on individual participation.



MATZU CHINBE FROG AS A COMMUNITY
MEDIATOR VS THE ROLE OF THE
PROFESSIONAL PLANNER/DESIGNER.

INCLUSIVE, PUBLIC, DEMOCRATIC.

SOCIAL DESIGN IN THE
PRACTICE OF EDIT.

From a three person hoover to public spaces co-designed with teenagers, Edit's projects usually aim to include architecture's users - either in the design process, the outcome or both.

Borne out of rejection of self-referential design, which is made by and for designers, we are instead interested in engaging the general public and learning from the ways people use, adapt or appropriate spaces.

Talking through some of Edit's projects: the Gross Domestic Product, Laundry Day, Purchese Street Open Space and D.A.M.P. I reflect on Edit's methods and our approach to social design. Just as design has the power to make reproductive work invisible, through the planning of cities and homes which deprioritises sites of care and reproduction, design also offers tools to interrogate those everyday practices that are ripe for reinvention.

Edit's design research practice has examined practices such as cleaning or doing laundry, questioning who does it, where and on what terms. In the next chapter of this research I turn to London's disused 1000 communal laundry rooms, thinking about how design can activate those sites and engage the public in a conversation about London's history of shared and social infrastructure for domestic work.

Keywords:
Reproductive Labour,
Laundry Rooms

AR.
MARIANNA
JANOWICZ



D.A.M.P. (DRYING AND MOISTURE PERFORMANCE) - AN INSTALLATION ABOUT THE ISSUES OF UNHEALTHY INDOOR ENVIRONMENTS IN THE UK, SHOWN AT THE DESIGN MUSEUM IN 2023. FELIX SPELLER, 2023.

ORGANIZING/ WORK

PROFESSOR EMERITA PEGGY DEAMER

Reimagining “architecture” as a discipline that is personally rewarding and socially relevant takes work.

Organizing/Work is an examination of both the organizing of architectural work and the work of organizing itself. Through the lens of The Architecture

Lobby, the activist organization arguing for the value of architectural work, the talk looks at “architecture” at three different scales: the worker, the profession, the discipline. The talk proposes that if these three entities can be reimagined, architecture might fulfill its proper role as steward of the built and climate environment.

Keywords: The Profession, Architectural Education, Architectural Work, Organizing, The Institutions of Architecture



PROTEST AT AIA NATIONAL CONVENTION IN
PHILADELPHIA, 2015;
PHOTO: PEGGY DEAMER



IMAGE CREDITS: EDIT COLLECTIVE,
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)