

galt.

issue 02: breaking

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Preface

galt. publication is a student-run, peer-reviewed annual journal dedicated to publishing student work in the context of the contemporary architectural discourse. Its mandate is to bring together the voices of students at schools of architecture across Canada with designers, activists, professionals, and academics through a format that lends credibility to these conversations. The journal is curated and edited by a collective of students from the University of Waterloo School of Architecture.

We publish galt. as guests on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishnaabeg, and Haudenosaunee Peoples. The Waterloo School of Architecture is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land granted to the Six Nations (Haudenosaunee) by the British Crown to honour their alliance during the American Revolution, and as compensation for the loss of their territory in what is now New York state. The tract extends ten kilometres on each side of the entirety of the Grand River, from its source near Dundalk, ON to its end at Lake Erie.

Our journal's namesake—Galt—identifies the community that we as students live and work in. The town of Galt is one of three names given to this land through the settlement and erasure of Indigenous Peoples from this place. Initially established as Shade's Mill in 1816, the town was renamed Galt in 1827, and presently exists as part of Cambridge, ON since 1973. The town of Galt was named after John Galt, a Scottish author and the first superintendent of the Canada Company, which was responsible for colonizing and settling much of southern Ontario in the early nineteenth century. It is especially important to acknowledge our place as settlers on this land, in a country where forms of colonial violence against Indigenous land and bodies are perpetuated to this day.

As students of architecture, we understand the unique opportunity we have to engage with the people and the land we design for and with. It is in part because of this changing and expanding discourse that the theme of our second issue explores 'breaking' in architecture.

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Where should architecture go? How should architecture expand its breadth, its reach? What fringes should it explore, and which divergent states should it claim? How can we reconceive of the role of architects and architecture?

galt. in conversation with

Malkit Shoshan

[begin interview excerpt]

[00:11:45] Julia: Can you speak about your process as a designer dedicated to advocacy? How does that play into your day-to-day work compared to the traditional architecture office?

[00:12:13] Malkit Shoshan: I think the first difference is that my practice is centered on a non-for-profit model instead of the common design practice that is for-profit and commission-based: We research and identify certain socio-economic, ecological, political concerns that are manifested and facilitated by the organization of the built environment; we engage with communities and find tangible and diverse ways to funnel all sorts of resources into this issue. Once we decide to engage with a topic and initiate a project, we conduct preliminary research, fundraise and usually begin a long process.

Often we don't really design spaces; we design processes, showcase alternatives, advocate toward policy change, mobilize different parties toward change.

For instance, we can work with policymakers and empower them with tool-sets, visualizing alternative spatial strategies that can challenge or change the status quo. Often, we feel that our primary role is to stimulate the imaginations of people to conceive space in different ways. We don't always use drawings, especially when working on policy recommendations. We use words that contain in them ideas about space and institutional culture; for instance, in the past years, we were continuously

analyzing the impact of UN missions in cities across the world. At the end of its operations, the UN begins a process of liquidation of assets. In our recent reports to the UN, we changed the word liquidation to re-purposing. Liquidation of assets insinuates a culture of doing, of having no accountability toward the materials left behind by UN agencies. Repurposing, however, may indicate the need to think in relationality considering time (past, present, future); users (successors, communities, local agencies and so on); functions, usage, etc. It enforces greater responsibility for consequences. Changing one word might seem like a small intervention, but it can lead to big changes.

[00:16:17] Kobi: So tying back to that, how can architects be at that table when there are discussions about policy-making? How can we demonstrate that we're not just a contracted service, but we do have the agency to effect change on a bigger scale, to be in that political arena, or affect a policy?

[00:16:45] Malkit Shoshan: It's hard work. It requires dedication to a cause and a commitment to a project. What we tried to do is, on the one hand, be idealistic, and on the other hand, be very pragmatic. Although we have visions, although we make violence and systemic segregation visible through our designs, we also try to identify what are the possible ways to create change. It means navigating real-life complexity (users, politics, finance, incidents, etc.). It means not being sterile and hermetic in the way we engage with

Fig. 1: The colour catalogue - materials, textures, furniture & more

The colour catalogue illustrates a masculinized palette noted throughout an analysis of *Playboy*'s various bachelor pad interiors. Darker and muted natural tones were a common thread amongst the various designs and material advertisements of the magazine. Hugh Hefner was obsessed with 'masculinizing' the house and landscape down to the last detail. He wanted to de-domesticate and defeminize it in order to create a 'manly paradise' accentuated by noble elements (which, according to Hefner, were marble, dark timber, bronze, stone, and the like) and technological accessories. Cut-out from *Playboy*'s multiple 'modern living' articles, these materials and furnishings are recurrent gender signifiers that reinforce an association of power and nobility to masculinity. Here, there is a breaking down of the materiality and colouring of the spatial objects that form the gendered architecture of *Playboy*. In order to understand the normalization of gender signifiers as it relates to architecture, we must first disassemble its parts. Through forming this catalogue, it became clear that what *Playboy* was putting forth was a variety of aesthetic codes that stressed an engagement with consumerism and display, which altogether delineated very specific gender stereotypes. These aesthetic outlines were integral to *Playboy*'s 'new-and-improved' version of masculinity—a type of masculinity that was far from the traditional husband-family-man role. The regular interior designs, although 'chic and elegant' at first glance, incorporated an iconography

of status and power to underline the masculine and heterosexual integrity of the archetypal 'bachelor pad'—the main commodity of consumption and display being women.

Fig. 2: An evidentiary catalogue of Playboy's interiors

This log provides a visual analysis of *Playboy*'s bachelor pad interiors. In the dismantling of its hedonistic and sexist designs, it became strikingly evident that these spaces harness female sexuality and corporeality through an interaction of various spatial and visual relationships. The most common pieces in these spaces included chairs, sofas, tables, consoles, and electronics. The simplicity of form emulated the very essence of modernity—machine-like simplicity, smoothness of surface, avoidance of ornament—as a symbol of the precision and (supposed) functionalism of a growing technological age.

We can compare this to the language of theatre. What *Playboy* put forward was a theory of gender and sexual identity as determined by the theatre, where gender and sexual identity are performed.

Likewise to Beatriz Colomina's theory of the theatre box in Villa Müller¹, the Playmate's body becomes the focus of an intricate performance of moves and techniques executed by the Playboy, with his designer objects and information technologies as his props, in his aim to reveal her sexuality; she is the object of display in his spectacle. In this spatial performance, an interaction between Playboy and Playmate, subject and object, viewer-viewed, remains at play. In unpacking gender biases implanted in architecture, we must consider the



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