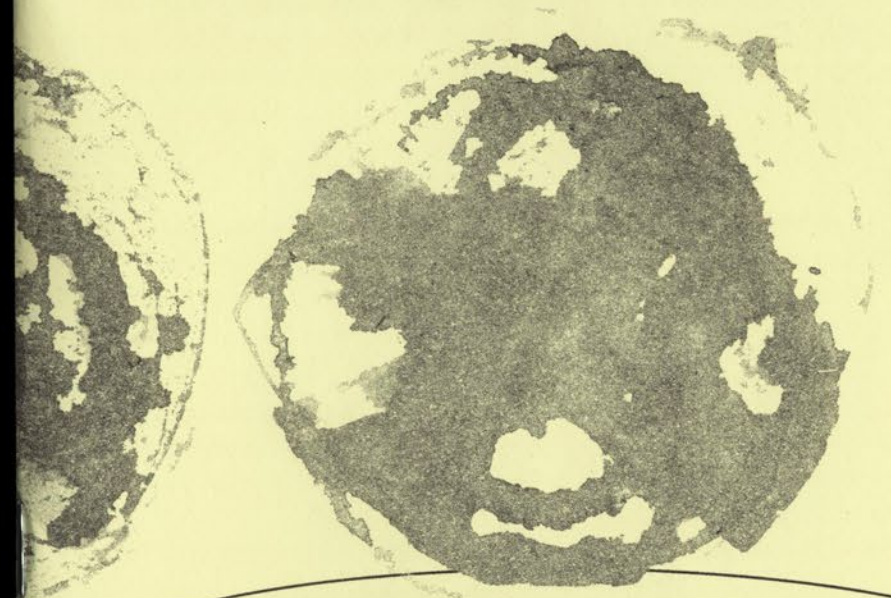
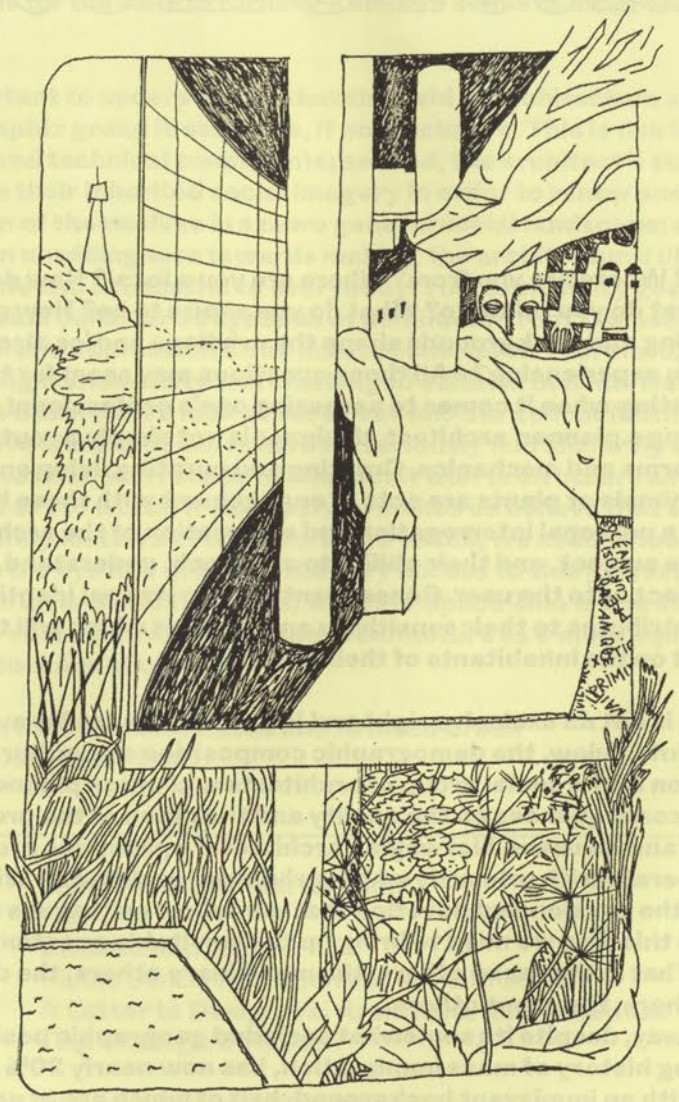
SAFE SPACE

ZINE 1



Who gets to be an architect?



"Museum of Quai Branly for non-European art" by Linh Gling (Le Studio Jaune)

SAFE SPACE ZINE 1

Editor's Letter

Who are you? Where are you from? Where are you a local? How do you identify yourself? What do you relate to? What do you aspire to be? How do you think your upbringing and backgrounds shape the privilege and/or discrimination you have been experiencing?—All those questions may seem far too personal and uninteresting when it comes to assessing one's professional proficiency. However, being a planner, architect, designer is not simply a routine job with immutable norms and mechanics. Creating and curating living environments for people, animals or plants are acts of engagement with these living matters. It is a personal interrogation and exploration of the architect's own relation to the subject, and their ability to approach, understand, empathize with and project onto the user. Consequently, the personal identity of the architect contributes to their sensitivity and interest which will then have a direct impact on the inhabitants of their creation.

Architecture is not an exclusive right and is de facto meant for everybody. From this point of view, the demographic composition and cultural representation of the social group of architects and urban planners have unequivocal consequences on the quality and the reach of the produced architecture and its users. Norwegian architecture practices are founded, led by and operate with primarily white, privileged architects. Without discrediting the passion and devotion that our fellow colleagues have put into their work to this day, we need to bring up the inevitable question: Where are the others? That is the raced others, the non-binary others, the deliberately undefined others, the silent others.

Norway, despite its somewhat secluded geographic position and a rather young history of mass immigration, has now nearly 20% of its population with an immigrant background, half of which are of non-European descent, and clearly not proportionally represented in the profession. Though we are not demanding literal translation and instant manifestation of these statistics in the realities of our practice, we intend to build the foundations for this discussion, to induce a degree of sociopolitical awareness and activeness among architects, and to foster a hospitable environment for even more profound actions and policies. As race—among other constructs still governing human societies today—is historically and tangibly an "uncomfortable" subject of conversation, we are taking small steps in breaking the barriers of silently clashing racial tension, expanding our own racial perspectives, building up resilience and openness towards racial issues. This should be done not through the victimization of one group and accusation of another, but rather through an unprejudiced dialogue between all groups and individuals for the sake of forming a sincere sense of inter-belonging and alliance.

What is important to understand is that the field of architecture as a sociodemographic group is selective, if not exclusive. This is due to, first, its academic and technical constraints; second, the architect's struggle to break through their inherited social imagery in order to renew and readapt the perception of themselves in a more general social landscape; and third, a certain unwillingness towards making the architectural discourse comprehensible and accessible to everybody. This exclusivity goes way beyond individual behavior as systems of domination root themselves in discrimination and oppression on an institutional level. Therefore, in a world of ever-evolving translocality and challenged cultural boundaries, it is time we take a step back, take a look at ourselves and our self-definition as well as the collective ideologies we adhere to, seriously and sincerely evaluate the privilege we hold, and realize the impact it exerts on others and on the larger context of the world. If meritocracy makes us believe that success and wealth are merely matters of hard work and virtue, we need to look structural inequalities in the eye and question the very access to this professional field. Who gets to be an architect? Indeed, the Safe Space Zine is one step toward our long-term commitment to reshape architecture as a more equitable practice, product and profession.

—Bui Quy Son, Paul-Antoine Lucas and Armelle Breuil
/ Safe Space Collective, 2021.

From the Other Norwegians

Tina Lam

The original text "Fra de andre nordmennene" was first published by ROM Forlag on its website (www.r-o-m.no) in June 2020.

In a field that plans and builds for everyone, it is natural to ask the question of who has the power of definition, which voices are included and excluded, and how inclusion and diversity in general fit in.

Architects are a homogeneous group. I could have been even more explicit and said that the Norwegian architecture scene is quite white, and I am not talking about our white-painted living rooms. We have to talk about diversity and representation in the Norwegian architecture field. We have to talk about the exclusion of groups who are also Norwegians but who you never see or hear about in the architecture discourse, whether it is writers or stories from *Aftenposten* or *Arkitektur N* or at professional events. It has been difficult to write this text. Only a few of us have talked about this issue, and only in empty offices and small rooms with people we know. The issue is unpopular and uncomfortable to bring up, but necessary and long overdue.

I have often thought that it would be easier just to drop it. On previous occasions, people have told me "don't rock the boat" or, perhaps worst of all, that I wouldn't be hired if I was a "troublemaker" or "hysterical minority lady". After reading Reni Eddo-Lodge's book about racism, I put all my projects on the topic on hold. In this book, titled *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*, Eddo-Lodge writes about how racism is felt both physically and mentally. I could never quite formulate why it was so exhausting to talk about racism, until Eddo-Lodge described such talks as emotional acrobatics. The reactions from those who "had to" listen could be anything from being visibly bored to being defensive. Some people even get so upset by it that you end up having to comfort them. Both your own self-censoring and the reactions of others are mentally exhausting. A pause was necessary, as talking about racism had become too emotionally draining and not very constructive. What was the point if no one learned anything? But then another black body was killed by a policeman, once again in the United States: the weariness, the sorrow and not least the anger crossed the Atlantic over to us.

As an informal exercise in discourse analysis, I processed articles about architecture and public spaces from the newspaper *Aftenposten* and the architectural journals *Arkitektnytt* and *Arkitektur N* on 24 May 2020 to check on the status of representation and diversity in the Norwegian architecture scene. Based on each author's name and photo, the articles and stories were categorized according to whether the writers were white men, white women, or people of color (POC). The positive news is that it seems like there is an equality in representation of women and men in the architecture magazines. As a woman these are encouraging findings. However, only two articles were authored by minority women, of which one was co-authored by a white male. This informal but handy exercise demonstrates that we do need to discuss diversity within our field.

In addition to calling out the people with power in the field, I have to address "my own people". We do not talk out loud about diversity, we do not write op-eds or comments about diversity, instead we whisper about diversity. When the ethically Norwegian architect Joakim Skajaa is the one who tops the online searches for the phrase mangfold i arkitektur ("diversity in architecture"), alarm bells should ring. The problem is of course not Joakim Skajaa, who deserves all manner of praise for highlighting this issue. The problem is that it is very rare that I have seen people from minority backgrounds who wanted to talk about diversity. To a certain degree I do understand why. For us, a lot is on the table: the fear of not being hired, of being ostracized or losing opportunities. We did not inherit the social and cultural capital that we have accumulated – for most of us, this is something we have worked hard and long for. The fear of not wanting to speak out is legitimate, but we are not doing ourselves any favours by being silent.

This problem has two sides. First of all, the field itself has not done enough to make space for representation and diversity. Secondly, there has been a lack of aligning among the minority groups. This is something we as minorities have to deal with, but fundamentally, this requires measures that ensure that individuals feel safe to express themselves. This is currently not the case.

In addition to finding an appropriate method and

language, representation is another necessary measure. Representation as a tool can help make it easier for minorities to express themselves and broaden the recruitment of future talents, thus enriching the field. It is important to see people like yourself out there, whether it is news anchors, models on magazine covers, politicians or those who build and plan for us. Could one possible explanation of the lack of diversity within architecture education be that young minority people have not seen themselves as architects and planners?

Take, for example, articles about homes: it would be refreshing to see other representations than the typical white, middle-class, heteronormative couple with the Eames chairs and the Artichoke lamp centrally placed in the architect-designed apartment with clear nods to functionalism. To be clear, I love these "cribs"-like articles, and I am and will remain a loyal reader. I just want more varied portrayals.

As a kid I could remember the following observation: my home did not resemble the homes of my friends from other backgrounds. It also did not resemble what you saw on television. The design and art references were different: for example, we did not have the pine furniture, the aforementioned Artichoke lamp, or rosemaling bowls and plates. The art on our walls was not of Norwegian landscapes but rather of Vietnamese landscapes along with a few Van Gogh reproductions. More fascinating was the homes of our Middle Eastern friends, who had furniture you never saw in IKEA catalogues, but rather gold, ornaments and huge sofas with plenty of sitting space.

The rooms in my childhood home were also used differently than the white homes with the Artichoke lamps. For example, we had a designated space for religious activity, which later received its own room when the apartment eventually got swapped in for a suburban house. This room consisted of an altar with a selection of photos of dead relatives and Buddha personalities. And perhaps there was a statue or two, and of course the serving plate that somehow always contained fruit. Rice also had its own designated area. It was often kept in barrels hidden away in lockers, sheds or beneath the kitchen counter. Those who were really extravagant had rice dispensers.

I also miss stories about how minority women use public space. Such women are rarely written or talked about. We know a lot about how white middle-class women use public space. They enjoy using the mountains for skiing and hiking and they enjoy doing things in the woods, like Instagramable camping trips. But my mom does not use public space like this, and I can imagine that is the case with similar moms. My mom does not seek out parks or forests on her own. When she is in a public space, she moves in an A-to-B pattern with clearly set goals.

It is more of these stories and voices that I am looking for within the architecture field. It is not because I wish to see more people who look like me in these feature articles on homes or because diversity is politically correct, but rather because it is an important societal perspective that is lacking in our field. The presentation of architecture, cityscapes and public space is almost exclusively stripped of voices from a variety of cultures and social groups who too are Norwegians.

I started writing this text long before Black Lives Matter reached Norway, before the blacked-out squares on Instagram and before the demonstrations. That an American movement was required before we finally talk about this topic here at home is revealing, but also not surprising for those of us who have attempted to bring it up for years. Much can be said about this, such as the fact that many of us did not feel that our stories were worthy enough to be taken seriously, that they were not important enough, that they were not dramatic enough. But for some people it has been dramatic. Some have experienced getting their hijabs torn off, others have had racial slurs hurled at them. Some have been threatened to silence, while others have died. None of these incidents has provoked what we have seen in the first weeks of June, even though they happened here in Norway.

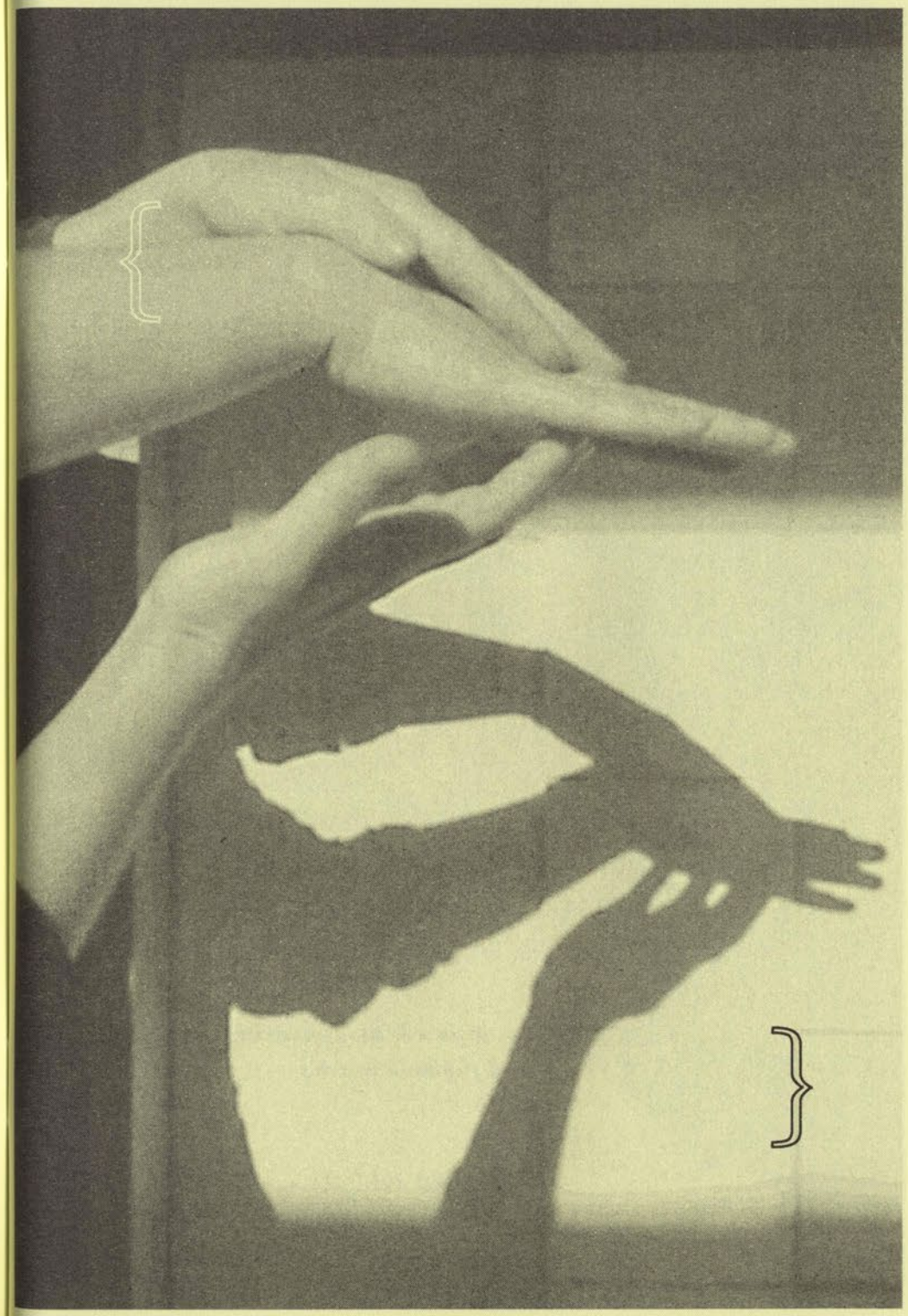
The time is due for a discussion about diversity and architecture. But luckily this time with another point of entry, one that is more palatable and constructive. This time no one will be accused of being racist or of having privileges that they need to be aware of. Instead of focusing on unconscious biases and the traumas of the past, the goal here is to encourage reflections on diversity and representation. The aim of this text is to highlight the issue in a meaningful way that hopefully can result in substantial changes. But perhaps most importantly, to find a method and a language to talk about it in. This has been lacking in the Norwegian architecture scene.

Those of us who build and plan for everyone have to be able to demonstrate that we have the socio-cultural competence that is needed to create things for every group. This can only be strengthened by being more inclusive. ■

Gabrielle Paré

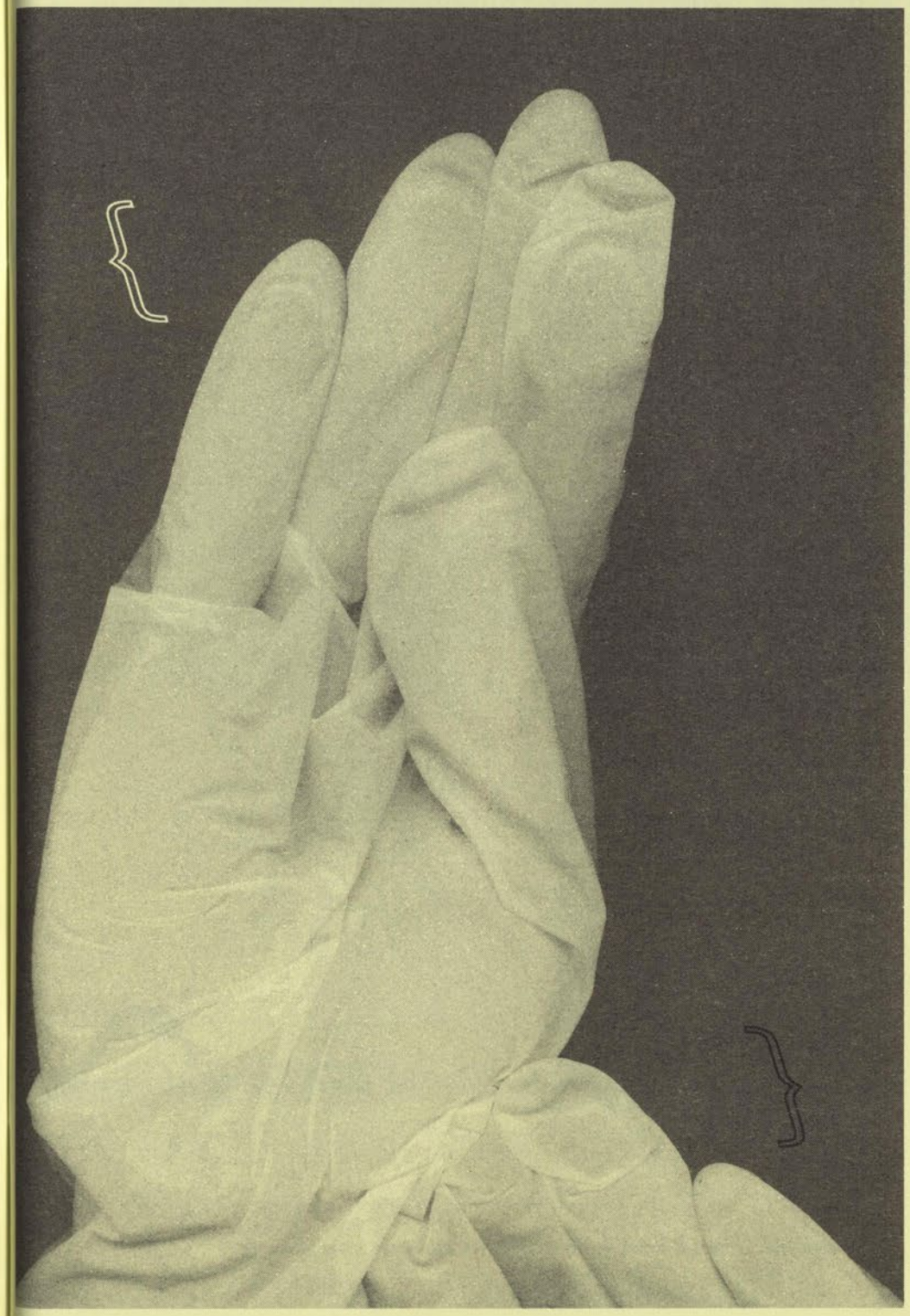
Ty! what was that cheap metaphor?

drop the dusty lines
and the closed brackets,
the (angels) jostling
in their airless spaces
for shallow prizes



no, give me disappearing margins
and fugitive marks —

sovereign soldiers
staking out a spacious news,
where the old this-and-that can mellow

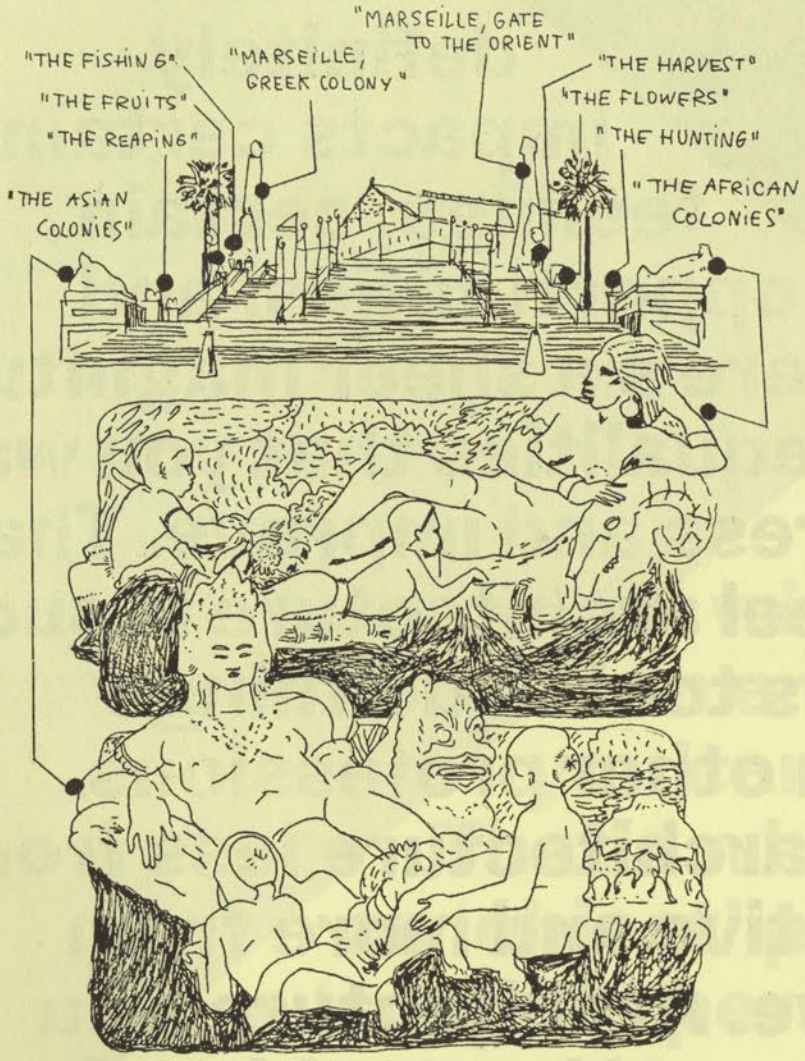


unfamiliar and generous
...safer that way,

inside our new grammar, new and Ever New again.

—Gary Bates

Growing up in Black America definitely impacts certain feelings, certain opportunities, and there's a sheer magnitude of inequalities that you want to address and improve. That's where I feel architecture is such an enormous tool to do things you can't do in other professions. That's why I like architecture less from an 'object' perspective and more from a 'subject' perspective. Architecture as a subject creates dialogue and interaction. It creates discourse. And that's where I actually see the value of the profession.



"Monumental sculptural staircase at Marseille train station" by Linh Gling (Le Studio Jaune)

We have this portrayal of Norway which, for most people, it's the 'Nobel Institute portrayal' that here's the place where fairness is at the maximum. It's because our government is organized – organized health care, organized schools, organized police and fire departments, and organized everything – and taking care of everyone, and everyone is equal, and we don't see color, and all these assumptions. I was personally surprised, but the strange thing was I didn't have anyone to talk to about it with. I was surprised to look around and be like "Guys, do you understand this is all a smokescreen here? Do you understand I get stopped at the airport all the time? Do you understand the police pull up next to my car and ask for 'license and registration'?" Then I say: "I'm sitting in a parked car." "– Is this your car?" "– Why the FUCK wouldn't it be my car? Who else's car is it?" —Gary

—Maisam

I'm just thinking "Where's my ally? Where's my people? I need you at this moment in different professions." Even though I meet a lot of ambitious kids, I don't know where they end up, but it's not in the creative fields.

Balance and Biases

Hanna Dencik Petersson and
Anna Aniksdal

After the Me Too movement started in 2018, a group of architects within the Oslo Association of Architects (OAF) began to question why it seemed that the movement never reached the Norwegian architecture scene. While a global movement was pushing sexual harassment and discrimination to the top of the agenda in everything from politics to the film industry, nothing seemed to surface in our profession. Maybe Norwegian architects didn't experience harassment or discrimination? Or should the question rather be if patriarchal power structures are so rooted in the discipline that it would be difficult to voice these issues?

In the autumn of 2018, a survey on sexual harassment created by the Norwegian Union of Architects (AFAG) was sent to its members. Over 1,000 people answered, and it revealed that one out of five respondents had experienced some kind of sexual harassment. Furthermore, the majority of respondents answered that the incident was reoccurring and in relation to a more senior person at their workplace. Finally, and maybe most significantly, it showed that three out of four didn't report the incident.

Throughout history, architecture has been a male-dominated discipline, but since around the 1980s, women were, to an increasing extent, represented in architecture offices. One could presume that the development is closely connected to the increased availability of childcare in Norway from the beginning of the 1980s due to the extensive campaigning by the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, awareness around issues of gender equality and, in recent years, also diversity is more and more present in our profession, especially within the Norwegian schools of architecture. But, biases still exist.

A quick look at gender equality in the field of architecture today initially gives quite a good impression. There are more or less as many women as men studying architecture, and statistics show that more women than men are graduating from architecture schools. But when scratching the surface, another picture appears. As in many other industries, statistics show that when it comes to management, women's representations are much lower, at only 37%[1]. Continuing our search, we find that only about a third of the professors at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO) are female[2]. When it comes to who represents the discourse and who are used as references, representation is even worse. Looking through the guest lectures that are available online (for the above-named institution) from the last five years, there are 55 lectures that can be viewed, but only 14 of these were held by women.

Looking into our own records at OAF, we find the same situation. Sundt's prize, an important architecture prize awarded by OAF every other year, has not once, over the last 30 years, gone to a building designed by architectural firms established and led by women. And only twice has the award been given to a building designed by an office with both male and female partners. Of course, one could argue that this is due to the low numbers of offices that are either started or run by women. But instead of using that as an argument,

1 Arkitektbedriftene, information about women in architecture: https://www.arkitektbedriftene.no/kvinner-i-arkitekturen
2 The Oslo School of Architecture and Design, information about staff: https://aho.no/no/ansattoversikt

we should be asking ourselves why. Why do we overlook the female offices that do produce high-quality buildings? And why are so few women partners in architecture offices? And maybe most importantly, what can we do to encourage more women to start their own practices?

As an answer to this, and other issues connected to inclusion, gender equality, and diversity that the Me Too movement pushed onto the agenda, the Committee for Gender Equality and Diversity was founded through a resolution at OAF's general assembly in 2018. The core ambition was to (re)open the discussions on these issues and lift them to a public and organizational level, much like the ambitions of Safe Space. By initiating the committee as a joint project across Norwegian architecture organizations and raising awareness of diversity and equality issues in the Norwegian field of architecture, OAF hoped to build shared knowledge and expose, map, and highlight potential biases and inequalities within the field.

The committee was constituted with members from OAF, AFAG, The Association of Consulting Architects in Norway, National Association of Norwegian Architects (NAL), Bergen School of Architecture (BAS), AHO, and practicing architects. Through conversations, the committee quickly learned that there was perhaps rather a lack of reports than a lack of stories and experiences related to inequity and sexual harassment, and acknowledged that compared to other fields within the arts, architects were far less educated and aware of the challenges our profession faces in terms of diversity. As a first important step to improve this, OAF became a member of the Art of Balance (Balansekunst), a Norwegian association within the culture industry working to promote gender equality and diversity in the arts. OAF became their first-ever member from the field of architecture, and shortly after, NAL and the Oslo Architecture Triennale decided to follow suit.

As the committee continued its work and attempted to expand its knowledge, it soon became apparent that minimal data on these issues were available. Collecting facts became its main task. In the spring of 2020, the committee launched a survey on gender equality and diversity covering the whole field of architecture, including architects, landscape architects, interior architects, and students. The survey is still a work in progress. However, with data collected from almost 2,500 individuals, 95 architecture offices, and 5 out of 6 educational institutions in Norway (including architecture, interior architecture, and landscape architecture schools), the survey and the work behind it are already representing a significant and historical joint effort on diversity and gender equality in the field of architecture.

So, why is it important to shed light on these issues, and on the current situation in our profession? As architects, we need to stay relevant to our societies. As they change and evolve, so must we. Therefore, we need to recruit and educate architects from a broader spectrum of society with different experiences, stories, perspectives, and backgrounds. To be able to do this, we need to educate ourselves and each other. More collective knowledge and awareness among architects will contribute toward a healthier and more diverse professional culture. This is the core of the work of the committee.

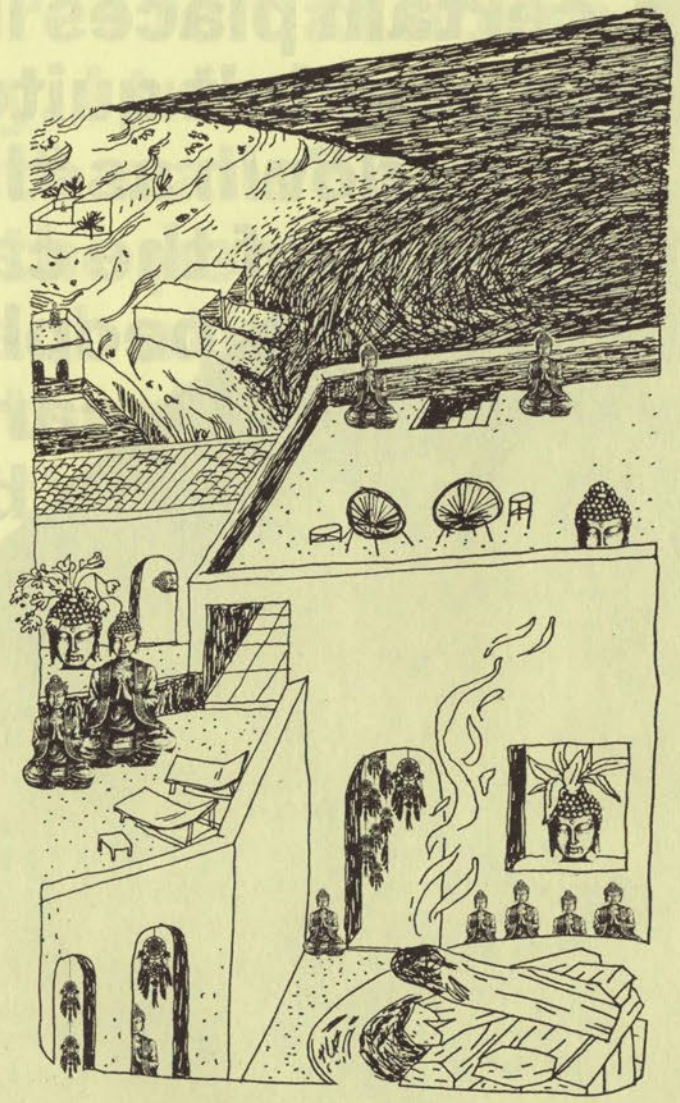
In parallel, we must address the archaic structures that are still present in the field of architecture. Professor Jeremy Till talks about a "culture of sacrifice"[3] in the discipline, where one shouldn't mind the long hours, or the un(der)paid internships, because "practicing or studying architecture is a privilege." But the truth is rather that architecture is *for* the privileged and that this culture makes parity impossible.

Luckily, initiatives bringing discussions about diversity, inclusion, and equality to the forefront of public debate are becoming more frequent. As we keep asking ourselves what it means that a privileged majority is shaping the profession, historically and at present, we move forward. As we acknowledge that different life experiences, backgrounds, role models, and references do shape our design decisions, and we become aware of the effect of these choices, we can create change and shape consciousness, and with that, over time, also the practice. ■

3 Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends*, The MIT Press, 2009

The way that architecture is packaged, sold, and understood, it's already like "No, that's not for us" – the same way golf is not for us, the same way tennis is not for us, sailing is not for us, and downhill skiing is not for us. We all think "we're probably not physically or intellectually capable to do those things". —Gary

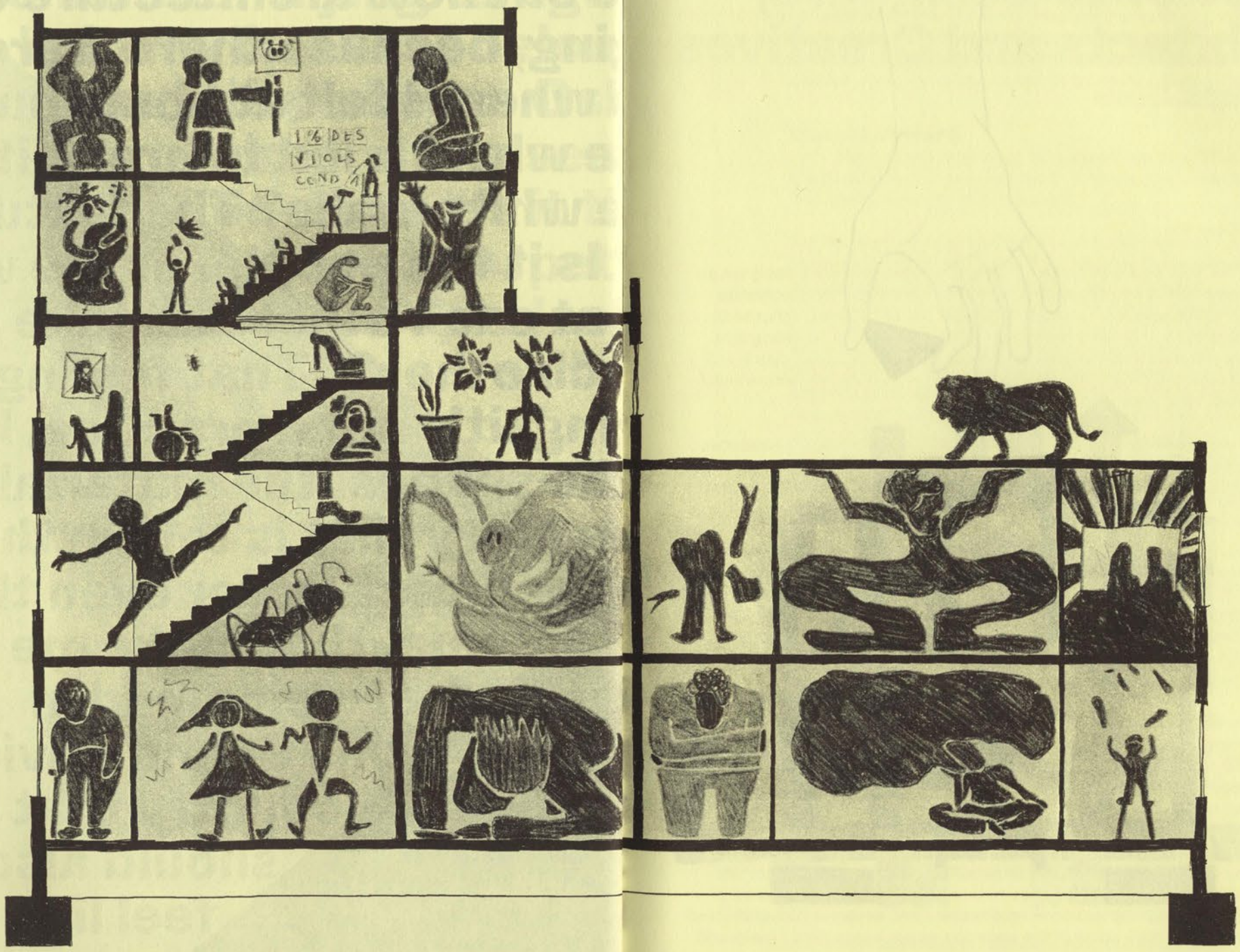
I don't go around actively thinking "I'm a Muslim woman in this profession". I don't want to come across as a different woman first, then an architect. But as a woman of color in this field, I'm using my experience everyday. The perk would be me being a chameleon in situations where I understand the 'home' culture and the other culture, and the fact that I have that double way of thinking, relating to things and sharing my experience should make one jealous. —Maisam



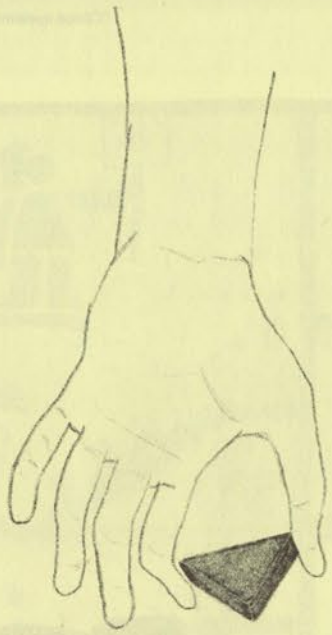
"Ibiza, a spiritual island" by Linh Gling (Le Studio Jaune)

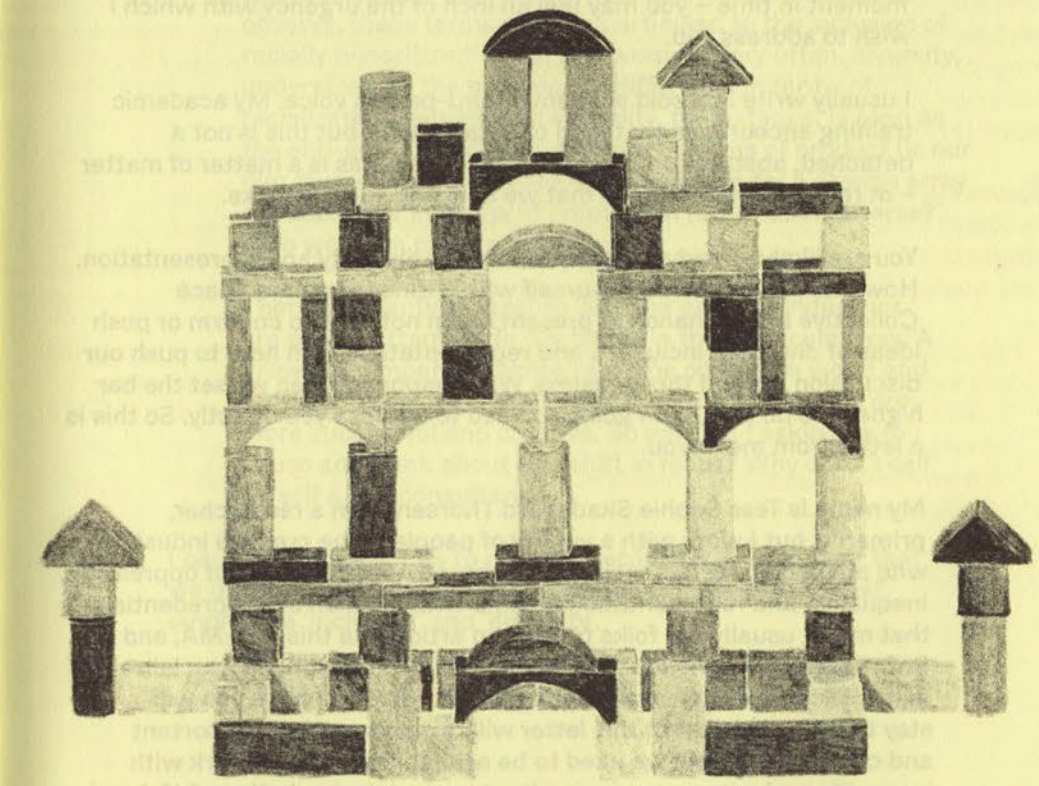
I remember trying to figure out how architecture can help me feel that belonging, because there were certain places in Oslo where I felt at home but couldn't quite sense why. I tried to break it down as "Is it the white walls? The texture of the carpet? Is it the people, or the way people look at each other and take care of each other?" That feeling of belonging, it's not a practice, but it's the shapes, the materials, the story that is told in the architecture, or even the scale, that make me feel welcomed in this Scandinavian country that I should also feel like my own.

—Maisam Mahdi



"Coupe systémique" by Delphine Lam Lewandowski (Le Studio Jaune)





A Letter to Designers, Architects and Creatives

Tess Skadegård Thorsen

Dear You,

Yes, you, future or current creative, whether you are a designer, an architect, a landscape architect or someone else with a creative practice adjacent to creating spaces, houses, homes. I choose to address you directly today, to write directly to you, knowing that as you read this – as your eyes move across this liminal space and moment in time – you may feel an inch of the urgency with which I wish to address you.

I usually write in a cold academic third-person voice. My academic training encourages that kind of detachment, but this is not a detached, abstract or philosophical matter. This is a matter of matter – of real material changes that we can, and should, make.

You are likely already warmed to ideas of diversity and representation. How else would you find yourself with a Zine from Safe Space Collective in your hands at present? I am not here to confirm or push ideas of diversity, inclusion, and representation. I am here to push our discussion beyond those realms. What happens when we set the bar higher? To do that, I am going to need to address you directly. So this is a letter from me to you.

My name is Tess Sophie Skadegård Thorsen. I am a researcher, primarily, but I work with a variety of people in the creative industries, who are becoming increasingly concerned with questions of oppression, inequality, and representation. I come with a bunch of the credentials that might usually get folks to read an article like this, BA, MA, and PhD, years of experience with sustainability consulting, a specialization in non-discrimination and creative processes. But I hope you will stay because the rest of this letter will raise some of the important and critical questions we need to be asking if we plan to work with inequality and oppression in architecture and design in thoughtful and just ways. I hope some of the tools and recommendations I make will

be useful for you, but I also hope to start a discussion that goes beyond this letter. I hope we can shift our focus away from the typical neoliberal diversity-equity-inclusion arguments, and critically engage the ways that heterosexist imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy[1] shapes and limits our creative work, and what we can do to change that.

Diversity discourse

Let's begin at the beginning. Why should we be critical of the paradigms we have learned to treat as goals, mantras and ideals: diversity and inclusion?

For the past years, while I have conducted research on representation in the Danish film industry, I have witnessed an increased interest in 'Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI)' across creative industries in the Nordic countries. Consultancies are popping up that work with these topics, and a wide variety of clients wish to solicit trainings on the topics from me. Very often in the Scandinavian contexts I observe, these terms refer, in particular, to the inclusion of racially minoritized[2] folks, and women. Very often, diversity, understood as the presence of difference in terms of racialization, gender, and sexuality, for instance, is seen as the end-goal. It might be diversity in terms of product (is our film diverse? Are we building or designing for a diverse array of people?) or in terms of production (is our team diverse? Who works in our organization?).

There are plenty of reasons why the creative industries are paying attention to the topics in this particular way. A growing number of studies from the corporate world and academia seem to suggest that more diverse teams are more successful and creative. So why am I asking us to pause and think about this shift in focus? Why don't I call myself a DEI consultant?

I pause – and I want us to pause – because it is important that we question the underlying presumptions in strategies that emphasize 'inclusion' and 'diversity'.

1 It's a thing (although I added heterosexist). I recommend reading some bell hooks to learn more about it.
2 I use 'minoritized' throughout this letter to signify those of us who are minoritized in terms of power, access, and opportunity, across categories like race, gender, sexuality, age, (dis)ability, religion, skincolour, social background, political beliefs, indigenousness, nationality, education, 'class', body and more.

Today, many organizations, diversity consultants, and creative institutions set the bar for 'diversity'. But 'more diversity' (whether in terms of *who designs* or *whom we design for*) is not necessarily able to guarantee less discrimination, inequality, or oppression. We may have hired more women, but they may not be hired in positions of power. They are not guaranteed to avoid discrimination just because there are more of them. Even if they are, it would be presumptuous to expect that our design will automatically be less sexist, as soon as we hire more women. That would presume that gendered patterns don't get internalized and learned throughout our education-systems and careers. It would presume that our institutions do not uphold such systems at various stages of decision-making, other than hiring.[3]

Some diversity consultants would respond to these challenges with an emphasis on 'inclusion' as a natural next step. However, I think we need to take pause at 'inclusion' as well. What does 'inclusion' require? Which presumptions does it rely on?

For inclusion to happen, there has to be a majoritized group that includes a minoritized group. Inclusion as such becomes a benevolent gesture, often at the hands of those with power. What does it mean for those of us who are minoritized to have to be 'included'? How does that 'inclusion' maintain a separation between those who *kindly* include, and those who are *granted* 'inclusion'?

Space invaders

In *Space Invaders*, Nirmal Puwar reflects on the interplay between those of us who are racially (or otherwise) minoritized, and the spaces we occupy. Particularly the spaces that are not intended for us:

> "The arrival of women and racialized minorities in spaces from which they have been historically or conceptually excluded is an illuminating and intriguing paradox. It is illuminating because it sheds light on how spaces have been formed through what has been constructed out. And it is intriguing because it is a moment of change. It disturbs the status quo, while at the same time bearing the weight of the sedimented past." (Nirmal Puwar, Space Invaders, p.1)

3 I use 'women' here as a broad example. In my own work I operate across axes of oppression. I employ an 'intersectional' or assemblage-theoretical approach, where I recognize that various overlapping axes of oppression inform one another and cannot be taken separately (Crenshaw, 1991).

We, the 'space invaders', those of us for whom these spaces were not intended, occupy a precarious position. As Puwar argues, our unintended presence can lead to contortions of our mind and matter. Perhaps we will become complicit. We might even insist on maintaining the status quo, whether consciously or not, as a way of protecting our fragile position in the spaces we now occupy. We might ask ourselves: Does our mere presence serve to prove that the problem of exclusion is not as severe as we thought?

Puwar illustrates that we cannot presume that ease follows 'diversity' and 'inclusion'. Merely including someone – or merely aiming for 'more diversity' – will not solve our challenges of mis- and under-representation, let alone discrimination, oppression, and inequality.

Minority taxation

As more and more institutions become increasingly aware of, and interested in, questions of diversity, or even racism, sexism and inequality, more and more minoritized folks are tasked, and I would argue taxed, with fixing these challenges for their institutions. I wrote about this in a 2019 article in the Danish academic journal for gender studies, *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*. I called the article *Minoritetsbeskatning*, which translates into Minority Taxation. I translate and adapt the term from Dr. Amado Padillas term 'Cultural Taxation' (Padilla, 1994; Canton, 2013):

> "I translate the term to *Minority Taxation* rather than *Cultural Taxation* to clarify that the taxation is impacted by power-dynamics that minoritize. Culture can be understood as a relative and neutral term (we all have culture, we all 'do' culture). By using minority instead, I ensure that the term can only be applied in context of the exercise of power: minoritization. In addition, I avoid contributing to the use of culture as an implied proxy-term for difference." (Minority Tax p. 35, my translation and new emphasis)

In the article, I use my own experiences from working in academia, as auto-ethnographic empirical material for analysis, and I highlight selected examples of Minority Taxation, that have impacted my work as a researcher and teacher. I argue that some of these taxes are measurable and straight-forward, while others are more subtle and immeasurable.

"Illustration of minority taxation mapped according to the affective (often hidden and opaque) forms of taxation and the tactile (and often more easily measurable) forms of taxation. The overlapping area of the two circles illustrates, that the types of minority taxation can be connected and/or fall into both categories. My examples of presumed incompetence and poorer feedback show, that the two are connected in my case – hence the line in the illustration between the two points. There will likely be many more cases where the various points inform one another in new empirical material." (Minority Tax p.36, my translation)

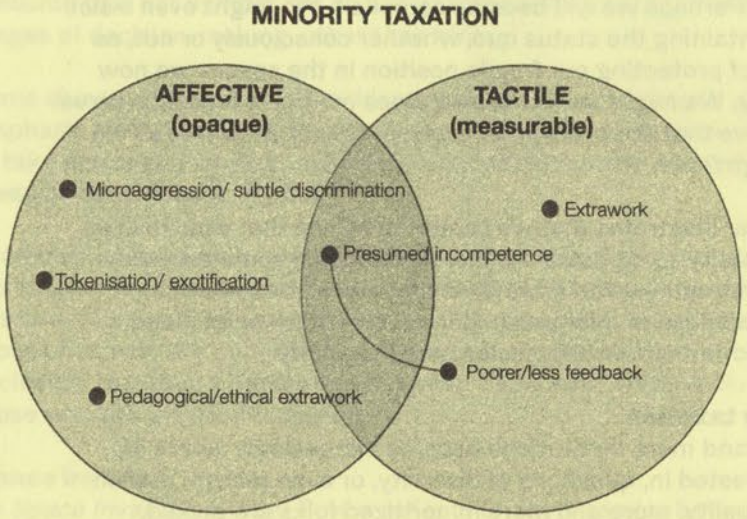


Illustration by Tess S. Skadegård Thorsen, 2018 (translation 2020)

In my engagements with professionals in architecture and design over the past years, I have been surprised to find how many of my examples from academia translate directly to your industries. Perhaps architects who are minoritized in some way, experience being tokenized or exotified at work, expected to handle particular clients or tasks, due to their class, 'race', gender, or sexuality. Perhaps a mentor subtly comments on how 'feminine' or 'pretty' your work is. Perhaps (and I often hear examples of this) one is presumed incompetent in various ways. This might both be expressed in who gets the coffee or speaks most in meetings, and it might make a visible difference in who receives thorough feedback, support and positive reviews.

"As such, one can talk about multiple forms of Minority Taxation, spread across axes of oppression (ability, 'race', nationality, gender, class, sexuality, etc.), and in variations of tactile and measurable to the more opaque and affective. In this article I focus on the complex and nuanced dynamics, which would usually fall outside of the realm of the law (including hate-

crimes, legal discrimination/ preferential treatment and harassment), but these could eventually be included too. With my focus I argue that minority taxation is also a question of the small, often more nuanced, structurally discriminatory praxes (Skadegård 2014; 2017) …" (Minority Tax p. 37, my translation)

Puwar shows that our presence in spaces not intended for us is not always enough to disrupt the status quo. In line with this, I have shown that our presence in these spaces often taxes us with additional labour related to 'diversifying' our institutions. Neither of these claims should be taken as arguments for not 'diversifying'. Neither of these claims should be used to further exclude or overlook minoritized folks. Rather, what this requires of us is an understanding that 1) Minoritized folks will have the best tools and skills to identify the ways in which we are affected by architecture, design, discrimination, inequality, and more. 2) This knowledge is valuable and important and should be remunerated and acknowledged as such, rather than taken for granted or placed as a taxation of labour on the minoritized folks who deliver it.

Decolonization is not a metaphor

Thus far it should be clear that the benevolent gestures of building spaces for an imagined 'other' will not suffice. It should be clear that incorporating that imagined 'other' in performances of diversity, to carry out the often unrewarded/-ing labour of diversifying institutions and products, needs to be carefully considered and critiqued. But before we end, we need to talk about a newly popularized term: decolonization.

I turn here to Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang in 'Decolonization is not a Metaphor'.

"Decolonization as metaphor allows people to equivocate these contradictory decolonial desires because it turns decolonization into an empty signifier to be filled by any track towards liberation. In reality, the tracks walk all over land/ people in settler contexts. Though the details are not fixed or agreed upon, in our view, decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, all of the land, and not just symbolically." (Tuck & Yang, Decolonization is not a Metaphor, p.7)

Decolonization is not a metaphor. Engaging with the term in architecture- and design contexts without pushing for actual repatriation of land, is rarely anything but an empty gesture. This is particularly important to folks who build, produce, model and therefore actively participate in extractionist and displacing industries.

A final word: on the Design Justice Principles

I leave you with a final word. A recommendation, really. I want you to learn about the Design Justice Principles: a set of principles that were collaboratively created, have founded a global community, and were documented by former MIT professor Sasha Costanza-Chock.

Principle 1 reads: "We use design to sustain, heal, and empower our communities, as well as to seek liberation from exploitative and oppressive systems." Principle 2 continues: "We center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process."

Principle 3 asks that "We prioritize design's impact on the community over the intentions of the designer." And principle 10 encourages us: "Before seeking new design solutions, we look for what is already working at the community level. We honor and uplift traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and practices."

You can read all ten here: *https://designjustice.org/read-the-principles*

There is not an easy answer to discrimination, oppression and inequality. You cannot fix it with a bit of diversity and inclusion, and metaphorical discourse around 'decolonization'. We need to think about when 'inclusion' turns into incorporation, and when incorporation is used to shut down critique.

Maybe we need our own spaces. Maybe we need reparations. Repatriation. Maybe the Design Justice Principles can help. After a decade of working with (and years of researching) discrimination and oppression in creative industries, I have more questions than answers. Maybe unlearning centuries of violence takes many more years of unlearning. Better start now.

In solidarity, Tess. ■

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Acknowledgements

because Safe Space would not exist without

Contributors to "Safe Space Zine 1"

Tina Lam (b. 1989) has a background in political science from the University of Sydney, Australia and holds a Master's degree in city- and regional planning from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU). She has been web editor of the magazine +KOTE and has worked at ROM for kunst og arkitektur since 2015.

Gabrielle Paré (b. 1989, Amiskwacîwâskahikan/Edmonton, Canada) is a visual artist based in Oslo. Through text and lens-based work, Paré creates bodies that ultimately collapse under their own intersension; particularly those swinging between the experiences of alienation and embrace.

Hanna Dencik Petersson is an architect trained at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO). She has previously worked as director of the Oslo Architecture Triennale and has extensive experience on curating, planning, and implementing large architecture dissemination projects. Dencik Petersson currently works at the Oslo Association of Architects (OAF), where she heads the Committee for Equality and Diversity. • Anna Aniksdal lives and works in Oslo, with a Master's degree in architecture from the Bergen School of Architecture (BAS) and a background in performing arts and preliminary art studies. She has been a board member of the Oslo Association of Architects (2017–2019) and one of the initiators of the Committee for Equality and Diversity that she led from 2018 to 2020. Anna is a founding partner of Kolab Architects, and has been teaching at BA and MA levels at BAS and the Oslo School of Architecture and Design.

Le Studio Jaune (*@lestudiojaune*) is a cyber activist practice from Paris, exploring pan-Asiafeminism in music and graphic fields. It was founded by Linh Gling and Delphine Lam Lewandowski, two French women of Asian descent who met in architecture school in 2016. At first, the term "Jaune" (Yellow) refered to their so-called skin color, using the principle of reversing the stigma to fight racism against their diasporas: "We've been told yellow is the color of 'Yellow Peril' and of treason. Today we want to bring back its positive substance, as the color of the sun and hope". They are part of a larger pan-Asian and antiracist network which takes roots in the Decolonial Movement specific to the French context, where addressing racism is still extremely taboo and repressed.

Tess Skadegård Thorsen, PhD, is a researcher, speaker, educator, and consultant. She works at the intersection of arts, media, film, tech, and social justice and is particularly interested in decision-making in creative processes. You can read more about Tess' work at *www.tessskadegardthorsen.com*.

Participants to the "Safe Space" Podcast, Episode 1: Who gets to be an architect?

Gary Bates founded Spacegroup with Gro Bonesmo in Oslo in 1999. As architects and planners, the firm quickly made its mark with projects such as Prostneset Ferry Terminal in Tromsø, Vestbane National Library in Oslo and the Louisville 25-year Vision Plan. Gary studied at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (1985–1990). He is currently a visiting professor at the School of Architecture at the Cooper Union in New York City.

Maisam Mahdi was born in Iraq and came to Norway with her family at the age of 7. Mahdi took her Master's degree in interior architecture and furniture design at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO), and now works in an architecture office in Oslo.

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FRITT ORD

BALANSEKUNST

"Bring the elsewhere to your French bedroom,
and working from there to become an architect" by Linh Gling (Le Studio Jaune)

About Gabrielle Paré's contribution (pp. 10–15):
"forever new grammar" is a weaving of references from the writings of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the music of Beverly-Glenn Copeland and a fascination with the topology of language. This word-and-image poem is an appeal for a new space for communication and fellowship, made possible by the slipping and bending of old containers.

About Ling Gling's contribution (pp. 03, 18, 25, 42):
During my first days in architecture school, a frequent advice by teachers stroke me: "You must travel and visit a lot. See everything you can." But are every eyes equal? As French culture fiercely defends universalism, it makes that question worth asking. *Are Marseille, Ibiza, Paris or an architecture school the same places for everybody?* Following the professor's recommendation, I bring to you a selection of four travelling and visiting memories, including interior travelling, falling into four illustrated postcards. Those are questions, thoughts, feelings about who gets to observe architecture, who it is made for, how you and I are connected to spirituality or to tropical plants, or even to tropical persons.

About Delphine Lam Lewandowski's contribution (pp. 28–31):
"Coupe systémique": Like the phantom of an architectural section, this drawing represents caricatural pictograms, situations or activities, as black silhouettes that usually inhabit this type of architectural visuals. This time I tried to put more diversity in it with a lot of irony, thinking of the French expression "to put you in a case", as a way to show—very litterally—how architecture can be limiting for personal expression.
"Learning from the Playground": 'Who gets to be an architect?' is a good first question to address architecture as an oppressive system. I also question the 'when' and 'how' in this drawing: "Learning from the Playground" refers to the capitalist hierarchy and other social constructs impregnating our system of values from the early age to our professional practice. Even though a big part of architectural theory is trying to resist this inequality-based system in order to serve the so-called "collective interest", architects are still products of the system and its "idiots utiles"—useful idiots.

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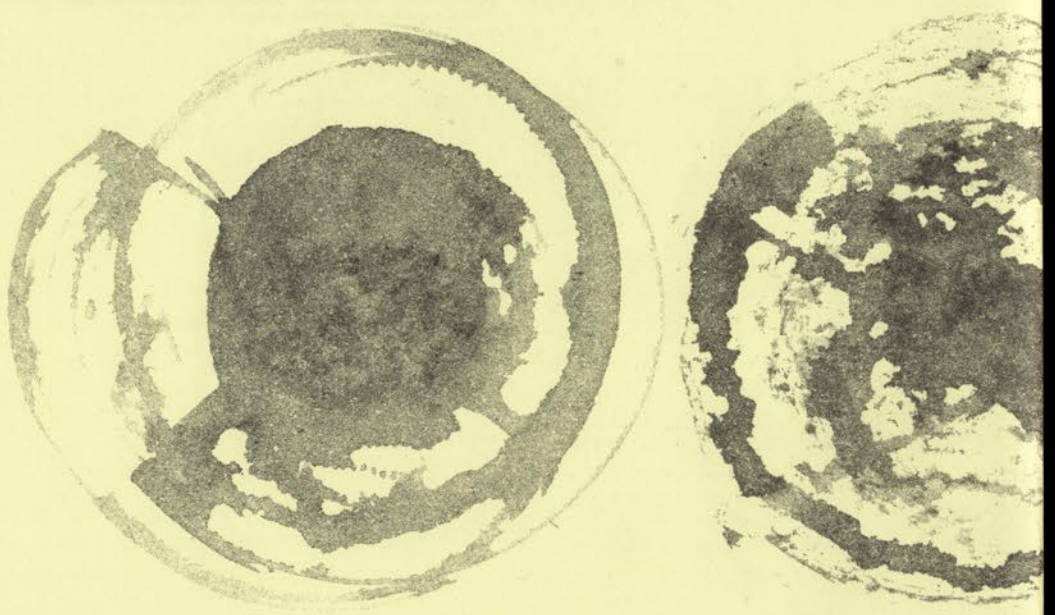

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