

# **SAFE SPACE**



**ZINE 2**

**Diversity  
and  
representation in  
architecture and design  
education**

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Illustrations by Leila Sliman  
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# SAFE SPACE ZINE 2

## Editor's Letter

What role does architecture and design education play in the installation and consolidation of dominating voices in the industry? How can we take an active role in addressing racial inequity and systemic biases in our education, pedagogy, curriculum and the recruitment processes of students and faculty? In this publication, the textual and graphic contributions present the backdrop of a much needed discussion around the topic of representation and equity in architecture and design education in Norway.

Education plays an instrumental role in defining an architect/designer's positioning as a practitioner. Meant to bear witness to the contemporary issues the profession is facing, education has the responsibility to shape the next generation of professionals. It should therefore equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge in order to be able to address those issues in their practice upon graduation. Today, this implies developing a critical outlook and awareness among students, faculty and staff in regards to societal issues such as institutional racism and biases present within our profession, curriculum and practice. This change should be visible in the reform of the ways recruitments are conducted, in the way we teach, in what is being taught and in the way design is practiced.

**4** However, the schools' demographics in Europe and Norway only faintly represent the diversity of the population. Predominantly constituted of white cis-gender able heterosexual privileged individuals, both the student and faculty bodies illustrate the outdated elitist self-perpetuating narrative the profession is built upon. In schools, the theory being taught, the research being produced as well as the curriculum and the pedagogy are based on a Eurocentric perspective on history. Even the vocabulary, the socialization, the rituals and the dress code of the students seem as homogeneous as its mix.

Architecture pedagogy has been constructed throughout centuries by a system inherited from the aristocratic foundations of the Beaux-Arts school in France; it still struggles today to catch up with the evolution of society and the reality of the discipline. In *Architecture Depends*, Jeremy Till describes this as a prescriptive pedagogy, with its own mores that rely on the authority of the "masters", detached from the reality of the world it studies and

unapologetically autonomous<sup>1</sup>. Architecture and design schools cultivate those outdated traditions in their curriculum and recruitment processes. But decolonizing the curriculum and accepting more minoritized folks on the benches of schools and in faculty staff are not enough. Indeed, increased representation is not going to improve this inequity in the long term if we do not actively question and deconstruct the systems that have led to it and ensure that they are not reinstated.

*"Because anti-racism is not taught but practiced, an anti-racist pedagogy is not only about the political and ideological content embedded in the syllabus of the design studio, the critical content of the history of theory seminar, and the emancipating potential that technical, and how-to knowledge can bring, but about interpersonal relations, radically inclusive learning spaces, anti-occupation and de-occupation practices, and anti-hegemonic institutional approaches."*<sup>2</sup>

A collective effort has to be made if we want to see a meaningful change. The profession at large should be making sure that the next generation is adequately equipped to influence and critically reflect upon the current practices in order to tackle future crises. In reality, the design process can be discriminating. As Tu-Uyen stated during the recording of the second episode of the Safe Space podcast: "It is interesting that whenever you create a space, you automatically exclude, because you need to, in order to design. So then the question is, Who are you excluding? which means that when you're learning that there is only one way of designing, you produce similar spaces that exclude the same groups, so you're reproducing an un-culture."<sup>3</sup>

This goes to show that we need to be more radically inclusive in the way we design, we need to study other approaches and acknowledge our own biases in our behaviour and practice. Garry Stevens wrote, the culture in schools is alienating, the studio is "a place of internment (that) produces a socially and mentally homogeneous set of individuals."<sup>4</sup> It is not only what we do but how we think as social beings that we need to reform. More diverse ways of doing are needed, *other ways of doing*<sup>5</sup> are possible, what are we waiting for?

**5**

<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (London: MIT Press, 2013), p.7-17

<sup>2</sup> WAI Think Tank, *UN-MAKING ARCHITECTURE: An Anti-Racist Architecture Manifesto* (2020), p.4

<sup>3</sup> See Safe Space Podcast episode 2 transcript excerpt p. 30

<sup>4</sup> Garry Stevens, *The Favored Circle: The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), p.200

<sup>5</sup> Such as the 136 examples listed in Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, Jeremy Till, *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2011).



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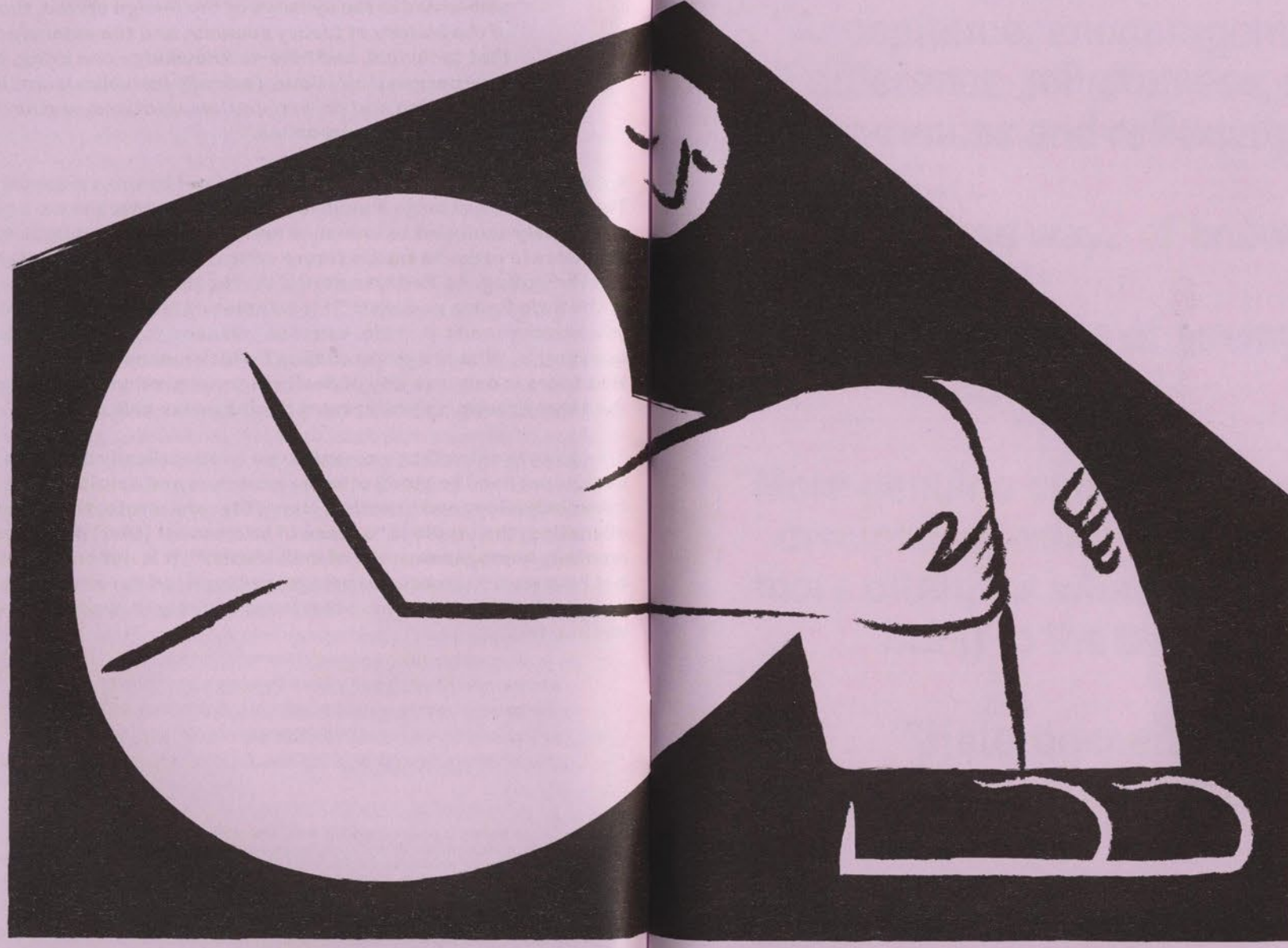


Illustration by Leila Silman (1)

Her illustrations show different aspects of a student's journey to find his/her/their values in architecture and design education, including self-questioning, facing the challenge of being different and making choices to become the designer or architect you want to be-expression.

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# Against the commons

## An exploration into opening up education

8

Josina Vink  
& Shivani Prakash

\* Voices from Within

We want to open up  
education/AHO to:

"Acceptance, encouragement  
of difference, mindfulness, self-  
awareness and reflexivity"

"More diverse ways of knowing"

"Different ways of seeing  
and being"

"More genuine curiosity, for other  
disciplines, working together  
more often, for what others can  
bring to the table"

"Heterogeneity,  
pluriversality, justice"

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## \* Creating the Uncommons

Industrialized education in the creative professions all too often disciplines students into designing based on modern aesthetic canons that prioritize utilitarianism and universalism (Angelon & Van Amstel, 2021). Through educational institutions, students are socialized into a dominant understanding of what good design is. By its pervasiveness, this dominant understanding becomes neutralized and taken for granted. In this way, industrialized education has a tendency to create a “commons” for creative professions that is homogeneous and perpetuates coloniality, or the dominance of a Western, Euro-centric culture over others.

In an attempt to resist the forces of homogenization through education at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO), we started to draw inspiration from the concept of the “uncommons” coined by anthropologists Blaser and de la Cadena (2017). The uncommons disrupts the idea of the commons as a solid, unified and shared ground. Instead it highlights that the commons is always in the making through an ever changing process of divergence with heterogeneous practices amid collectives. The concept of the uncommons calls out that simply denying divergence within the commons, such as diverse aesthetic practices, entrenches power asymmetries rather than “leveling the playing field” as education is often said to do.

*“I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.”*

Angela Y. Davis

## \* Our Journey and Approach

The Opening Up AHO initiative started in Fall 2020 catalysed by feedback from students and alumni about the need to address issues of diversity, equity and inclusion at the school. This feedback stemmed from individual experiences and were intertwined with different phases of studying at AHO. To facilitate this initiative, so far we have held four working sessions in 2020 and 2021. Each session begins with an open call for participants. Participants have included students, faculty, a board member, alumni and leadership from design, architecture and landscape architecture.

As an attempt at Opening Up AHO, one of our key focuses has been on creating a platform where individuals can share their experiences regarding diversity, equity and inclusion. Keeping in mind the intersectional nature of this subject, and that structures affect individuals in different proportions, we will continue to attempt at holding up these individual experiences throughout the process. To enable a safe space to share vulnerable experiences, we set-up the working sessions with a clear intention, ground rules, and highlight a collective responsibility of helping everyone to feel included and safe.

Opening Up AHO is geared towards taking action to create impact on structural issues which underpin people's experiences regarding diversity, equity and inclusion. At the moment, the initiative is driven forward through four key focus areas for concrete action. We view these focus areas as probes into generating an understanding of how we can impact individual and collective change in AHO.



## \* Structural Issues

Starting with the individual, lived experiences of Opening Up AHO group members, we worked together to unpack some of the root causes of the issues related to equity that they experienced. For us it was important to recognize the systemic nature of these issues. Building on the leadership of black feminist thinkers, like Patricia Hill Collins and Kimberle Crenshaw, we acknowledge that issues of oppression, such as by race, class, gender, disability, and so on, are systemic and interconnected. We acknowledge that there is an intentional disadvantaging of specific groups based on their identity that is "baked in" to our existing systems. With this in mind, we worked to identify some of the underlying structural issues that are perpetuating inequity in and beyond AHO. The ten structural issues identifying through our process were as follows:

### 1\_ Decolonize teaching

Opening Up AHO group members highlighted the need for a greater openness to others' perspectives; increased inclusion of diverse students; a critical lens on teaching approaches; a broad framing of disciplines; more constructive and supportive supervision; and greater reflection on biases in relation to students.

— "There seems to be a right way and a wrong way. What about my way?"

### 2\_ Repositioning AHO

Group members also highlighted an urgency regarding critically reflecting on AHO's role in Oslo, Norway and the world; AHO's influence on how disciplines are interpreted and their standards; questioning the structures AHO reproduces in society; thinking about who AHO "others"; and examining how diverse students and staff experience society outside of the walls of AHO.

— "At AHO, I gained a very narrow understanding of what it meant to be an architect."

### 3\_ Equitable outcomes

The Opening Up AHO group also pointed to a need for greater investment in creating employment opportunities for students with different backgrounds and interests; supporting more divergent career directions after AHO; building inclusion in the city of Oslo; encouraging our disciplines to be more diverse; and raising the standards for a just and equitable practice in our disciplines.

— "When I step outside of the AHO bubble, it is hard to see how I can live here."

### 4\_ Leveraging research

The group also called for AHO to building on research from other ways of knowing; strengthening guidelines for research ethics; partnering with diverse researchers around the globe; leveraging research impact for positive outcomes; and critically taking up sustainable development goals.

— "The academic paradigm often just reinforces dominant views and the systems in place make it hard to bring forward alternatives."

### 5\_ Rethinking curriculum

Regarding curriculum, group members advocated for multiple sources of knowledge and reading; embracing critical reflection on practice; bring in discourse about decolonization; and move beyond Euro-centric disciplinary views.

— "We don't read anything from women in non Western contexts."

### 6\_ Diversifying AHO

Discussions within Opening Up AHO pointed to a necessity to expand AHO's outreach for student recruitment and hiring staff; examine entrance exam evaluation criteria which respects different ways of knowing; enabling diverse humans to feel acknowledged and accepted; embracing multiple languages and forms of expression; and ability to deal with different worldviews.

— "While I have friends, it's hard to feel fully included as I don't feel represented at AHO."

### 7\_ Enabling structures

Furthermore, group members discussed the need to build a democratic organization; ensure diversity at all levels of the hierarchy; cultivate a supportive institutional culture; and secure respect for all jobs and positions.

— "This reorganization is making it harder for decision making to be connected with diverse perspectives on the ground."

### 8\_ Building support

Within this group, there was also widespread recognition of the need to create approachable and safe spaces for support; identify, acknowledge and address all forms of bullying; access to mental health support; care for different struggles and needs; and addressing income barriers.

— "I experienced significant bullying from an older faculty member."



## 9\_Inclusive education

Our group also talked about the underlying need to embrace different ways of seeing, understanding, and knowing; develop evaluation criteria that respects individual positions; ensure fair access to academic supports; support individual student potential; and critically examine censoring of diplomas.

— “When I started studying at AHO, I began to feel that my previous local experiences with design were not correct.”

## 10\_Public debate

In addition, Opening Up group members brought forward the need to contribute to ongoing public discussions around assimilation versus integration; embrace multiculturalism; address growing polarization in Norwegian society; and showcase how our disciplines can better address issues of class-ism and racism.

— “We can’t just sit back while Norwegian values take shape.”

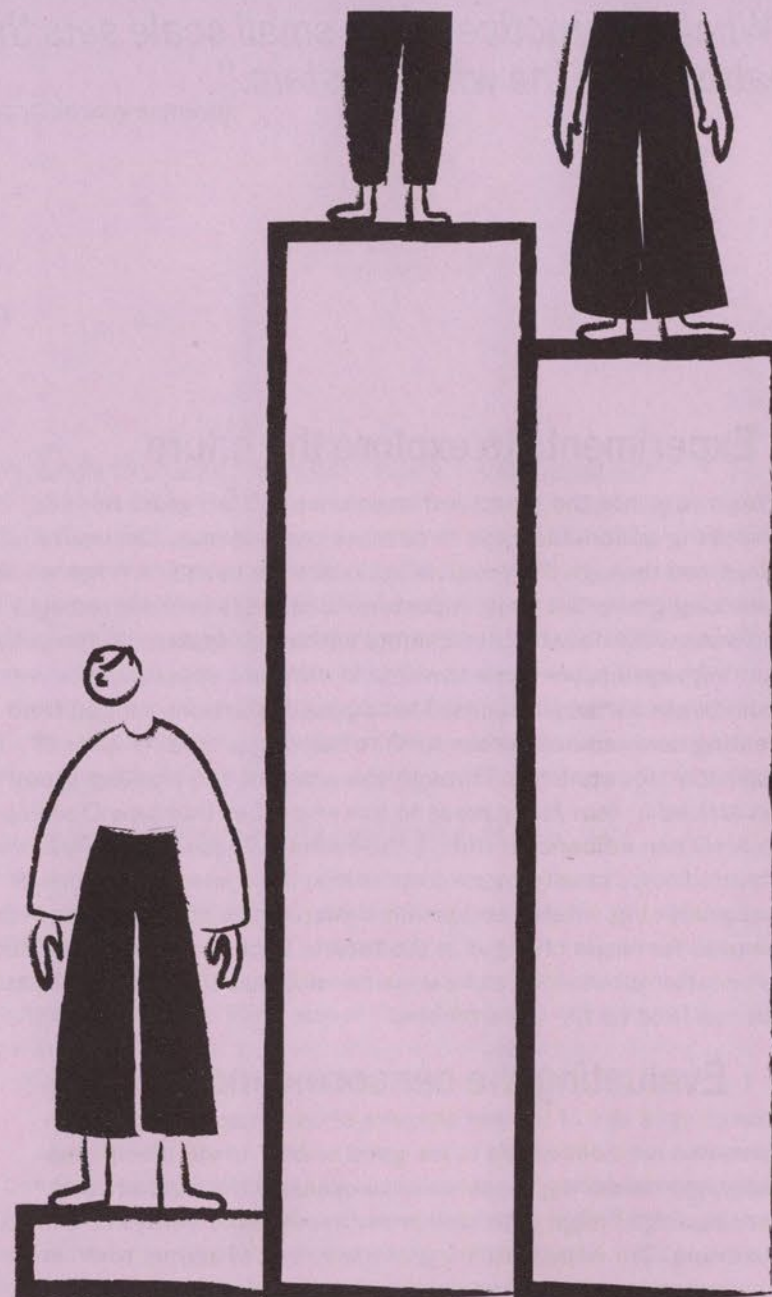


Illustration by Lella Silman (2)  
Her illustrations show different aspects of a student's journey to find his/her values in architecture and design education, including self-questioning, facing the challenge of being different and making choices to become the designer or architect you want to be.



***"What we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system."***

adrienne maree brown

## **\* Experiments to explore the future**

After diving into the structural issues, we shifted gears by describing actionable ways to address those issues. The issues prioritized through the possible actions were based on what we as a working group felt were important to address in order to begin understanding how to drive change within the system. In the second working session, we came towards 11 different spaces where we could begin our experiments. These possible actions ranged from creating connections across AHO to building a broader base of inspiration for students. Through the process, the working group has arrived at four focus areas to use as probes into how Opening Up AHO can influence a shift in the system. These focus areas are intended to be small experiments within the system. Our hope is that practicing smaller actions on a micro scale could help us set the path for larger changes in the future. Each focus area described below attempts to look at how we can address the structural issues, and can hold up the uncommons:

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### **1\_Evaluating the censoring model**

Censoring is one of the key shapers of which approaches and outcomes are considered to be 'good or bad' in our disciplines. Today, the censoring model used to evaluate the outcomes of learning might align with, and promote, dominant ways of thinking and doing. Our hope is to bring in the voices of alumni to draw from their experience to gather insight into the existing model. Through these insights we hope to move towards reimagining and developing a proposal for how to adjust the existing censoring model to better support diverse educational outcomes.

### **2\_Developing a joint elective course**

Our syllabi set the starting point for students to begin exploring different ways of thinking in design and architecture. We recognise that the majority of our existing curriculum refers to dominant voices from the Global North. We hope to start out by doing a strategic review to gather insight into how we can challenge the dominant paradigms which exist in these disciplines. Through our process, we intend to bring in academics and professionals with diverse perspectives to provide insight and feedback to our proposed syllabus and lesson plan for a new elective course at AHO.

### **3\_Supporting critical reflection**

While creating these ongoing attempts to broaden our disciplines, and embracing multiple ways of thinking, we need to consistently reflect on our own position and actions. Through reflection, we will attempt to build a culture for critical dialogue in AHO which can support learning, teaching and research at AHO. We intend to work together with teachers, researchers and students to develop an (anti-) toolbox to support this reflective process.

By collaborating with other movements, which work towards similar goals, can we begin to probe into how we can create safer spaces to meet, learn and grow together as a community. By collaborating with WONDER, a Nordic network for women in design research, we aim to build awareness, spark dialogue and build relationships across institutes, industry and academia. The dialogue at the event will focus on topics such as working with power dynamics, integrating cultural awareness into practice, and examples of interdisciplinary projects shaping equitable outcomes.

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## \* Tensions

Amid our attempts to create the uncommons through Opening Up AHO, several tensions emerged in the process. Below we highlight six prominent tensions that we have confronted as we navigate along this journey.

### 1\_ Including everyone and staying open verses centering voices of marginalized folks

We attempt to include anyone interested in working to address the issues related to diversity, inclusion and equity in and beyond our school and acknowledge this means working with conflicting perspectives. However, we also recognize that movements can reinforce existing systems of oppression and power hierarchies when they do not center marginalized voices or realities of those disproportionately affected by the existing structures. This has meant directly addressing different perspectives, for example someone thinking that "we are all human and identity shouldn't matter" and people who feel like identity matters greatly and has a very real impact on their life.

### 2\_ Working within existing structures verses creating space for radical change

There is also a tension between working within the existing structures of the school and society and creating alternative spaces for more radical change. For example, when working toward decolonizing education, we were confronted with the question of whether we could indeed work toward such a goal within the existing curriculum, such as through a mandatory module or elective course or would such a goal require working outside of existing education systems to offer an accessible radically different course.

### 3\_ Recognizing this is a global issue verses situating in the Norwegian context

Many of the intersecting issues that Opening Up AHO is working to address are global. For example, we have seen growing momentum for an international movement related to Black Lives Matter that has been protesting against the unequal treatment and oppression of black people, including in Norway. We have also seen growing recognition globally of the need to decolonizing education and academia. While needing to address global issues, such as racism

and coloniality, there are local nuances that we are also seeking to better understand. For example, Opening Up AHO has been discussing tensions between rural and urban populations in Norway and the oppression of Sámi people in Norway and beyond.

### 4\_ Acknowledging power hierarchies verses working with a "level playing field"

In Opening Up AHO, we are working with people across the "levels" of the organization within AHO by involving students, alumni, staff, leadership and a board member. There is a tension that we experience in our sessions between attempting to give everyone an equal voice in the discussion and acknowledging the very real power dynamics that shape who is listened to and who has the power to affect the situation. In our sessions, this tension is manifested by, for example, a teacher or leader, interrupting or taking up more space in a discussion with students. This is something we have been working to address head on and acknowledge as part of the work that we need to do in our process.

### 5\_ Embracing transferable approaches verses distinct approaches for our disciplines

There is also a tension that we face connected with the dilemma of using transferable approaches that have been well established in other contexts or adapting and developing unique approaches based on our creative disciplines and educational setting. For example, there has been a lot of work done internationally around decolonizing education, diversity, equity and inclusion as well as critical reflection. However, there may be some particularities within our disciplines that need specific attention and ways through which our disciplines can uniquely contribute to this evolving discourse. We are striving for a balance of learning from other spaces and cultivating situated approaches for our own context.

### 6\_ Taking action and making progress verses knowing the work is never done

There is also a key contradiction that we face in this initiative between making measurable change in our work together and acknowledging that due to the entrenched systemic nature of this issue, there is no "finished" in this work. We acknowledge that our initiative does not have full control over the long-term outcomes that we are seeking and thus must work as strategic



catalysts and enablers. We have also emphasized dialogue to build understanding as we see this as an important action and want to ensure that we don't rush into action in a way that reproduces the issues and causes further harm. However, at the same time we seek real, concrete changes at AHO and beyond as we find the current situation unacceptable. We also face some pressure to show such results by both those involved and for the small funding that we have received. This is a dance that we continue to do between standing still, moving forward and sometimes even stepping back.

While we highlight these tensions explicitly as contradictions to call out the conflicts that occur when building the uncommons in education, we see the ideas presented above as not necessarily mutually exclusive. We see these tensions as constructive and valuable as we learn to co-exist and thrive in this process. We think that working with these tensions within Opening Up AHO is a hopeful way to build a better present and future in respectful relation with each other.

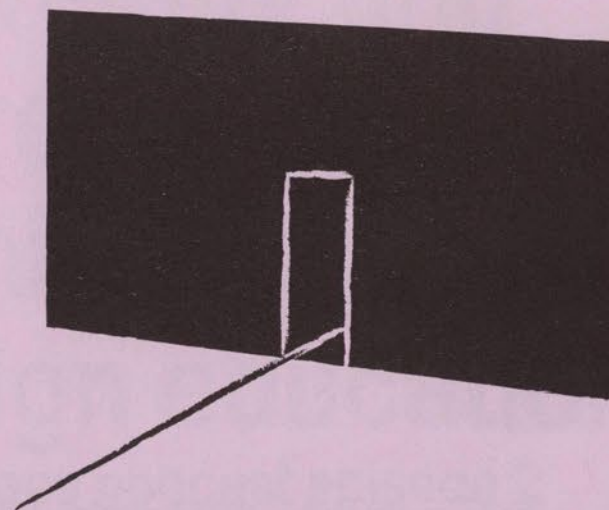


Illustration by Leila Sliman (3)  
Her illustrations show different aspects of a student's journey to find his/her/their values in architecture and design education, including self-questioning, facing the challenge of being different and making choices to become the designer or architect you want to be.expression.



# TRANSCRIPTS

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## " Diversity and representation in architecture and design education"

Safe Space podcast episode 2

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Transcript extracts from the podcast Safe Space episode 2 titled: "Diversity and representation in architecture and design education". The podcast guests were: Tu-Uyen Phan-Nguyen / Student in architecture (AHO), Mikael Oscar Johansen / Student in landscape architecture (NMBU/AHO), Nebil Zaman / Artist and designer (KHO alumnus) and Josina Vink / Teacher and researcher in design (AHO), co-leading the "Opening Up AHO" initiative, the conversation was moderated by Safe Space Collective's members Bui Quy son and Paul-Antoine Lucas. The episode was recorded at ROM for kunst og arkitektur Thursday May 13, 2021 - 18:00 CET



Tu-Uyen\_ My parents are from Vietnam, both of them, and they have this traditional way of thinking that if you are to pursue education you should do so knowing that it will most likely guarantee a job. So, pursuing something that you sort of like, in a way, is perceived as a weird thing, because if it doesn't lead to a stable income you should not pursue it.

Nebil\_ This is very typical. Even though our cultures are not the same, they have the same mentality. This is very understandable when you have parents that have either been in war or very poor conditions. When they come from another country to provide a safer life for their children, they don't want to push their children in a direction of something unsafe.

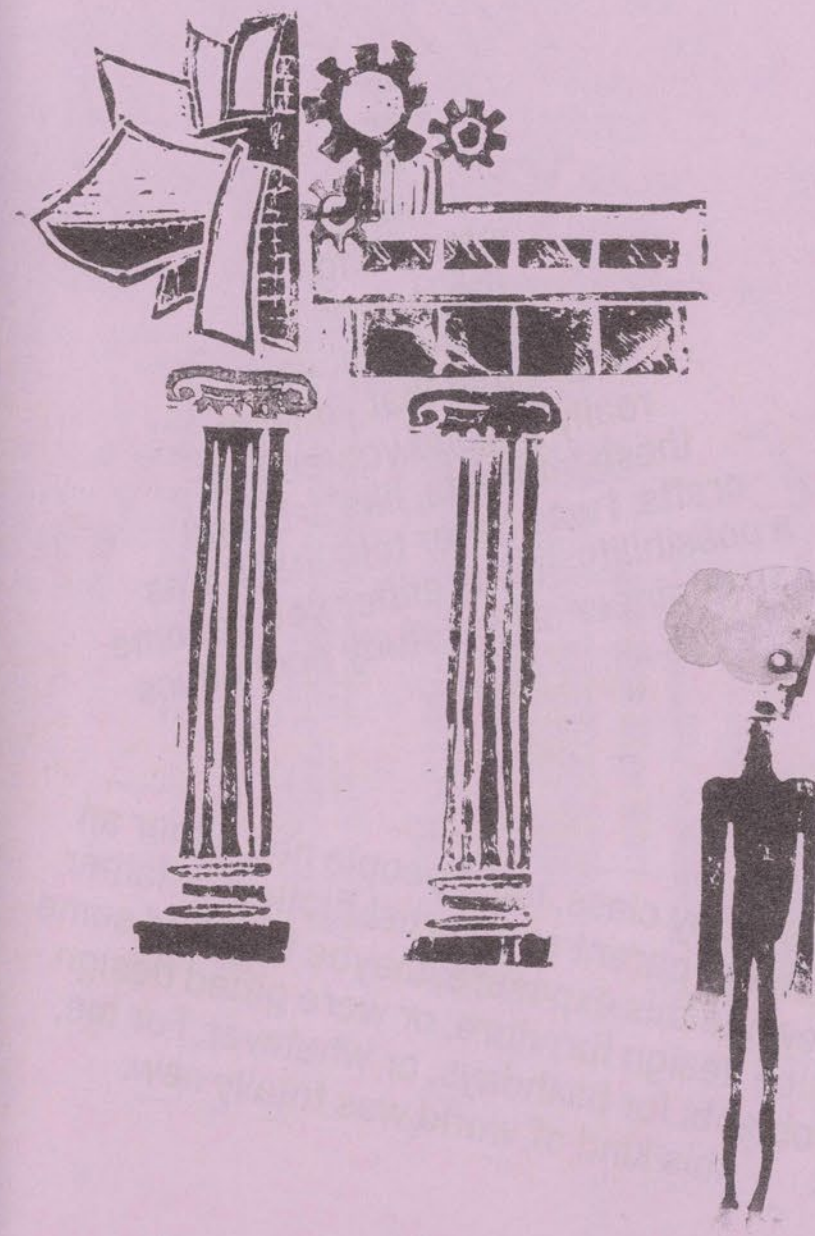


Illustration by Vilde Vera Vilik Vesterlid (1/4)  
The lino cuts show elements of both classical and modernist architecture that each student goes through, teaching them the same history over and over, in the end confining the student within the boundaries of a stereotypical architect.



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Nebil\_ In my class, most people had either an architect parent or an artist mother or father. They had this exposure; maybe they had some nice design furniture, or were gifted design objects for birthdays, or whatever. For me, this kind of world was totally new.

Mikael  
Oscar\_  
It  
is very  
interesting,  
the lack of  
exposure, that you  
aren't told that you can  
really engage yourself in  
these interests, like arts and  
crafts. I was never told that it was  
a possibility; it was either you become  
an engineer or you study economics.

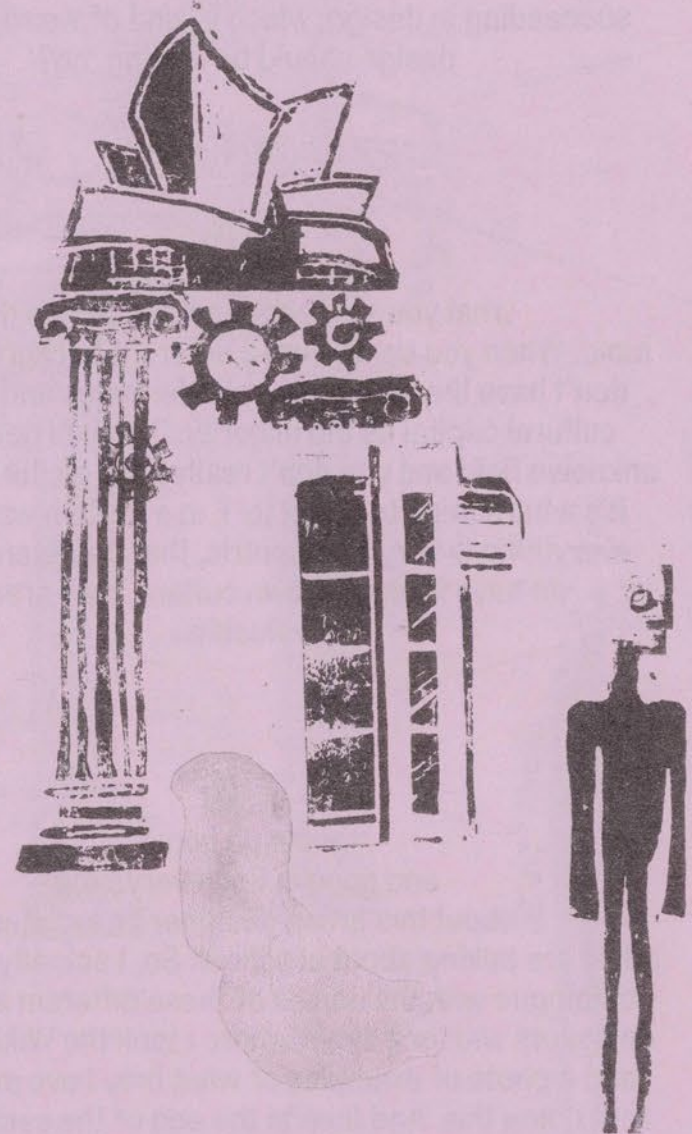


Illustration by Vilde Vera Viik Vesterlid (2/4)  
The lino cuts show elements of both classical and modernist architecture as a learning machine that each student goes through, teaching them the same history over and over, in the end confining the student within the boundaries of a stereotypical architect.

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Tu-Uyen\_When I arrived at AHO I was under the impression that the people were quite similar and I think they still are, both students and teachers. For me, it felt like I was entering a school that has cultural code that I needed to crack. I felt like I had to work even harder to understand the code to succeed, that there would be one way of succeeding in design, which is kind of weird, because design should be freeing, no?

Mikael

Oscar\_It's interesting what you said about not fitting into the mold. When you come from a different background in you don't have the same cultural references and the same cultural capital as the majority, then you get into this unknown field and you don't really have all the references, it's a hard thing to adapt to. I, in a certain way feel like everything is very Eurocentric, that the references you do have from your own culture, they aren't as valuable.

Nebil\_I

would go home and google, find everything about this artist, designer or architect they are talking about at school. So, I actually made this catalogue with the names of these different artists and designers with one sheet where I took the Wikipedia page and a photo of examples of what they have made, and I kept doing this. And then at the end of the semester I had more knowledge than them, because I was doing this as kind of a side thing. I had to do double work.

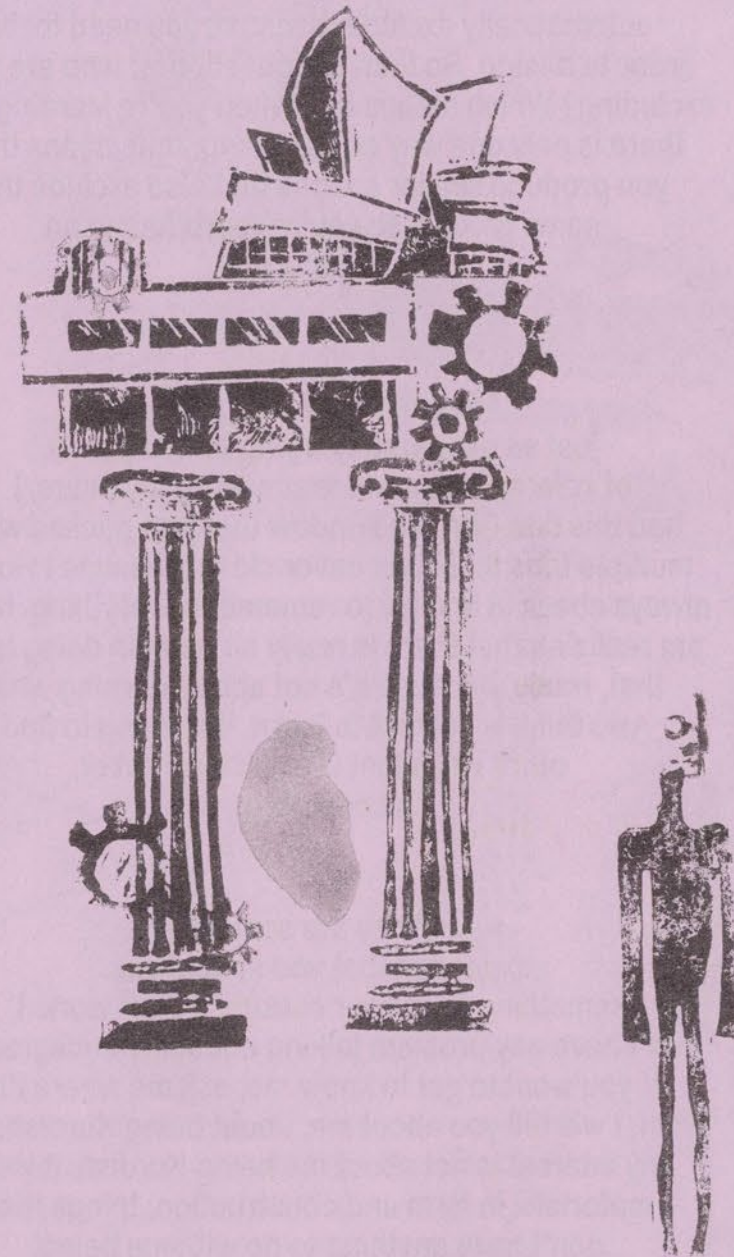


Illustration by Vilde Vera Viik Vesterlid (3/4)  
The lino cuts show elements of both classical and modernist architecture as a learning machine that each student goes through, teaching them the same history over and over, in the end confining the student within the boundaries of a stereotypical architect.



Tu-

Uyen\_ It is interesting

that whenever you create a space you automatically exclude, because you need to, in order to design. So then the question is: who are you excluding? Which means that when you're learning that there is only one way of designing, that means that you produce similar spaces that also exclude the same groups, so you're reproducing an un-culture.

Tu-Uyen\_

I found myself struggling just so desperately trying to find points of reference that were similar to my peers. I had this one Chrome Window that was packed with multiple tabs that I can never close, because I would always check in and try to remember everything. Now I am realizing that there is really no point in doing all of that, really, because it's not about learning what you think is correct to learn, but trying to find other ways that are also correct or acceptable.

Nebil\_ They are sometimes

expecting that you should use something from your culture in your work. I don't have any problem talking about my background, if you want to get to know me, ask me where I'm from, I will tell you about me, about being Kurdish. But my interest is not about me being Kurdish, it is in materials, in form and construction, things that don't have anything to do with me being Kurdish.

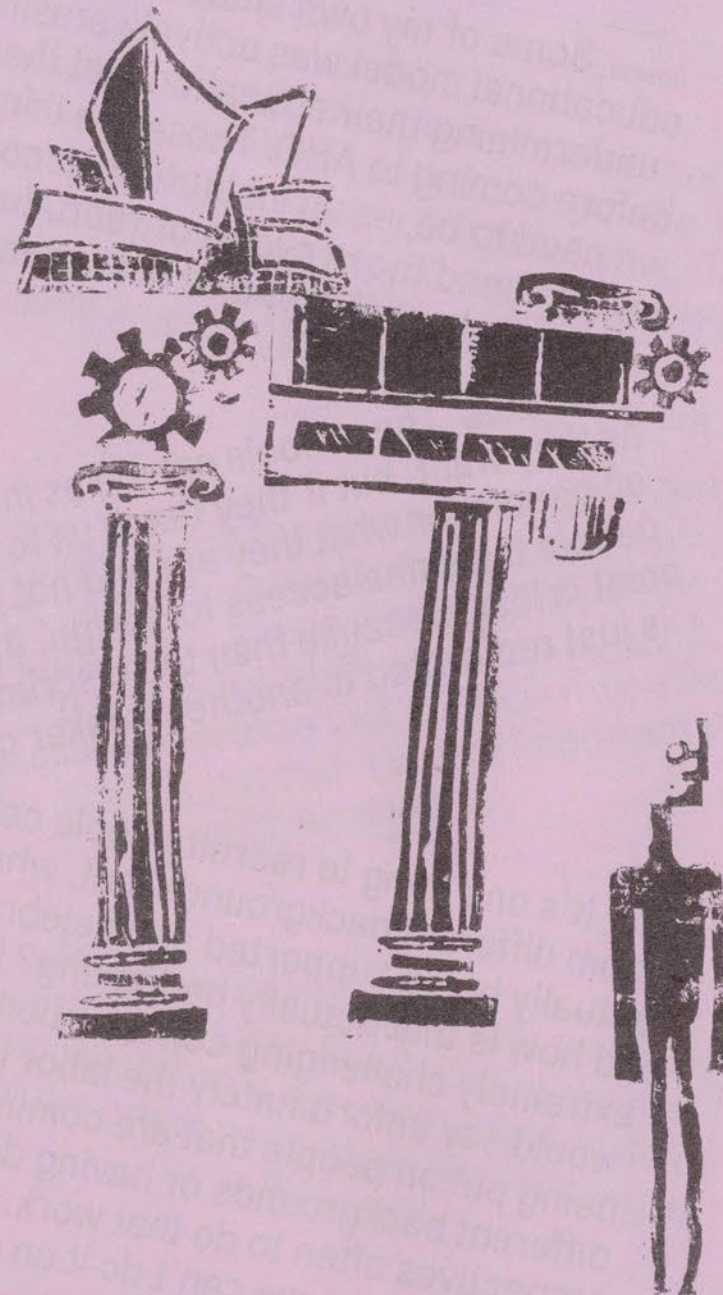


Illustration by Vilde Vera Vilk Vesterlid (4/4)  
The lino cuts show elements of both classical and modernist architecture that each student goes through, teaching them the same history over and over, in the end confining the student within the boundaries of a stereotypical architect.



Josina\_ Some of my own students felt that our educational model was actively erasing and undermining their education that they had before coming to AHO. Those are things that we need to be, as an institution, accountable for, to upend those cycles of reproducing the un-culture that you're talking about.

Mikael Oscar\_ The schools can be as inclusive as they want, but if they teach us to not see all people for what they are and not give all people the same access to design, then the point is lost. Because then the discrimination is just redirected to another weaker group.

32 Josina\_ It's one thing to recruit people coming from different backgrounds, but, what is actually being supported and celebrated, and how is that actually happening? It is an extremely challenging conversation and I would say unfortunately the labor is also being put on people that are coming from different backgrounds or having different perspectives often to do that work. Because it's so systemic, we can't do it on our own.

Mikael Oscar\_ It is not enough and clearly not the way to do when you actually put the responsibility of solving this problem for minoritized groups on minoritized groups. It's not enough to just welcome us, just invite us to the table and ask us to resolve the problem.

Tu-Uyen\_ I think due to the events of the previous year, it helped to make it okay to bring it up as a topic. Also, for me, I have a little sister that just started at AHO, so I try to do work that makes her realize that it's okay if you feel on the outside, but that it is also important to speak up about it.

Josina\_ So, I think it takes all of that and more over the long term. But it does make me hopeful that there is real momentum building within the group and people are showing up to do that work.



# Of Public Interest

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**Jonas Dahlberg**

Some time ago I received an invitation to give an introduction at a panel discussion about art and architecture. When seeing the names of the other 2 participants in the panel, I realized one of them went to the same class as me at architecture school, and his name triggered a memory of a lecture there.

I don't remember who was giving the lecture or what it was about, but at some point during the talk the lecturer mentioned a building in Paris. As I remember, the building was from the mid 1800s. And in a large apartment lived an 80-year-old woman. She had lived there her whole life, and her parents had also lived on that floor of the building their entire lives.

But the property owner had decided it was time to tear it down, and build something new instead. Those who lived there would have to move out, and everyone in the building had accepted it – except for the elderly woman on the 4th floor.

The owner of the building tried everything to convince her, but she refused. The owner probably thought about the option of waiting her out, until she died, but a challenge such as this could risk to motivate her to live to one hundred.

The owner finally devised a very special solution. He lifted up her apartment, stacking it on stilts, and tore down what was on top and underneath. Above and below,

he rebuilt completely new. I don't remember when this happened or what it looked like, but I imagine it as having a modern glass façade on the first 3 floors, and then suddenly the elderly woman's floor from the mid 1800s, and above that, a couple more floors in glass.

I think the reason I remember this story is that the elderly woman's resistance and stubbornness, together with the developer's conviction and stubbornness created a type of performative architecture where several voices and intentions could exist simultaneously. Without their co-existence, it would most probably have ended up as a rather uninteresting new building that did not contribute so much to our built environment or conversations around it. But instead, it became a kind of narrative architecture. An architecture that told a very specific story, through living people. And it was the elderly woman who had a direct hand in creating the grammatics for the new building. Her voice was forever there as part of the dialogue in our common spaces.

This story is deeply connected to, or maybe even the reason why, soon after this lecture I decided to stop studying architecture and instead applied to an art academy. The reason I stopped was not because I was no longer interested in architecture, but I probably realized that a story like this had very little interest and value at my

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architecture school and had a better place inside an art.

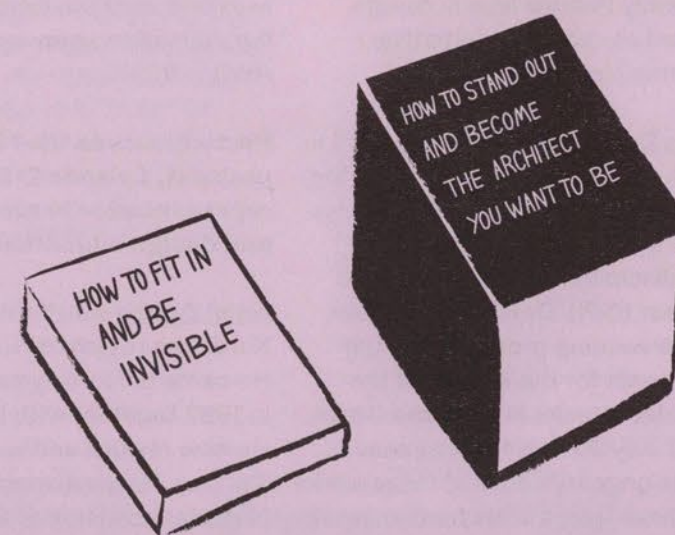
Even now, 25 years later, I still think the field of architecture often fails in hosting diverse and critical discussions about what it actually means that most of our built environment is made by a homogenous group of people with very similar goals. Architects, who actively want to work with that as their starting point, need to move to other arenas to be able to truly engage in such discussions. And then I am not even talking about how impossible it is to actually be able to practice these thoughts through making real projects that shape our future societies.

The starting point for – and the approach of – the studio Of Public Interest (OPI) is very closely connected to this story. I believe it is important that we practitioners should use artistic strategies and methods in our common spaces – as a way of insisting that artistic voices play an active role in our society, especially at a time when we are at some kind of tipping point, and there is a clear and urgent need to rethink the values that our society is built on.

Like the elderly woman, we might try to be the ones that add a component of resistance or alternative imaginaries. Not because she should have succeeded in saving the whole building. A city has to be in a constant process of change to stay alive. But because

it was the multitude of intentions which made that new building interesting in the same way as it is the co-existence of different voices and intentions that form the basis for any interesting context. Whether that context is a city or a conversation over dinner.

And the space that is called public should be a host for disagreements and multiple voices and narratives.





# Acknowledgements

## Safe Space would not exist without

### Contributors to "Safe Space Zine 2"

Josina Vink is an Associate Professor in Service Design at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design. They do research on shaping social structures and health systems transformation by design. Josina co-leads the initiative Opening Up AHO.

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Jonas Dahlberg is an artist based in Stockholm. He is a professor at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm and the founding director of the interdisciplinary studio Of Public Interest (OPI). Dahlberg is known for his winning proposals for the memorials for the victims of the terrorist attacks in Oslo and Utøya on 22 July 2011. He is also known for his ongoing series of video works that have become his fundamental

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Leila Sliman is a French designer and illustrator based in Oslo. She is currently working as a brand and digital designer at Designit. Aside from design, Leila also enjoys painting, hiking and going on adventures.

Vilde Vera Viik Vesterlid (b. 1987) lives and works in Oslo. She finished her education as an architect at AHO in 2018.

### Participants to the "Safe Space" podcast, Episode 2: Diversity and representation in architecture and design education

Nebil Zaman was born in 1985, in Kurdistan region of Northern Iraq. He came to Norway as a refugee in 1992 together with his family. He now resides and works in Oslo, Norway. He graduated from Oslo National Academy of the Arts with

a BA in Furniture design & Interior Architecture in 2019.

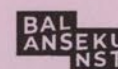
Zaman's artistic practice focuses on his interest in furniture and objects that are in the private and public space. With background in advertising, furniture crafts and design, Zaman's interest in materials, production techniques and visual languages is visible in his work.

Mikael Oscar Loum Johansen (b. 1998) is a landscape architecture student and the chair of the board of the magazine +KOTE. He is currently finishing a bachelors level degree at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, and this autumn he will continue his degree at the international master's program in landscape architecture at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design. Mikael Oscar has engaged himself in public discourse regarding "right to space" and "right to urbanity", through columns discussing ecological- and social justice in city development.

Tu-Uyen Phan-Nguyen (b. 1993) is a master's student in architecture at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO). Tu-Uyen also holds a bachelor's degree in Technology Design and management from NTNU.

and Josina Vink (see Contributors)

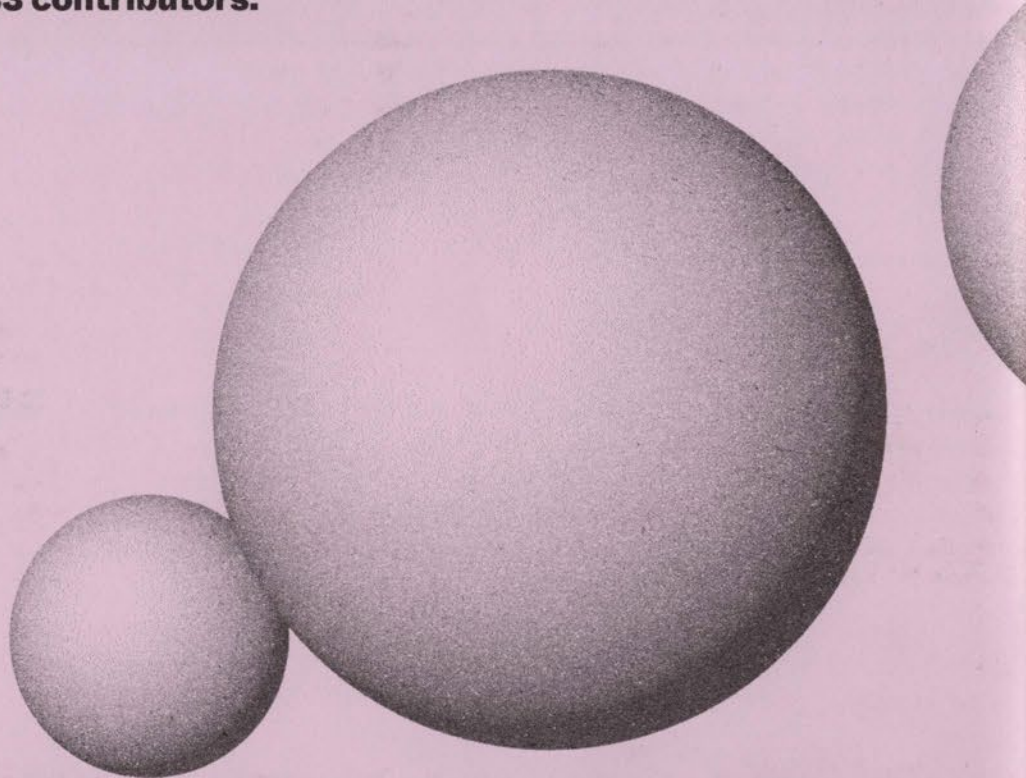
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