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Biographies

Lonn Combs studied architecture at the University of Kentucky, where he received his first professional degree in architecture in 1992. He later received a post-professional degree at Columbia University in 2001. Lonn Combs co-founded EASTON+COMBS in 2002 with over ten years of professional experience in Germany, China, and the United States. In tandem with the founding of EASTON+COMBS, he began teaching design studios and has taught at Pratt Institute School of Architecture and City College of New York, and Cornell University. He is currently Adjunct Associate Professor of Architecture and the Assistant Chair of Undergraduate Architecture at Pratt Institute.

Mark Foster Gage is the co-founder, with Marc Clemenceau Bailly, of Gage/Clemenceau Architects. The firm is known for its synthesis of aesthetic innovations with advanced technologies, often enabled by collaborative research with the software and manufacturing industries. Gage/Clemenceau Architects was a winner of the AIA New Practices citation in 2006, and was a finalist in the Museum of Modern Art/P.S.1 Young Architects Program in 2007. Mark Foster Gage is an Assistant Professor of Architecture and chair of the design curriculum at Yale University. He has also taught at Columbia University, at the Institute for Classical Architecture in New York, and has lectured internationally.

Ben Pell and Tate Overton founded PellOverton in New York City in 2005. The office is guided by an interest in blending research and practice through the exploration of innovative material applications and fabrication techniques. Ben Pell received his Master of Architecture from UCLA and his Bachelor of Architecture from Syracuse University. Ben has taught at the Pratt Institute and Syracuse University, and is currently on the faculty at the Yale School of Architecture. He is a Registered Architect in the State of New York. Tate Overton received his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Kentucky, and has extensive experience in residential and commercial construction management and supervision.

Ana Miljacki and Lee Moreau founded the design and research firm Project in 1998. Through the production of buildings, exhibitions, writing, and the instigation of discourse, Project strives to critically engage and reimagine the contemporary world. Project relies on research to frame a particular problem and determine the most effective role for design. Both Ana Miljacki and Lee Moreau received their Bachelors degrees from Bennington College and their Master of Architecture degrees from Rice University. Ana completed her PhD in the History and Theory of Architecture at Harvard University. She is currently an assistant professor of architecture at MIT.

Kathy Velikov received her professional degree from the University of Waterloo and a Masters in History of Art and Architecture from the University of Toronto. She is a licensed architect and is currently Academic Committee Chair at the CaGBC. Geoffrey Thün received a Masters of Urban Design from the University of Toronto, his professional degree in Architecture from the University of Waterloo, and a Bachelor of Sociology from the University of Western Ontario. RVTR was founded by Velikov and Thün along with partners Colin Ripley and Paul Raff and is driven by the belief that the manner in which we develop our landscapes and build our cities is critical to our collective global future.

Tiantian Xu is founding principal of Design and Architecture Beijing (DnA Beijing), an interdisciplinary practice for city planning, urban design, and architecture. Xu received her Master of Architecture in Urban Design from the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 2000, and her Bachelors in Architecture from Tsinghua University in Beijing. Prior to establishing DnA Beijing, she worked at a number of design firms in the United States and the Netherlands. She has also taught at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) School of Architecture, in Beijing, and has been a guest critic in numerous schools including Peking University and Tokyo Chiba Institute of Technology. She received a WA China Architecture Award in 2006.
YouPrison
Torino, Italy 2008
Exhibition with Benjamin Porto and Daniel Sakai

We were invited by Francesco Bonami and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin to contribute a prison cell design to their YouPrison exhibit, together with twelve other international architects. After researching reform ideas within the U.S. prison system, prison labor laws, as well as the actual architectural implications of a cell redesign, we decided to dedicate our exhibition to explicating the dilemma that a designer finds himself in when asked to impact (through the design of a room) a system determined by agents and agencies well beyond any architect's domain.

As a direct result of recent legislation and of the general cultural embrace of "cleaning up" and normalizing American cities, the number of individuals in U.S. prisons has been steadily increasing, which has brought clear financial benefit to private prison management companies over the last decade. The interior of U.S. prisons is also one of the last sites of production in an otherwise post-industrial economy. None of this is to say that prisons do not involve architectural design—on the contrary, prison architectures often survive the governments that sponsor them—but rather, to begin to describe the intricate and vast network of agents involved in the shaping of the U.S. correctional system in order to understand what possible agency an architect might have in this situation. Not only is the contemporary architect not the same figure as the eighteenth-century reformer/architect, but the cell is in fact too small a unit of carceral space to impact the deeply problematic structures and practices that extend well beyond it today.

The floor of our installation is an informational display that requires the visitor to perform our research and our dilemma spatially. Three main voices are reconstructed: the voice of the legislature and governmental agencies, the voice of all who benefit from the prison system financially, and the voice of the prisoners. Each of these agents spins the information in specific ideological directions. Although it may be possible to care about only one of these larger agents, the connections between them are intricate, inextricably woven together, and, most importantly, entangle the figure of the architect as well.

Above the large informational display, an illuminated polypropylene cell is presented upside down, as an invitation to contemplate architectural design. If the floor invites one to try to understand the network of agents involved in the prison industrial system or in this contemporary species of prisoner reform, the upper portion of the installation presents a limit case scenario, based on plausible future outcomes of current trends in prison management and contemporary culture. Starting with the ongoing increase in skilled and non-violent prisoner populations, our scenario involves the possible expansion of prison reform arguments to embrace ideas about the special (reform) value of creative work.
2 Exploded Axonometric of Installation
3 Google Cells—Prison/Workplace Hybrids
4 Google Cell Variants

- Personal Library Cell
  - quiet work environment

- Workroom Cell
  - quiet work environment

- Multi-Workstation Cell
  - reconfigurable to meet team’s needs

- Conference Cell
  - focused collaboration space

- Private Workstation Cell
  - quiet resident work

- Clubhouse Cell
  - opportunities for chance encounters

- Open Meeting Cell
  - impromptu team collaboration

- Regrouping Cell
  - restful break between brainstorming sessions

- Terrace Cell
  - quiet alternative to in-house work stations
  - alternative dining setting for focused co-laborative work

- Dining Cell

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5 Polycarbonate Cell Assembly Drawing
6 Life in the Live/Work Cell

1. Cut
2. Fold

3. Layout
   - Verify that folded segments align with one another.

4. Assembly
   - Fasten elements together and to unistrut strapping with nylon
Floor Graphics Presenting Our Research on the Prison Industrial Complex

View Inside Gallery Installation
Zone 1, in which we are bunching the rafts, provides areas in direct relation to the water and is formally resolved such that it allows rafts to connect while ensuring openings that cannot be occupied by rafts for views and access to the water on foot.

Zone 2 is programmatically dedicated to cultural and artistic content, as it is currently the site of the famous postwar building of the museum of contemporary art. We intensified Zone 2 through a network of paths, clearings for future art and cultural buildings and circularly shaped forests. We called this formal maneuver seeding.

Zone 3 is entirely constructed wilderness. It profits from existing riverbanks and flood areas where some still go fishing. No paths, no benches, only grasses, trees, mud, all formally combed in such a way that each subzone is defined by the life and morphology of plants.

Zone 4 is located in the area that has often been used in recent years for large pop concerts. We propose to scoop the concert visitors through a land/landscaping gesture, which focuses that portion of the park towards the back of the proposed location of the new opera building. The lifted landscape allows for a new parking facility underneath.
Zone 5 is dedicated to sport playgrounds: it packs together tennis, basketball, mini soccer, and bocce courts, producing a topographically activated but brutally rationalized landscape of play, spectatorship, and occasional shade, all connected by a running and biking turf.

Zone 6 contains within it the old, modernist, imposing and impressive building of the old executive branch of the communist party as well as a foundation for the never completed Museum of the Revolution. We propose here to plant a dense forest, which would overtake the grand paved paths and reframe this part of our history as nature and as a piece of historical memory.
Building on the spirit of this year's Young Architects Forum, we designed Project_insert to serve as our exhibition and as another probe to send out into the world. Project_insert invites all visitors to the Young Architects exhibit to participate in the guerilla dissemination of some of our work and ideas by taking copies and literally inserting them in books, magazines, libraries, and bookstores. We were particularly interested in collecting answers to our questionnaire for young architects, which we see as an important generational project that will have a life beyond the exhibition. Apart from our ambition to instigate further discourse with Project_insert, and to circulate some of our work and our students' work, we imagined Project_insert literally setting up a type of reciprocity between dissemination and the gallery space. As the stacks of this take away mini-journal were depleted in the gallery, we imagined our ideas and work beginning their journey into the city.
Studio 24b was one of those design opportunities that came with no money and a very self-motivated client. We were asked to design a woodshop and a painting studio in Maine, which together had to pose as a garage and occasionally function as a gallery. It was a mischievous project from the outset and also one that had to work on the ground, logistically, not only as a final product, but also as a carefully thought out construction process that eventually involved numerous volunteers.

We thought that if we engaged architecturally the identity of the users and of the identity of the garage that Studio 24b represented on its permit papers, we could produce something functional and unique in the context of Portland's fringes. The architectural solution of Studio 24b features a continuously changing section that makes the woodshop inevitably different from the painting studio while keeping them coherently synthesized in a single object. We used revolving walls in place of doors, which ensures a garage reading from one angle, while it enables the painting studio and the gallery to spill outside. The non-standard use of standard residential construction techniques made the assembly relatively easy for its amateur construction crews and ensured it minor landmark status in its neighborhood of Portland, Maine. The collective construction of the building brought the neighbors closer together and has instigated improvements along the entire block of adjacent properties.
Plan and Elevations

- West elevation
  - Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

- East elevation
  - Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

- South elevation
  - Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

- North elevation - part one
  - Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

- 2'-6" wide window
- 5'-0" wide window
- 2'-6" wide window in alcove
- 5'-0" wide window in alcove
- Built-in shelves
- 5'-0" wide window
- Roof overhang above shown dashed
- 5'-0" wide clerestory window (shown dashed)
- 5'-0" wide window

Exterior Detail Open
View into Woodshop
Exterior Open
Interior View of Woodshop
The Architects of Our Happiness

Prague, Belgrade, Warsaw 2005-2006
Research Project with Luke Bulman and Kimberly Shoemaker

Fascinated by the vast landscape of the post-wall transition and with the Graham Foundation's sponsorship, we embarked on this ambitious documentary project. 170,000,000 people reportedly live in the communist-era housing of Eastern Europe and Russia. We wanted to record and make some sense of these deeply ideological architectures, their massive scale, the entropic breakdown of the society that produced them, and the industrious (and no less strange) capitalist makeover that was taking place on the same vast scale. We visited housing districts of Warsaw, Prague, and Belgrade to record this landscape in transition, aesthetically awesome (in all senses of that word), brutal, relentless, and nearly beautiful on its own terms.

We titled the project "The Architects of Our Happiness" after a mock documentary imbedded in the 1971 film *Man of Marble* by Andrzej Wajda. We organized our findings into six categories of phenomena. 170,000,000 contained large architectural formations, building configurations, and the sky figured between them. *Pazi Metafi* which in Serbian means "watch out for bullets," contained all the open spaces we found between things, some considered, some not. The name for this section came from a billboard we found in one of the open spaces of New Belgrade in Serbia, which just before New Year's Eve reminded inhabitants of one of the functions of the open spaces between housing. *Pastels* concentrated on the hues and contrasts we found; it included the greys of Belgrade and the newly insulated (with dryvit) and freshly painted (formerly grey) housing stock from Warsaw and Prague. The category *Good Year* was constituted out of all kinds of commercial language, oversized, profane, loud, that was not initially planned and installed in the housing districts we visited, thus still a bit awkward and surreal when we recorded it. *1/1 Jan* was a category that collected all the small events and traces of daily life in the housing districts. And lastly, *Eye Sore* was a Super 8 film we produced by taking a single shot every time we saw Houston, Texas, in our Eastern European cities.
Good Year. The language of commercialism
The entire landscape of Eastern Europe is sprinkled with oversized billboards that seem to watch over the housing districts like freshly made-up shopping fairies. Some form of commercial activity was always imagined to support the housing districts, but for many the transition to capitalism has meant the importation of a truly international exurbia—consisting of anything from KFC to IKEA.

With the sprawling commercial world on one side and the shopping malls on the other, these billboards could almost seem natural, if not for their awkward search for the right scale. And if we were to reverse engineer them, we might learn something that we were already suspecting about the vast open spaces of the modernist housing districts: words and images project far here. After all, this was the world in which production was propelled by propaganda, and consumption was meant to balance out necessity.

Pastels. The coloring of prefab concrete
In the summer of 2005, Przyzolek Grochowski, a housing estate dating from 1968–1974, was visibly falling apart from neglect, but its exterior hallways and pattern of protruding “rest” balconies still appeared the way Zofia and Oskar Hansen had designed them. Open form in architecture—with all of its period resonance and references—was Hansen’s brain child and is evidenced in this project by the “elevated streets” at the courtyard edge of every floor. Przyzolek Grochowski had its problems of course, but compared to the vast majority of mass housing examples in Warsaw, it was considered aesthetically and had managed to test radical typological innovations. Recently, this estate began to receive the treatment that has been spreading across Poland and the Czech Republic for several years. DRYVIT + PAINT. The inhabitants are warmer, and Oskar Hansen thinks the society is going down the tubes.

170,000,000. Building formations and the shape of the sky
Local specificity and difference, the various forms of wilderness, and an ever-shifting wash of “happiness” cannot soften the relentless repetition once the camera lens is zoomed out far enough. And yet, at that scale—the scale of total view—resides the pleasure of accessing totality, even if this is merely an optical illusion.

After observing one of his typically entropic sites of interest, Hotel Palenque, Robert Smithson claimed that the logic of the whole place was “just impossible to fathom,” that there was no way that someone could possibly figure it out. This was, of course, why he fell in love with it. Can one fall in love with béton brut ad infinitum, with long shadows, with triptych buildings, with 1960s residential skyscrapers? When the light hits them just right...they can be sublime. And for 170 million people they are all they
have ever known. We found an entropic landscape but instead of marveling at its otherness we thought that perhaps we could discover how these different architectures (and people) formed in a non-consumer consumptive society behave.

Pazi Metak! Occupying the space between things

"Pazi Metak!" (Watch out for bullets!) reads one of the billboards in New Belgrade. A friendly reminder for everyone. The ubiquitous modernist scale of open space and the often self-referential disposition of buildings—carpeting large territories of land with abstract two-dimensional patterns—gets routinely blamed for all of the stray bullets (and accidental deaths) on New Year’s Eve. These celebratory shots soar through the big empty spaces between the blocks and, occasionally, fly through windows killing other inhabitants of the district.

Not solely to blame, the vast voids are structural to this landscape, and can be the very essence of bucolic (Warsaw) or completely unkempt, sunburnt, and overgrown (Belgrade or Prague). Many of the debates about these housing estates beginning in the 1970s centered on the need for a human scale, both for the buildings and for these open spaces, and typically involved overturning the Athens Charter formula that prescribed them.

11 January 2005. One day in the housing blocks of New Belgrade
As much as Godard’s Two or Three Things I Know About Her is a self-appointed critique of industrial society and stars the banlieux of Paris, Kristof Kieslowski’s Decalogue series is a critique of the communist version of the industrial society presented under the guise of moral education. The housing block in Decalogue is not merely the organizing structure of the series; it is its main protagonist. The housing block has many eyes and many stories to tell and most importantly Kieslowski's series proposed that there is a unique logic of living in the housing blocks.

The daily life of the masses was a topic of great importance in all societies that claimed to have abolished the class system. The ideal proletarian masses would be fit, interested in culture, would shop optimally and be as hip as their western counterparts, but without obsessively caring about fashion. They would have charming offspring and, of course, ample leisure time to spend on sports and arts. Thus, sprinkled along the daily routes of New Belgrade’s inhabitants, we find the social program and the infrastructure meant to support the utopian population inhabiting the residential architecture.

These mysterious lonely pavilions, regional schools and kindergartens, basketball hoops, and mini soccer fields are all still around, but the cultural centers seem to have given way to pubs, poker joints, shopping malls, and carnival grounds.