

TELEM PHOTOVOICE



Don Houston



巴比倫電影社

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TELEM PHOTOVOICE

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Don Houston
www.cyclops.org



“My formula for human greatness is amor fati: that one wants nothing to be different, not in the future, not in the past, not for all eternity. Not only to endure what is necessary, still less to conceal it — all idealism is falseness in the face of necessity —, but to love it...”

Amor Fati

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“I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. Amor fati: let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. Looking away shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer.”

All quotes by Friedrich Nietzsche unless otherwise noted

Foreword

What is Photovoice?

Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. As a practice based in the production of knowledge, photovoice has three main goals: (1) to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and (3) to reach policy-makers.

Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment
Wang, Burris



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Photovoice methodology has gained in popularity in the two decades since its inception by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris in the early 1990s. As a participatory action research strategy, photovoice is typically used with marginalized populations that have been silenced in the political arena. Using ethnographic techniques that combine photography, critical dialogue, and experiential knowledge, participants reflect on and communicate their community's concerns to represent their culture, to expose social problems, and to ignite social change. This methodology provides a culturally grounded and contextually situated site for reflection on visual images, associated meanings, and social action.

Thinking Critically About Photovoice: Achieving Empowerment and Social Change
Liebenberg

Twenty years before the groundbreaking research conducted by Wang and Burris, a small group of students conducted social action along the same line. With the collaboration of Ethnic Studies and Architecture professors, the Telem video collective at the College of Environmental Design at the University of California at Berkeley placed videotape technology in the hands of students to give voice to their communities.



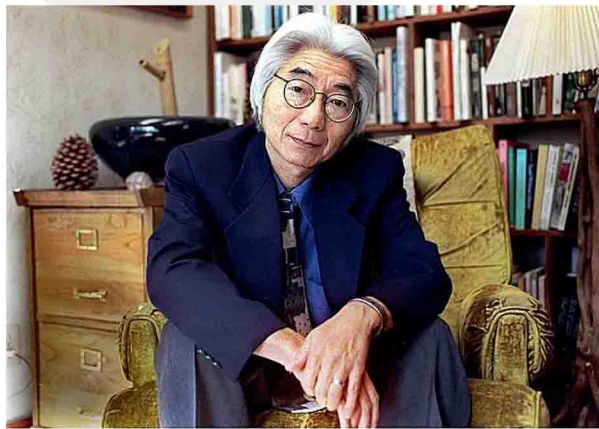
Here is our story from a personal point of view as a member of the collective's leadership.

“Of all that is written I love only what a man has written in his own blood.”

Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All and None

“One must give value to their existence by behaving as if ones very existence were a work of art.”

These professors met the challenge.



Liz Hafalia / The Chronicle



Ron Takaki

Russ Ellis and Carl Anthony

Roy Thomas

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Slide Inventory

No. of Slides

Telem Classroom

175

Trust for Public Land

64

Nairobi Project

230

We Can Turn It Around

107

Mexicali Project

66



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Students

120

Presentation

140

TELEM PHOTOVOICE

The
Origin and Outgrowth
of the
Video Collective

TELEM

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Introduction

What Brought Us Together

Material Poetics

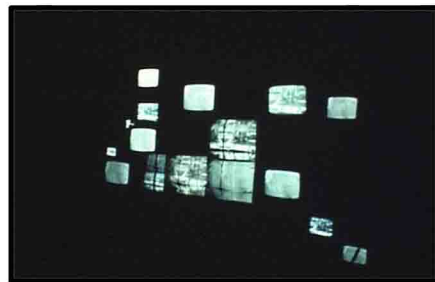
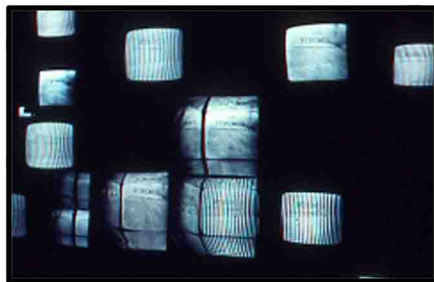
The video collective Telem began by giving voice to a material. Entitled, *Concrete*, the performance art piece attacked the perception of concrete material as static. It visually challenged designer skepticism in the material's ability to be plastic, in motion, have rhythm, and be playful. In this sense, it was experimental and pushed boundaries by engaging the designer's disbelief.



Funded by Kaiser Foundation and produced under Prof. Reichel as an independent study class, *Concrete*, a Fluxus-like conceptual video piece, portrayed the building material as a whole. The presentation consisted of two synced videotapes on 15 television monitors documenting the production, transportation, placing, and finishing of the material, set to music, and photographed to capture the material in its entire production cycle.



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Even though a surprise to the faculty, it was rewarded with funding for a presentation at the Student AIA convention in Los Angeles. But no one realized then that "the genie was out of the bottle."

The impact on the production crew was immediate and whetted our appetite for more and cemented together the three individuals forming the Telem collective: Robert Henry, Gale Fields, and Don Houston.



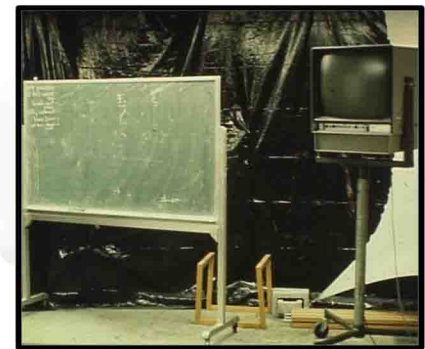
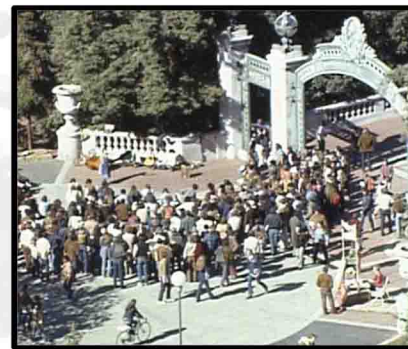
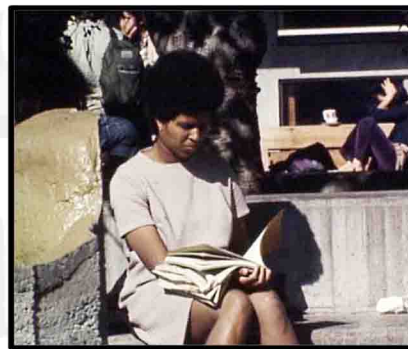
Two other members, Barbara Ryan and Joshua Reichel, graduated and did not carry on to graduate school. The question as to why we became a video collective, as far as I know, has never been asked. We can speculate at this late date.

Telem's Photovoice

Self-Determining One's Trajectory

"Become who you are!"

In 1970, schools, especially the architectural graduate school at the University of California at Berkeley (UCB), rarely provided students of color with storytelling platforms and technologies. There was a good reason. The University conducted its first official racial and ethnic survey four years earlier, in 1966. It reported in the *California Monthly* that 226 "American Negroes," were 1.02 percent of the student population. I didn't know when I started that I was one of 1400 Black students on campus in 1969 due to social activism.

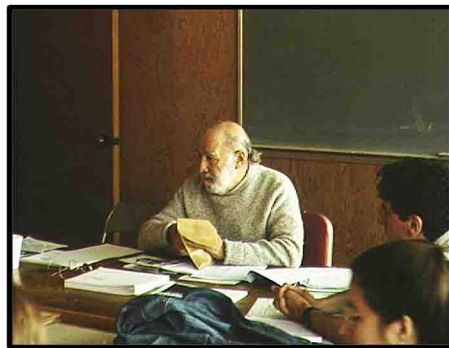


However, I knew something had happened. The rejection letter I received months earlier and the sudden turnabout in acceptance from the Equal Opportunity Program at UCB meant something had changed, and I was to be one of the beneficiaries of this power shift to admit "marginalized" students.

Fortunately, I did not consider myself marginalized. I saw the label as a fixed identity imposed on me. With the help of my professors, as an undergraduate I became competent in asserting individual autonomy to resist this societal label and self-determine the trajectory of my studies. This was particularly the case upon entering graduate school at UCB in the College of Environmental Design, Department of Architecture.

On entering graduate school, immersion in Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy is already a point of fact. During the six years it took to complete the four-year undergraduate program, Professor Reichel provided a steady diet of his teachings in his classes on the social impact of technological change.

When Professors Lindheim and Ross released video technology to the student video collective Telem I led, they specifically stated their expectations. They saw it as a means for community members impacted by urban development to engage, participate, and voice their needs and opinions to architectural professionals.



But once students took control of the technology, another power shift occurred. While professor Ellis sponsored and anchored the independent study classes, two other professors, Ron Takaki in Ethnic studies and Roy Thomas in African American studies, joined in supplying students for the classes the video collective Telem offered architectural students.

In hindsight, their hands-off approach to Telem's independent studies speaks volumes. Instead of shaping the class experience to conform to Freire's model of praxis, the reflection, and action upon the world to transform it, they saw that the three Telem members had defined praxis on our own terms, more in keeping with its ancient Greek meaning, the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, embodied and, realized.

College of Environmental Design

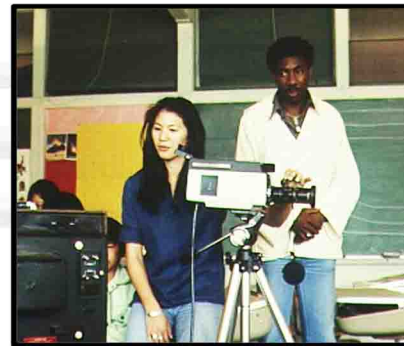
Department of Architecture
Telem Program

Architecture 198/298
Afro-American Studies 197
Ethnic Studies 197

Course Description:

Community Architecture and Electronic Media Workshop

Instructors: Professor W.R. Ellis, Professor, Ron Takaki, Professor Roy Thomas



Objectives:

- Introduce students to participatory process in Community Design and development.
- Investigate new issues in education in relation to video as an innovative learning technology.

Subject matter

The Telem program is to create a body of material, slides, video, drawings, and course structure in formulating future Community Design curriculum which stresses a learning approach lead by student formulated course objectives.

The fact that the faculty had placed the video technology at my disposal was indicative of the feelings of inclusion, acceptance, and care I received from them as an undergraduate, but that was not the case for most. While I felt unprepared for the rigors of Berkeley, I did not feel marginalized as some students of color did. Both Ron and Roy brought this to my attention.

In response, I unapologetically repositioned students of color and their concerns for “community design” from the periphery to the core of design education in the department by the impromptu display of their work in the halls of Wurster. The medium and its message were undeniable and caught the attention of faculty, administration, and students.



PLAY ▶

I placed video technology in the hands of students, and similar to Freire, we assumed the video they captured signified and highlighted their values and expectations; what they chose to tape shaped our discussions and inspired collaboration between group members. Thus, the architectonic nature of their constructed realities through video and dialogue made class participants both “students” and “teachers,” again echoing Freire’s critical pedagogy.

But unlike still images, video editing carried the potential to amplify, enhance, or juxtapose both image and narrative. An interpretive process that required critical reflective judgment to intentionally elicit desired emotions, feelings, and thoughts about the content in ways that still images or narrative alone cannot.

Furthermore, editing was a collaborative endeavor where the Telem core group and students explored the intent of the image sequences, what they reflected, and what outcome was expected. During these editing sessions, particular emphasis was given to the coordination between image (a doing) and narrative (the words) so that their presentation also embodied praxis. When done perceptively, it opened onto a realm of spatial perception and beauty.



While class discussions with Professors Takaki and Thomas, and on occasion Ling-Chi Wang, promoted a personal sense of accountability in students; what was demanded of them also applied to the Telem collective members as well. In response, the collective produced four portraits of participation.

Portraits

The first Telem project is an unconscious reminder of what happened to the Black community in San Francisco for me. Sponsored by the Trust for Public Land, the project's objective was to demonstrate the empowering effect of urban gardens. Its focus is on "urban blight."

By the beginning of the '70s, the Second Great Migration of African Americans was over, and the exodus of whites from the inner city was in full swing leaving behind a mess of their making.



PLAY ▶

White flight coupled with mass car ownership, the marketing of suburbia, the building of the Interstate Highway System, and forty-seven years of redlining practices had taken their toll.

However, in anticipation of a reversal of fortune, the Trust's land conservation measures included enlisting community members to lower criminal activity in the affected areas, promote investor confidence, and raise the quality of life by creating community gardens. The production of *Impressions of Oakland* helped the Trust's ideas gain political traction with the planning agency and local administration.



University of California at Berkeley
College of Environmental Design
Presentations

Impressions of Oakland

National Endowment of the Arts
1/2" video/BW/12 min./1975
Trust for Public Land Community Gardens



PLAY ▶



Next is the *Nairobi Project*. At the start of graduate school, I returned to the Nairobi community with the other Telem members and some students to continue the original mission. Only this time, we were there to take action.

A few years earlier, as a member of BEDSA, Black Environmental Design Student Association, my photographic skills caught the attention of an upperclassman, Fred Powell. He recruited me to assist in documenting an African American community day school needing renovation and library space in East Palo Alto, CA.



The video presentation, based on a “nothing-for-us-without-us” approach, voiced the Black community’s concerns and notified designers that any development or improvements not inclusive of community participation would be blocked.

Significantly few students at the time were interested in video, and even fewer still were interested in applying it as a research tool. But the presentation aligned with faculty expectations, and Prof. Lindheim awarded us funds for its exhibition at that year’s National AIA Convention in Washington, DC, entitled *Humane Architecture*.

On return to the community, we took the next step by placing donated trailers on their concrete and steel foundations.



University of California at Berkeley
College of Environmental Design
Presentations
Nairobi Day School

Student Independent study class
1/2" video/BW/17 min./1976
Students installing trailers on school grounds



PLAY ▶



The Mexicali Project followed and represented the starkest example of Telem self-determining its trajectory. In need of demonstrating architectural design on paper, Professor Ellis insisted that the collective bypass the student work in Mexico and concentrate on creating design documents for an imaginary project in the Black community I came from in San Francisco.

The proposed project location was one block away from my old family home.



But in an act of defiance and direct insubordination, the collective documented students creating participatory housing in Mexico. I can only attribute my insubordination to an immature understanding of Critical consciousness and the lack of appreciation for the poetic nature of the proposed assignment.

As you will later see, if I had followed instructions, I would have obtained valuable information about project development requirements in my community and perhaps met my future wife and father-in-law since he owned one of the stores on the proposed project site. But that was not to be. We met in a different way.



University of California at Berkeley
College of Environmental Design
Presentations

The Mexicali Project

A Pattern Language
1/2" video/BW/12 min./1976
Students building low-cost housing in Mexico



PLAY ▶



As for *We Can Turn It Around*, it was a project of appreciation. Professor Ellis introduced us to the Office of Relations with Schools and produced our most ambitious product with their support. Critical consciousness demands we work for the future and open opportunities for those to come.



Exhausted from the effort, the climb from naivete to Critical consciousness, I had neither the energy nor the academic insight to submit Telem's achievements as my graduate thesis at the conclusion of graduate school in 1977. The research into what would become Photovoice would be left to others. The collective's work was ahead of its time and approached as the embodiment of a theory, the correct thing to do when given such a rare opportunity to achieve Critical consciousness.



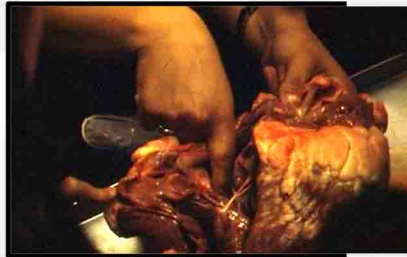
University of California at Berkeley
 College of Environmental Design
 Presentations

We Can Turn It Around

Office of Relations with Schools, UCB

16mm/color/15 min./1977

Recruitment aid for high school minority students



PLAY ▶



The Unanticipated

However, achieving Critical consciousness had an unexpected consequence shaped by incisive observation, discussion, and the video medium itself. Similar to print on paper, the electronic medium's animation quality acted as the "ground" or backdrop for image and sound, shaping my awareness. The conscious act of making "imitations of everyday life" created a poetic standpoint, a poetic perception.

It is a way of thinking about the world's unity, which includes the many differences and schisms we experience and know. It is a vision that develops and enhances feelings of truth because it is a "standpoint" from which the hidden principle of unity can be seen. Visually it expresses an insight that requires poetic action as a counterbalance to social urgency.



PLAY ▶

Unknowingly, years of working in ethnic communities editing their stories opened my eyes to the tragedy of the American experience. The portraits done by the collective and the students were snapshots of a larger tragic plot that pushed good people toward undeserved misfortune or destructive situations between friends, family, and unrelated strangers.

A different set of demands for empowerment and liberation came with this standpoint of poetic perception as an outgrowth of Critical consciousness. The drama found in Freire's praxis conveyed a responsibility to act to create a just world. In contrast, poetic perception required immersion into the world in search of its hidden unity, a call to explore the "taken-for-granted" natural environment, a place where one can breathe.

The Myth Is with Us

“Ah, women. They make the highs higher and the lows more frequent.” “Love, too, has to be learned.” “That which is done out of love is always beyond good and evil.”

As I explain elsewhere in my writings, a native male raised old-school by a community of women is never allowed to develop the disease of loneliness along with its maladaptations of misogyny and sadism. He is generously nurtured, listens to their wants and desires, and considers them equal peers. Graduate school at Berkeley in 1976 had made strides in addressing the lack of people of color in architecture, but their recruitment of women lagged far behind. But this disparity evened out with the addition of students from Ethnic and Afro-American studies in the video independent studies classes. For this, I am especially indebted to Professors Takaki and Wang.



PLAY ▶

After finishing graduate studies, poetic perception takes its turn in controlling my life. After falling in love with the Islands on my first trip as a tourist, it enacts an updated motif of an old tale to lure me back. The story stems from the beginning of Hawaiian culture but is revised to fit present conditions. It initiates the mythic drama of Lohiau and Pele. As an act of self-love, I listen and embrace a new sense of identity in the assigned role of Lohiau.

In this rendition, Pele asks Hi'iaka to bring her lover back. Hi'iaka delegates the responsibility of calling Lohiau to Wahine'oma'o while she searches for him. As a daughter of the Hula, Wahine'oma'o calls to him from afar. She chants and dances to draw Lohiau to her through mutual attraction and affection. When Hi'iaka finally finds Lohiau, she dons the guise of a beautiful maiden who will follow him anywhere, even Hawaii. It is then up to Lohiau to find his way home.

But on his arrival, Pele finds that not only has Lohiau returned with Hi'iaka, but both Wahine'oma'o and Hi'iaka love him. Uncharacteristically Pele exhibits patience. In time Hi'iaka and Wahine'oma'o find other lovers, leaving Lohiau to his beloved Pele.

Many Lohiau and Pele myth variations exhibit the traditional Hawaiian Punalua family motifs. A family style that missionaries attempted to stamp out. The small group we lived with were transplants, and the individuals involved in the situation couldn't, at the moment, appreciate what was occurring on the mythic level. These hidden happenings can only be teased out through meditation and reflection after the deeds are done. Still, in doing so, I learned another lesson in poetic praxis: applying and practicing unconditional love to the best of one's ability. And strangely enough, this translated directly into the practice of architecture.

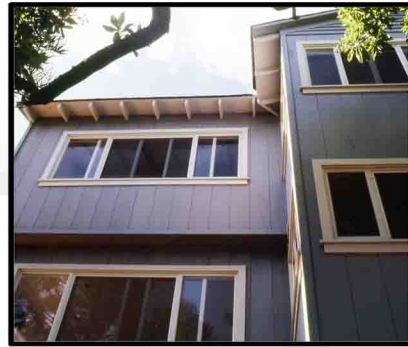


Freire's critical pedagogy made me seriously aware of how architecture and the profession contribute to maintaining oppression. However, staying with Pele under the guise of Lohiau ushered me into the identity of the amateur in its original sense, from the French 'amour', meaning someone who loves what they do. The new status required an alternate approach to employment in the architectural field.

In doing so, a recommendation from Professor Ellis to work for a contractor came to mind. As the estimator, I worked with the crew, in the office, and with clients. It was a small operation that allowed me to see construction from many angles. At the same time, bidding and obtaining permits offer exposure to the business aspects of the construction industry in the Hawaiian Islands.

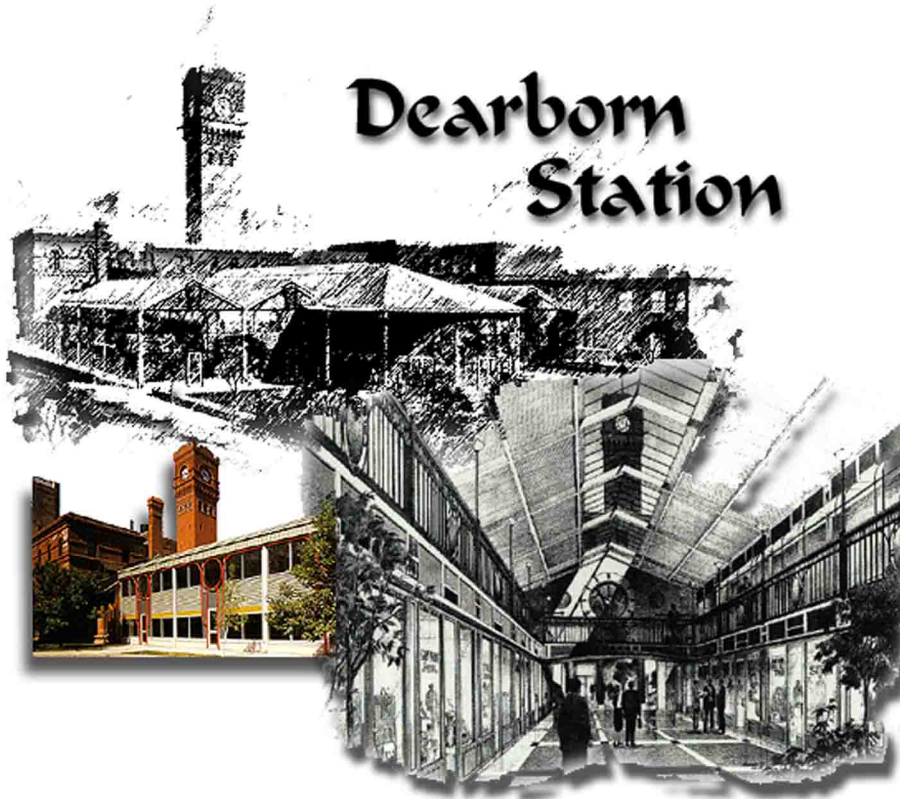
Instead of viewing amateur status as an insult, a criticism about my approach to work, I was to embrace it, albeit unconsciously at first, as the means to balance my needs between Critical consciousness and poetic perception. This meant an intimate approach to what I do, the situations I am in, and those close to me. Thus, I relinquished studying for the architectural exam or seeking a position in a firm for the time being.

Shao Fu Ren called me back, and I responded. But unlike our mythic experience in Hawaii, she was no longer unconsciously in the role of Hii'aka. Consciously she was a woman at home in her element, San Francisco, and had reached such a level of contentment that she was dispensing gifts. My assumption of amateur status concerning architecture was naïve but quickly demonstrated its rewards on my return to the California mainland.

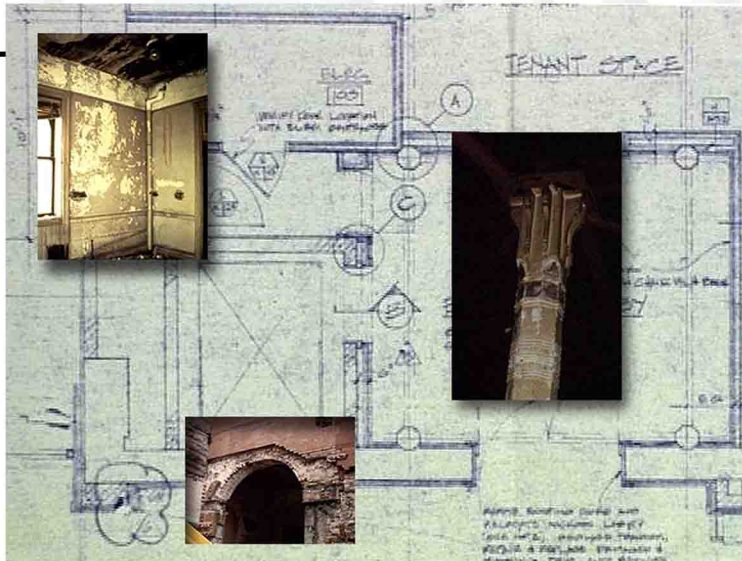


Her call was perfectly timed. I was the right person, in the right place, at the right time when Kaplan/ McLaughlin/ Diaz (KMD) expanded their contract administration (CA) department. I had never heard of contract administration, but when I sent in my resume, they immediately called and invited me for an interview with the CA director. Soon after, I was hired on the business side of the firm without a license or previous office experience. This began a six-year love affair with concrete, glass, and steel.

Dearborn Station



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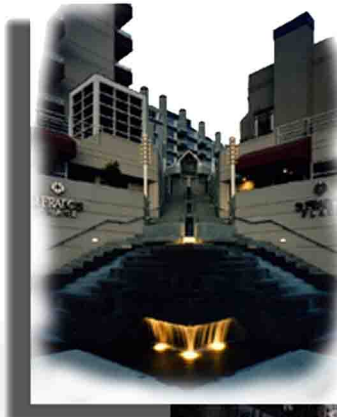




St.
Francis
Place



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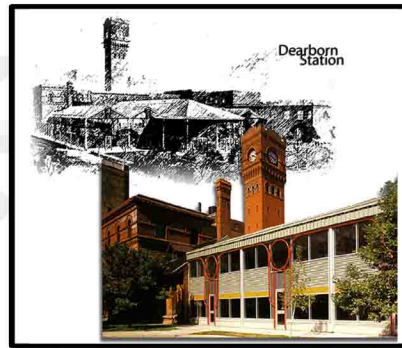
49
STEVENSON



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I never questioned why I ended up in architecture. Things just seemed to happen. Aside from the elective mechanical drawing class I enjoyed in high school, nothing consciously pointed to architecture until I graduated. Then by chance, my mother was hired as a receptionist by a prominent architectural firm in the city. One day I paid her a visit at work, and she walked me through the office where I met one of the principals, William Wurster, the same person the architectural building at Berkeley is named after.

The stroke of good luck in meeting him introduced me to the world of Design. I believe I unconsciously decided to study architecture that day. But no one told me the cold hard truth about architecture: minorities lack an architectural client base, and minority communities do not invest in architecture to shelter their assets. These realities never occurred to me. I was in love with Design.



The answer to why I gravitated to architecture came in 1983. With the completion of the Dearborn Train Station project, I was flying high. Intent on demonstrating my abilities to Shao Fu Ren, I accept an offer from the firm to CA a massive housing project in downtown SF, St. Francis Place.

Poetic perception exposed how architecture unified my life at this pivotal moment.

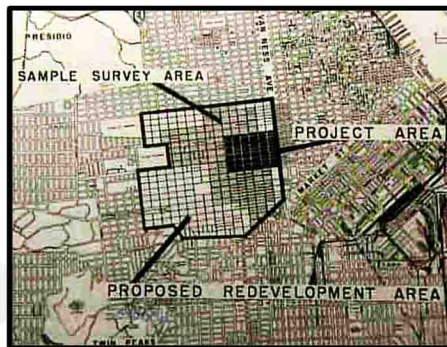
“And once you are awake, you shall remain awake eternally. ”

Thus Spoke Zarathustra - A Book For All And None

The Fillmore District Redevelopment Betrayal

The Black community's betrayal in San Francisco began in earnest in 1953. Roughly eight years after shipyard production began to wind down, a concerted effort to rid the city of its Black population gained momentum. Under the guise of rehabilitating existing structures, "slum clearance" is placed on hold due to economic and social cost concerns.

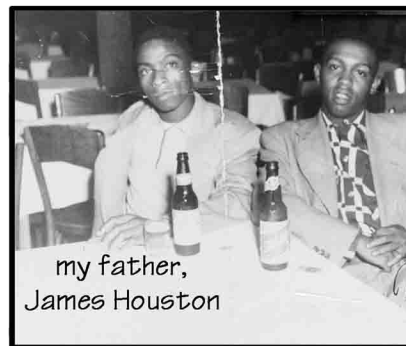
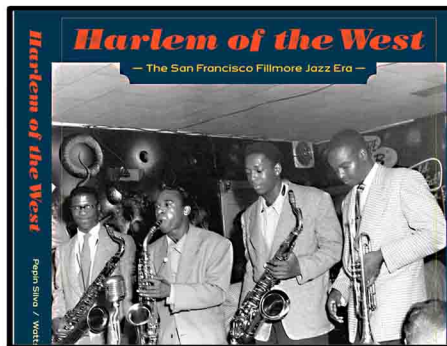
Still, seven years later, Justin Herman, head of the city's redevelopment agency, is ready to move forward. Using the power of Eminent Domain, the agency begins forcing families to move out of their homes, some of which they have owned for 90 years. The homes are subsequently demolished and made into parking lots.



Justin Herman prophetically declares, "Without adequate housing for the poor, critics will rightly condemn urban renewal as a land-grab for the rich and a heartless push-out for the poor and nonwhites."

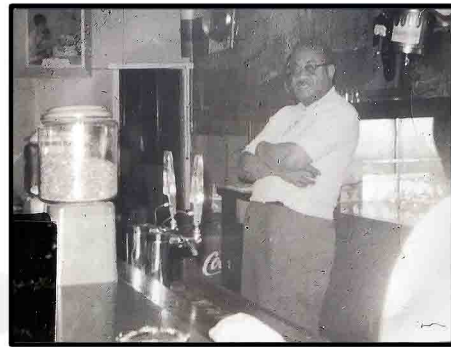
Our home and business are classic mixed-use, where we work below and live above. Many Black-owned businesses were similarly housed in Victorian live/work environments. Two years after his prophecy, the agency comes after our home. They take the home, bar, and restaurant business on the ground floor.

The Black Fillmore District is a vibrant hotbed of Jazz, known to some as the *Harlem of the West*. Filled with families that mainly rent, roughly 10 percent of the Black population owns their home, and 1 percent owns a business. Since my grandparents were from the South and carried the idea of 40 acres and a mule, autonomy, and do-it-yourself, we own both.



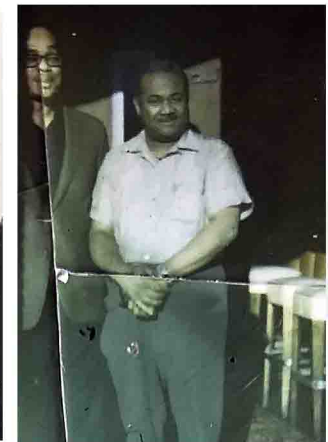
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Ben and Annabelle were pillars of the community. Annabelle, a founding member of the Uptown Church of Christ, while she and Ben feed “street corner men,” men who lived in rented rooms and ate out every day, in the Club La Jolla. *Talley's Corner* offers an excellent sociological study of such men and their lifestyle, to which the café or restaurant is crucial.



PLAY ▶

Uptown Church of Christ Chorus



Two years after Kennedy's murder, we have to close and move out. Our home was in good shape and wasn't relocated.

Callously uprooted, this is the fork in the road, the betrayal that shapes my fate. We wander from house to house. My grandparents will buy and sell other properties in the city, but the family will never be the same. The loss of our home deeply wounds me, but I hide my anger so well that I don't even know I'm angry.



PLAY ▶

This is par for the course since Black anger must be suppressed for fear of white reprisal. Unknown to my conscious self, that old deep-seated analogous reasoning moved the family and me in ways we never imagined. I had learned the lesson so well I fooled myself, but I couldn't fool the inner me.

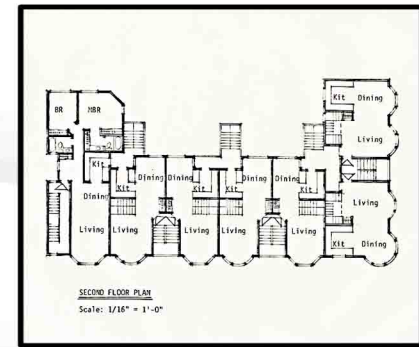
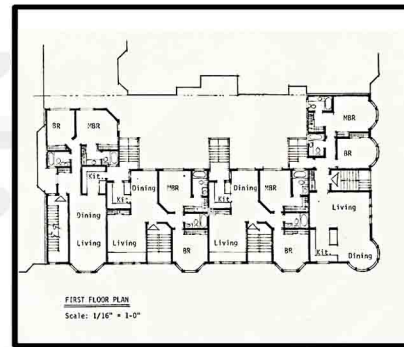
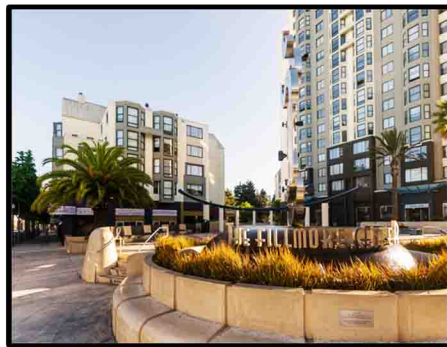


PLAY ▶



By 1983, I have returned from Hawaii due to Shao Fu Ren's call and work for KMD. In terms of the land vacated by the Black community two decades earlier, Mayor Dianne Feinstein's efforts to gentrify the area finally succeeded. Construction of a new complex of stores, restaurants, and hundreds of apartments and condominiums begins.

Nevertheless, the new housing units are not affordable for the former Black Fillmore residents. They are intentionally priced out of the market, and San Francisco begins to lose what's left of its Black population.



During this time, two friends from architecture school approached me with a project. Both are Asian Americans. Gilbert Chan of Asian Neighborhood Design and Warren Seeto has a potential condominium development project, an architect (one of our teachers from school), and the plans. What they need help to obtain is land.

A policy demand had been put into place by the Western Addition Community Organization (WACO) while I was away in school. Their strategy demanded that displaced residents who had homes and businesses taken by the Redevelopment have first preference on any land offered for sale by the agency. Certificates of preference were issued to 4,719 resident homeowners and 883 business owners, of which only 1,099 housing and 39 business certificates would be cashed in. My grandparents have one of each.

As a general partner in the Alamo Square project, my task is to secure the land. With the approval of my grandparents and the assistance of WACO, the development of Alamo Square has the quality of a dream. Until my soon-to-be partners brought it to my attention, I had no idea about the demand, but it exists and works. In short order, WACO committee members fast-track our housing certificate request, and I obtained control of a quarter-acre corner lot in the Fillmore district. The process moves so smoothly that my partners are caught off guard when the land documents come through.

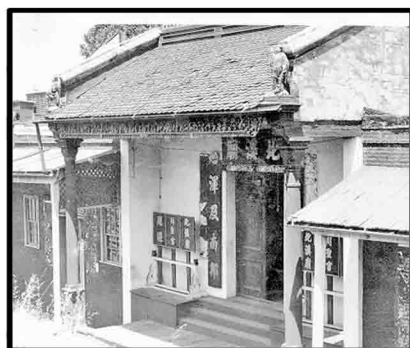
Control of the land meant we had to move on financing. We structure a limited partnership for this purpose, with each offer at \$10,000, and set about asking friends and acquaintances to join. Each partner must raise \$40,000 of the \$120,000 needed to secure the construction loan.



Outreach to the Black community produces no takers. Despite an 81 percent return on \$10,000, not one personal acquaintance within the Black community will take the chance. But then, an unlikely source of support quickly fills the vacuum, two Chinese women.

Shao Fu Ren is the first to take advantage of the Alamo limited partner offer. We have lived and loved for several years and are in the process of separating due to inconsiderate unskilled behavior on my part. Nonetheless, she responds.

A daughter of a politically well-connected Chinese family in San Francisco, she is native-born, a Longtime Californian. Her family is part of the Gold Rush and settles in Marysville. Over time, their clan and Tong affiliation make them a force in the small town. They build their family temple there. Men in her family, like many others, came to “Gold Mountain” in search of better lives and had no idea of the racial prejudice that waited.



They eventually established a stronghold in San Francisco, and Shao Fu Ren's father became the first Chinese American president of the San Francisco Board of Education.

Shao Fu Ren provides two investors for the project.

A martial arts acquaintance also accepts a limited partner offer, but what startles me is how she takes it. I introduce the idea. She asks for and reads the Pro-forma document I have with me and then writes a check. This time I'm caught off guard and intrigued.



PLAY ▶

An immigrant from Taiwan and the daughter of a farmer/merchant/industrialist family, Fu Ren understands risk and is fearless in business. She visits the construction site to observe its progress and, on completion, accepts another offer from me, an invitation to Hawaii. Initially an island girl in Taiwan, she's forgotten island magic. The islands capture her. Three or four months after our return from the Islands, I was informed that she was moving there and I could come if I wished.

Her offer initiates a struggle of standpoints. Critical consciousness demanded I purchase one of the units for my grandparents and move them in. A move that completes the cycle by reestablishing a presence in the community and signals the family's solidarity with the Black struggle in San Francisco. In opposition was the poetic standpoint. Pele's land, beauty, serenity, and caress were equally compelling and undeniable. I had never been happier in a place as I was there.

Caught in what appeared to be a stalemate, the poetic perspective won out by unifying the opposites. A strong emphatic triumphant return wasn't necessary, so the Hollywood ending many would expect with the Alamo project's conclusion did not materialize.



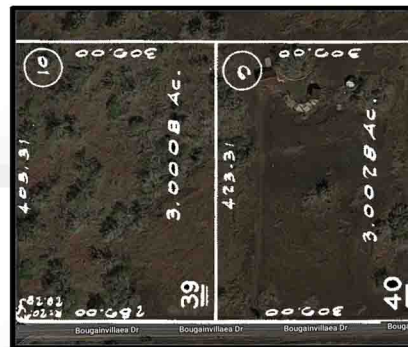
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My grandparents did not reestablish our presence in the old community in that manner. The solution, poetic justice, satisfying all the needs, was more complex. The building itself symbolized our presence in the community to those in the know.

No amount of proceeds earned from the Alamo project could repay the debt society owed us from the Fillmore experience or as Black Americans. That social justice and Critical consciousness struggle would continue based from Fu Ren's San Francisco home. However, the tantalizing prospect of poetic justice and its far-reaching future possibilities would act as reparations to end family feelings of resentment, rancor, and bitterness against the betrayal at the hands of the Redevelopment Agency.

Freed of the grudges from the past, I was at liberty to follow Fu Ren to Hawaii. Soon after, the premiere projects to grace the Honolulu skyline are placed under my supervision as architectural project manager and contract administrator.

However, with social injustice on the rise and climate change looming in the future, a change of location was in order. A move south made sense, but not back to the insanity of the Black-and-white struggle in states like Texas or Georgia, where many Black people relocated after being displaced from the city.



Instead of returning to that South, Grandma and I purchased land and moved the “homestead” to South Point on the Big Island of Hawaii, the southernmost point in the United States. And after purchasing land on the island, Fu Ren directed my attention to an advertisement. Several condominiums are for sale at a highly reasonable price in the Holualoa area above Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. Ideally situated on the volcanic mountainside, where one can swim and breathe, I purchased one, and over the years, the condo has appreciated significantly.

Through poetic justice, the family achieves peace and happiness with the prospect of more to come.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed
Paulo Freire

Thinking Critically About Photovoice:
Achieving Empowerment and Social Change
Linda Liebenberg

Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and
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Caroline Wang, DrPH, Mary Ann Burris, PhD

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Harlem of the West
Silva and Watts

Talley's Corner
Elliott Liebow

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Want to know more...



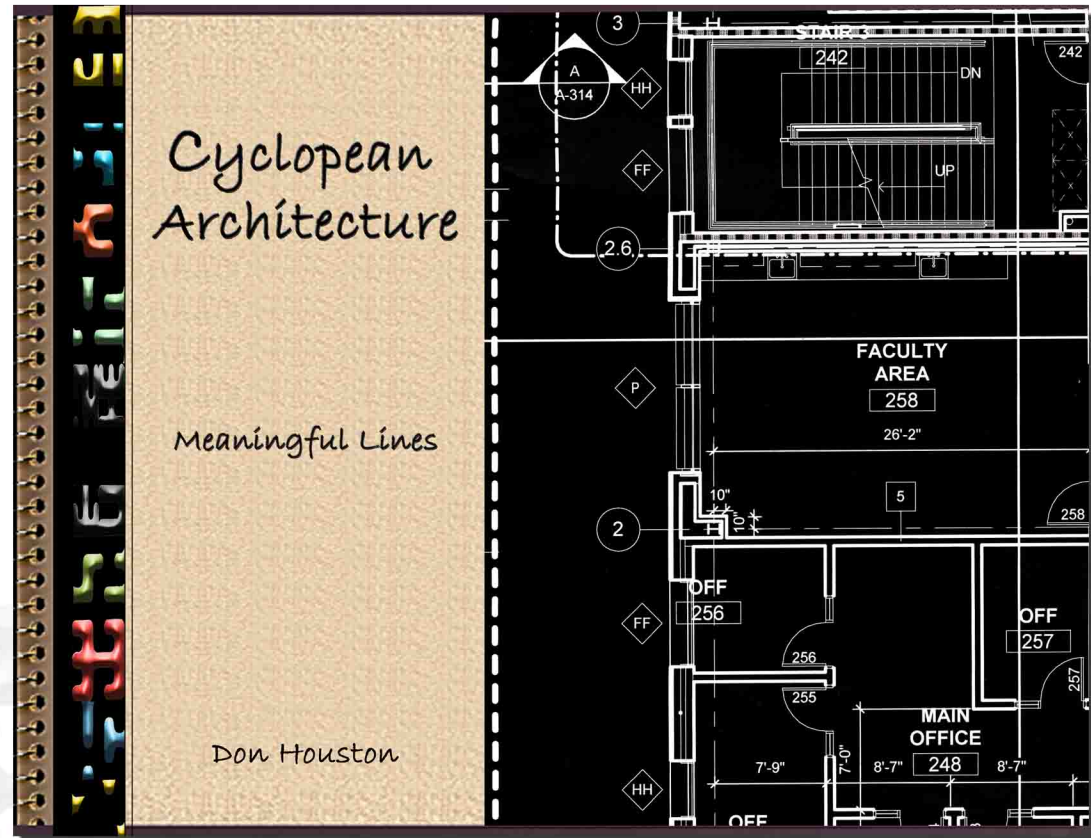
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Gospel of Thomas

"If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."



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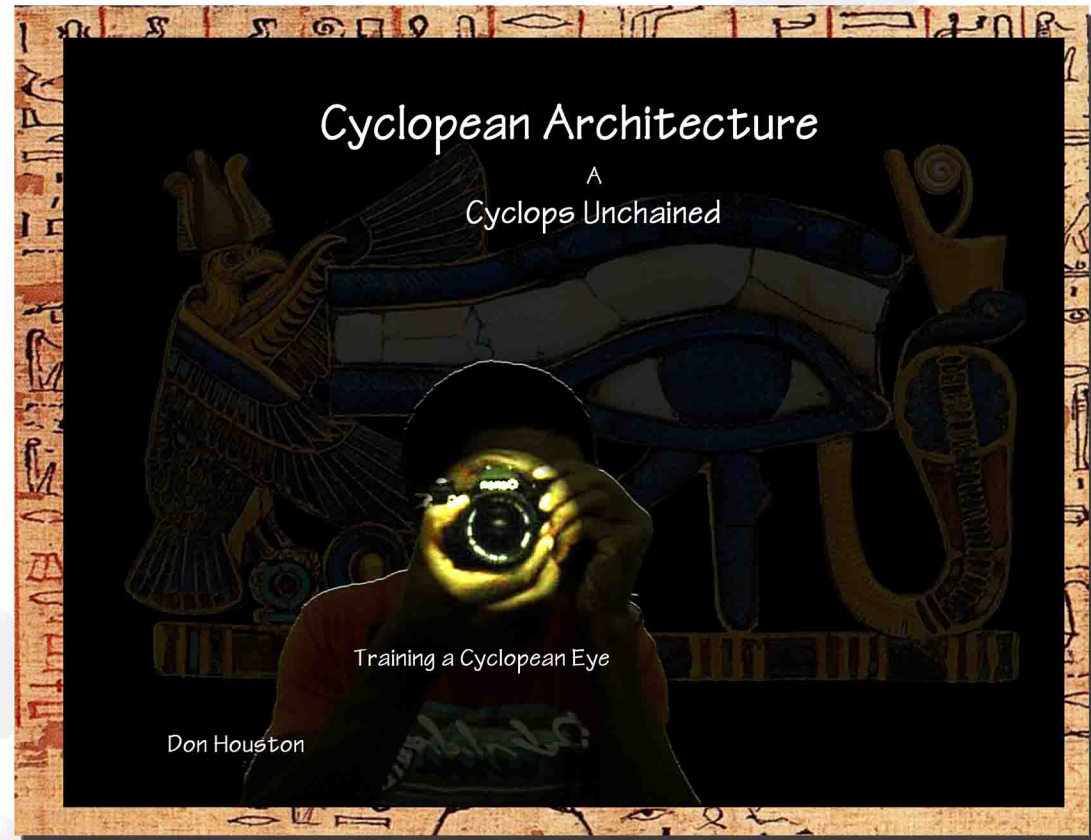


Cyclopean Architecture

At the end of my career, I reflect on what has transpired and what I mean by Cyclopean Architecture. Reviewing my slide library prompts this reflection as I prepare them for the Ethnic Studies and, hopefully, the College of Environment Design archives. With projects complete, my present understanding of self stands in stark contrast to the self I was at the beginning when Professor Ellis provided his insightful analysis. "You have no idea what the lines mean." His assessment was correct. But unlike many people of color who might accept this situation as a disadvantage, I refused to do so. Unconsciously I saw an opening, an opportunity to apply the reasoning found in the Gospel of Thomas.

Why a Cyclops has one eye

The answer to the riddle, why does the mythical Cyclops have one eye, is a function of the aesthetic perception ancient Black builders had in mind. A person practicing Cyclopean Architecture genuinely sees things differently than others engaged in design and construction. This difference has to do with binocular rivalry and the use of hallucinogenic compounds like the Blue Lotus.



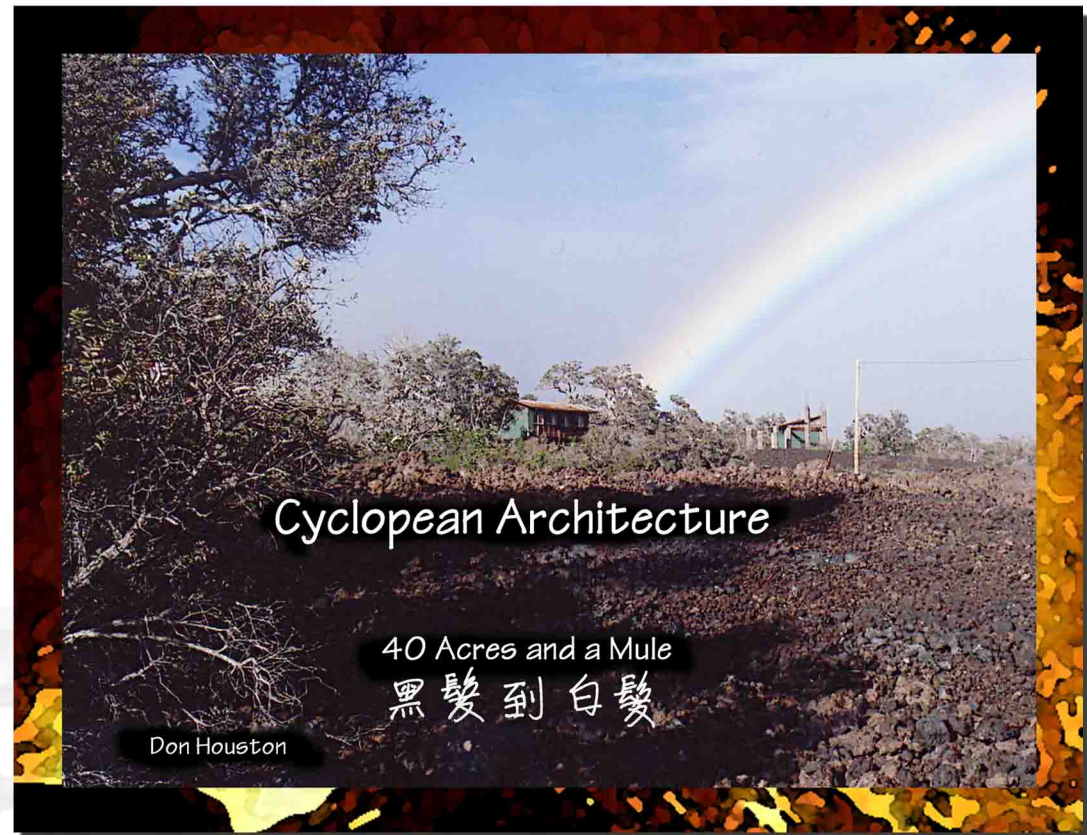
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Cyclopean Architecture

A Cyclops is a creature of fantasy. It never existed. It is, however, a fabrication to disguise and hide the historical people who did exist and their achievements. The people, who the cyclops represent, maintained a specific type of creative vision signified by one eye. They were Greek natives with cultural ties to Black Africa and believed in the “all-seeing” eye in ancient times. The ancient walls and buildings named cyclopean architecture came from them, an analogy I appropriated to reestablish architecture’s Black African roots.

At the End of a Rainbow

Have you ever been at the end of a rainbow? I have. A pot of gold is supposed to be at the end of a rainbow, but that's not what I found on one of our family trips to Hawaii. This trip was unique because we were trying to decide whether to keep our land or sell it. For 30 years, we have unsuccessfully attempted to build a house by hand.



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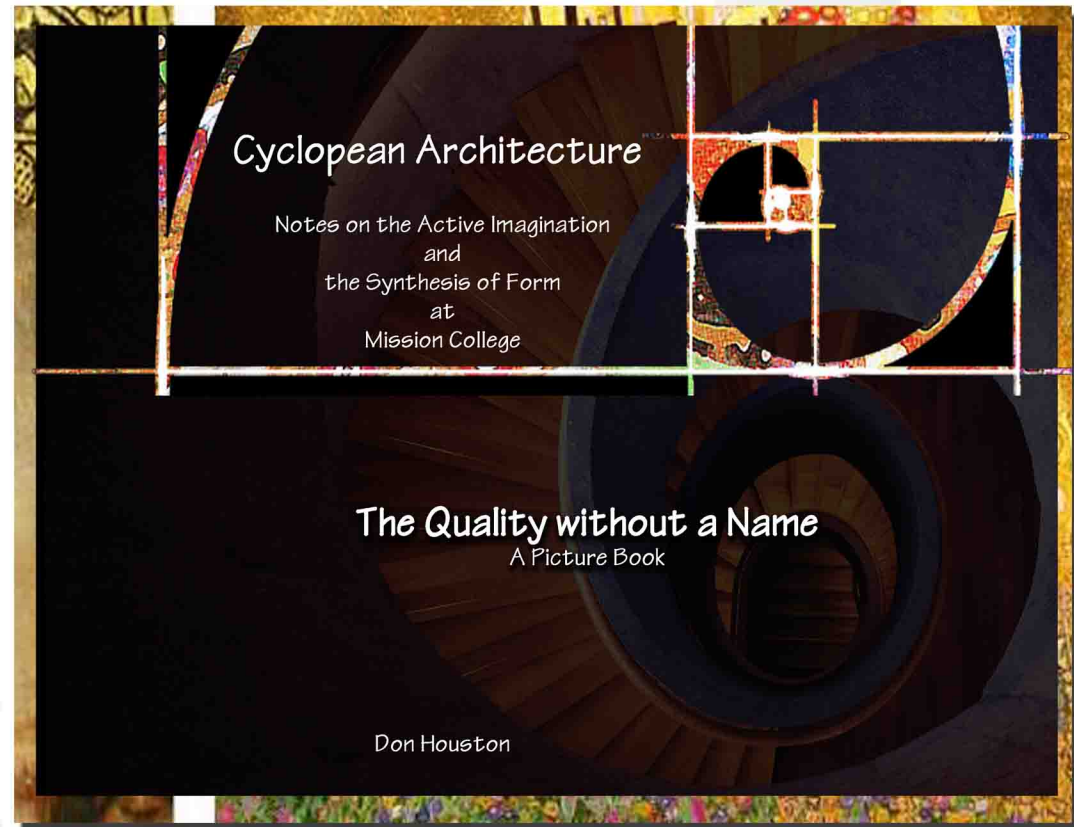
Cyclopean Architecture

Fu Ren doesn't see any future in trying any longer. In the old days, I could leave a hammer out on the land between our trips and return with the hammer still where I had left it. But those days are gone; theft and vandalism now plague the area.

We decide to drive to the site and let the land tell us what to do. As we turn the final corner, we get our answer. A rainbow appears to terminate at the shed. Although Fu Ren isn't convinced, I have my answer. And later, as we drive toward South Point for lunch, the rainbow persists. It's on the highway just in front of the car. It's as close to the end of a rainbow as one can get.

Some years ago, Fu Ren and I visited the Golden Pavilion in Kyoto on vacation in Japan. As the crowd gathered to look across the water, I veered off to the left and discovered a chained-off path. Something about that path caught my attention. Some would call the path perfect, from the compacted earth to the crushed stone on the lane to the suggestion of entry. But that day, I encountered a quality of space I could not name.

The same thing happened at Mission College.



Cyclopean Architecture

As a young architecture student, I dreamt grandiose dreams of designing community spaces that could reinvigorate the black community, but never in my wildest imagination did I dream of designing such spaces for the common good, using the Public Trust. Such a thought was beyond my imagination as a black man in a white world. I almost abandoned my position at Mission due to a failure to communicate with one of the administrators. Still, as Littlewood's Law would have it, miracles happen more often than we can imagine, and a miracle did indeed occur at Mission.

A special thanks
to
Stuart Robson
for his continuing support

PLAY ▶

“And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.”

TELEM PHOTOVOICE

PLAY ▶

Love Your Fate