Rethinking "Stuff"

Jonathan Anthony

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rethinking 'stuff'

design thesis
jonathan anthony

advisor: daniele profeta

thesis prep booklet
fall 2016
Groupius wrote a book on grain silos, Le Corbusier a book on aeroplanes and Charlotte Perriant - it was said - brought a new object to the office every morning; but in the fifties we collected ads - Peter & Alison Smithson

... but today we collect everything - Sylvia Lavin,

... but today we store everything - Jon Anthony, re-thinking stuff
‘rethinking stuff’

design thesis
2016-2017
jonathan anthony

syracuse university
school of architecture

main advisor:
professor daniele profeta

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professor jonathan louie
professor ted brown
re-thinking stuff is a manifesto for the study of material culture and a new way of looking at the ‘stuff’ that surrounds us and makes up so much of our social and personal life.

this thesis contends it is time to acknowledge and confront the lack of attention to how we store our stuff - most importantly what are the architectural effects of rethinking stuff in storage.
we live in a time where as architectural theorist Sylvia Lavin mentions ‘we collect everything’. Cabinets of curiosities, the Sir John Soane Museum, and the television series hoarders, hoarding: buried alive remind us of our material obsession. While we have embraced a material culture, we’ve also quickly come to realize our stuff is more than we can possibly handle or like at one given time. So our houses adapt and supply us with more storage space. Storage centers populate both urban and suburban areas. Google Drive, Dropbox, Pinterest, Tumblr and ‘the cloud’ provide us with endless platforms to store our digital collections. Data centers and digital farms become the architectural result of our digital hoarding. As our methods of storing grow, adapt, die and live- our storage environments especially the big box storage facility tend to not respond to the minutia of stuff and the effects of stuff in the everyday. If we have learned anything from the relationship of stuff, owner and their environment it is that it is fundamentally ‘zeitgeist’ – reflecting dominant set of relationships, ideals and attitudes during a particular time period. This thesis argues that today stuff is increasingly challenging notions of property, ritual, temporality, accessibility and materiality.
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stuff

noun
1. matter, material, articles, or activities of a specified or indeterminate kind that are being referred to, indicated, or implied.

2. the basic constituents or characteristics of something or someone.

verb
1. fill (a receptacle or space) tightly with something.
why stuff?

“even though things do not at first appear architectural because they do not contribute directly to the construction or the inhabitation of the building, they set effects in motion that activate relations between bodies and objects in space, structure, the perception of space, and alter patterns of circulation and use.”

-sylvia lavin, architecture in extremis, log 18

what stuff?

stuff (physical)

junk
knick-knack
tchotchle

things
goods
trinket

souvenir
baggage

matter
rummage

stuff (digital)
matter
data
files
screenshots

stuff (abstract)

ideas
memories
information
stuff today, stuff in storage today
property

storage often acts as a private entity foremost interested in private ownership. yet there seems to be an opportunity to capitalize on the fuzzy boundaries of property and ownership.

with this in mind ‘stuff is constantly re-interpreted. one man’s trash (often ‘dead storage’) is another man’s treasure. networks, overlaps, temporary couplings, twins and triplets have the potential to be established.

andrew zago, moma foreclosed
the ‘relaxation of site boundaries’, begins to combat traditional notions of property and ownership of space.

no stop city, archizoom
no stop city portrays an entirely interior world with an endless grid filled with stuff. tents, appliances and even natural artifacts (mountains) fill the interior. “mass production begins to produce infinite urban decors.”

shel silverstein, sharing
who owns the stuff?
time

storage facilities act as static containers that do not recognize the ever changing and accumulation of stuff that occur over time. traditional architectural responses to additional storage is to produce more static containers.
ritual

our typical storage environments often neglect other processes of stuff such as hoarding, exhibiting, collecting, archiving and accumulating. How can storage environments begin to benefit from other accepted processes of stuff?
storage

noun
1. the action or method of storing something for future use.

2. the retention of retrievable data on a computer or other electronic system; memory.

3. space available for storing something, especially allocated space in a warehouse.
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goodwillintl Your stuff can help others.

good will ad
digital & physical storing collide

View all 2 comments
5 DAYS AGO

world’s largest chest of drawers
american home as storage furniture
Institutional storage

digital storage

Physical storage of collections

Little mermaid: "You want thingamabobs? I’ve got twenty!"

Physical storage of accumulation

Jon Anthony

Thesis 2016-2017 'Re-thinking stuff'

Objects of storage

'Successful' places of storage

Infrastructure storage
desktop storage

the storage of images

a. mac desktop organization is setup to: sort by > snap to grid

b. icon size is set at forty-four (44) by forty-four (44).

c. a matrix of sixteen (16) rows x nine (9) columns can be filled with screenshots and images.

d. one hundred and forty four (144) images can be displayed without any disturbance.

e. after one hundred and forty four (144) images have been displayed, images overlap on top of existing matrix.

f. the second layer images are justified to the right and down to allow bottom layer to read through

g. as images pile up desktop appears both organized and disorganized, legible to illegible.

h. changing the settings of the icon size, justifications and grid spacing radically changes the appearance and organization.
thesis archive

the collection and exhibition of information

a. information regardless of content is first arranged alphabetically. This information is allocated the same amount of space per item. Each item is given a title in minion pro bold font size twenty-eight (28) and subtext in brandon grotesque font size twenty (20).

b. nine (9) selected boxes are given numbers to highlight a succinct narrative.

c. some boxes are layered with images, hatches or left blank. Hatches and images are monochromatic.

d. some information is useful to the project taking a more academic tone while other information is more playful.

e. some boxes refer to other boxes, using the words ‘see also) giving the viewer a very different prescribed ‘circulation’ route.
the collection and exhibition of information

a. information is arranged by content. content includes words that the project is interested in, readings, related precedents and people. this information is allocated the same amount of space per item in the size of a square. each item is given a title in minion pro bold font size twenty (20) and subtext in brandon grotesque font size ten (10).

b. all boxes are numbered. this gives a blatant understanding of the amount of individual information.

c. each individual box gets a circle. when boxes relate based on content they are grouped via a larger circle.

d. some information is useful to the project taking a more academic tone while other information is more playful.

e. some boxes refer to other boxes, using the words ‘see also) giving the viewer a very different prescribed ‘circulation’ route.
evidence in clue

the storage of evidence

a. someone is murdered in a room, with a specific weapon.

b. players circulate on a grid to move to each room to then ask their opponents questions about the murderer, the weapon and the location of the murder. nine rooms are placed on the edges of the board. players move in between them.

c. the number on the dice you roll allows the number of tiles you can move to.

d. if someone is blocking the doorway you can not get into the room.

f. some rooms have multiple doorways

e. circulation is relatively normal except for in four rooms where you can make unreasonable jumps to another room.
resources

the collection of resources in settlers of catan

a. a topography of hexagonal pieces are put together to form a landscape. land is differentiated into four different resources that players acquire.

b. players must acquire the resources of land for the construction and ownership of roads, houses and settlements. the player with the most property wins the game.

c. players collect resources and build property by navigating the hexagonal edges.

b. roads align to hexagon edges. houses align to hexagon corners. two consecutive roads are needed before you can build a house or settlement.

e. multiple people can collect and own the same resource due to the shape of pieces and the strategy of the game. players can prohibit each other from getting the resources they might desire or need.
documenting five different environments of storage – the honey-pot ant, the fridge, the suburban home, the storage facility, and the seed bank, the drawings begin to outline current methods of storing stuff. they also act projectively- animating the effects of stuff in their environments.
honey-pot ant
thesis 2016- 2017 - 're-thinking stuff'

honey pot ants

jon anthony
stuff changes
stuff changes from being in storage to being put to use.
as food is stored in the honey-pot ant it gains
nutrients- ‘value’ during storage.

stuff is collective
all of the ants work together to create one shared
storage system.
stuff takes on an identity
stuff is no longer secondary but much more important.
the honey-pot ant and the contents they store become
one. stuff goes from being stuff to Stuff:
stuff is zoned
stuff is tied to issues of property. stuff often float between ownership and established property lines

stuff is collective
multiple owners share stuff
stuff is dead

stuff is no longer at its original state. food and other items fall into disarray... stuff becomes unrecognizable. stuff is no longer relevant to its user getting pushed to the back of the shelf and out of sight.
stuff is maintained
stuff that prioritizes the life of other stuff first. baking soda is placed in the fridge to maintain the health of the fridge ecosystem as a whole.

stuff is blurred
property zones in the fridge become blurred in the freezer. the freezer becomes a free for all where both individuality of the item and who it belongs to is blurred
stuff is borrowed
roommate temporarily takes ownership of other roommate's stuff

stuff is inherited
roommate gives leftover chinese food to other roommate. stuff gains a new owner.
suburban dwelling
thesis 2016-2017 ‘re-thinking stuff’

jon anthony

thesis 2016-2017 ‘re-thinking stuff’

suburban home

jon anthony
stuff is active
stuff is in play; stuff goes from being 'stored' in the
garage to being put to use. stuff goes from one storage
place to another storage space.
stuff is nested
stuff lives within other stuff. stuff secretly or not so secretly fills the insides of cupboards, drawers and ottomans.

stuff blends in
stuff and its ecosystem blend together. the garage floor gets painted in a jackson pollock style that begins to allow stuff to float freely and blend in with the ground.
self storage facility
thesis 2016-2017 're-thinking stuff'

jon anthony

thesis 2016-2017 're-thinking stuff'

syracuse self storage facility

jon anthony
stuff is individual
zones of the storage facility explicitly highlight areas
where an environment and the stuff inside belong to
just one owner/group of owners.

stuff is isolated
stuff is compartamentalized
stuff is maintained
stuff that prioritizes the life of other stuff first. sur-
veillance, fences, and security keeps the health of the
storage ecosystem.

jon anthony
seed bank
thesis 2016-2017 're-thinking stuff'

Jon Anthony

Svalbard International Seed Bank
The Syrian government retrieved seeds from the seed bank in 2015. What was largely understood as a stagnant collection transformed into something very differently.
projective narratives

stuff is collective, zoned and retrieved. stuff is maintained, active, dead, concealed, appropriate, and inappropriate. stuff blends in, nested, secondary, borrowed, inherited, and changed. stuff is blurred, flat, pseudo flat, and volumetric.

drawing from richard serra’s 1967-68 famous list of verbs - which implies generation of objects or form through action, my list of gerunds implies a generation of effects from objects (stuff). going forward, five narratives begin to question the architectural effects of when stuff is re-thought based off of animated, spatial and invisible effects.
lost & found exhibit 01/5

claire johnson a curator at the museum of modern art proposes a permanent interactive exhibition space for lost and found items in new york city
divorced empty nesters 02/5

mary lou and tom just got divorced. their three children are all in college and have left their childhood belongings at home. as mary lou and tom try to find a new home, they are confronted with the difficulty of where to put their children’s stuff, whose new home does it belong in and how important is stuff still to their children.
hacker 03/5

charlie overide (charl130v3rr1d3) is about to uncover top government secrets. online, charlie is in conversation with other anonymous whistleblowers. not being able to trust anyone or any pre-made online storage site charlie begins to create his own storage drive.
living nomadically, a homeless person’s stuff is incredibly important to them. A group of homeless decide they would benefit from combining their stuff into one shared storage ecosystem.
twins 05/5

Miles and Felix do everything together, but also fight over everything. Miles’s stuff is Felix’s stuff and vice versa. Their playroom has become overcrowded and the parents decide to devise a new storage system for their stuff.
room environment for review

the opportunity to use the thesis prep review as a platform to begin rethinking environments of stuff
this log documents the process of the thesis -- readings, conversations, images and other stuff...
Among the various meanings of the French word *objet*, the dictionary gives this: ‘Anything which is the cause or subject of a passion.’ Figuratively and most typically: the loved object.

It ought to be obvious that the objects that occupy our daily lives fact the objects of a passion, that of personal possession, whose invested affect is in no way inferior to that of any other variety of passion. Indeed, this everyday passion often outstrips all the others. What is characteristic of this passion is that it is tempered, diffuse, and regulative: only guess at its fundamental role in keeping the lives of the individual and the collectivity on an even footing, and in supporting the project of survival. In this respect, the objects in our lives, as dist the way we make use of them at a given moment, represent much more, something profoundly related to subjectivity: for object is a resistant material body, it is also, simultaneously, a realm over which I hold sway, a thing whose meaning is given only to myself. It is all my own, the object of my passion.

THE OBJECT DIVESTED OF ITS FUNCTION

The fact that I make use of a refrigerator in order to freeze food is one thing; that the refrigerator is defined in terms of a practical transat is another. In this sense, it is an object so much as a freezing mechanism. In this sense, it is an object that is possessed in an implement, a thing to possess it. Possession cannot apply to an implement, nor to utilize always directs me back to the world. Rather, in this sense, all objects that are possessed submit to the same operation and participate in a mutual relationship so that they thereby constitute themselves on the basis of which the subject seeks to piece together personal microcosm.
friday, november 4

conversation w/ professor profeta:
sectional perspective of fridge sounds good
what is mood of residential drawing? different layers of heirarchies? piles-static?
are drawings too descriptive? add second level of information.

choose direction-- interested in types of storage being different (heirarchies) (1) or equal - ‘mat-ness’ - flatness (2) or psedo flatness (3)

is drawing about retrieval, cleanliness?
derg v. chaos
mat flowing- clue like connections?
Some sort of color archival?
levels of security
visit a storage facility

put in effort into fridge drawing-- screws, crubbles

tuesday, november 8

conversation w/ professor profeta:
include crumbles/ rotten food - ‘one man’s trash is another man’s treasure in fridge drawings
representation in house/fridge should be similar
stuff should read more... put efforts into two drawings, make storage center as quick as possible so panel knows this isn't a residential project

storage facility drawing should also be vertical
adjust fridge opening
notate more heavily, give narrative

later on items can be projected onto drawing
curate enviornment in presentation
Thursday, November 10

Thesis Review Two: Conversation w/ Professors Profeta, Brown + Louie

Professor Brown: Questions attention to individual objects in drawings, mentions I seem most interested in fridge. Interested in both flatness of stuff but also volumetric. Mentions drawings may begin to reflect notions of temporal effects. Stuff is also about accumulation—stuff is about residue and not always about collecting. Fridge is interesting because it is apart of the everyday. Day to day—ritual should be embedded in drawings. Each scale has positive and negative things you can learn from. Not just storage facility is all bad.

Professor Louie: Seems like a power of 10 is going on. Where do you stop? Perhaps the end goal of the thesis is not a storage facility. Mentions Joseph Cornell boxes and Gursky’s 99 cent store. Using stuff as both noun and a verb. Begin to define my interest/definition.

Professor Profeta: Doesn’t see a problem with using the storage facility as an exercise for the bigger picture. Thinks project will still be effective if experience is embedded in presentation—room filled with stuff...
2nd Thesis Prep Review - Fall 2016

Student: Anthony, Jonathan
Date: Thursday, November 10, 2016
Room: 404

Primary Advisor: Profeta, Danie
Advisor 1: Louie, Jonathan
Advisor 2: Brown, Ted

Evaluation Completed by:
Brown, Ted

Project:
're-thinking stuff

*Remember to upload your Thesis

1. Facts:
- invisible infrastructure
- how does it relate?

2. Theory:
- shared space (not property)
- shared property
- boundaries
- specificity of objects
- how to put these in play

Questions:
- how to put these in play

Return evaluation to Carol Pettinelli in Slocum 201 by November 11, 2016 for student
Friday November 18

Conversation w/ Professor Profeta,
Sketch out room for final thesis/final prep room
Will there be models? Performance? What do I need? Technically? Do I need 402? This will help with to do list
*Not making a building but an ecosystem
Project is not about efficiency of stuff
Possible narrative for project in the future
Narrative was too linear in verbal presentation - needs to reach conclusions quicker. Possibly re-write verbal prep presentation
drawings
Need to be taken to one more step graphically
tone? Texture? Projection?
Proposed 2 more drawings (xs, xl)
These scales are useful as they give ways of storage that we are not inherently used to
xs- ant storage- body of ant- community
xl- seed bank- who is it stored for- under what property- storing property- collection for preservation
These drawings should link to other drawings
These drawings should give more than what the other drawings are doing
Make website, learn with dabota
Adobe Muse
Get the work out there- how do I position my project in world

Thursday, December 1

Conversation w/ Professor Profeta,
Seed bank drawing
Property Lines- retrieval
cutting through geology
Exhibition thesis prep room
Why carpet? What connotation does the carpet conjure? - residential space?
Understand room as storage
Areas of exhibition v. areas of unconcentrated/ typical space
Carpet as sanitized area vs. more didactic?
Boxes for typical storage

Extract ideas from drawings
Material, temporal, accessibility, property boundaries
Website and room should pull from these findings

Projective steps forward, dry run
As an intervention where do I come in
This is all productive for me because I'm moving in this direction...
Are We Collecting the “Right Stuff”?

by CAROLYN HEALD*

Introduction

I have called this article, “Are we collecting the ‘Right Stuff’?” because it is about ‘stuff’—objects, hold-in-your-hands artifacts that we as archivists collect, as opposed to information which is ephemeral and perceived only by the intellect. In other words, the article is about artifacts vs. information, or the age-old dichotomy of form and content.

We are told that we live in an information age; increasingly archivists are being required to re-invent themselves as purveyors of information. We are information managers or information specialists; we provide access to information. It is easy to understand why this self-perception has come about in recent years. The medium of archiving is becoming more ephemeral, less fixed as we continue to digitize and move information around. In the world of databases and automated access to perform modern daily tasks, information is coming from a wide variety of sources, and with the advent of computer technology and microforms, the content of records, as far as we are concerned, is increasingly divorced from, and seemingly less dependent on, the form.

Is this rupture a good thing? Are virtual archives on the horizon? Does the future of content/information lie over form/artifact? Reflect the professional archival role. Are we as archivists in the information business or the artifact business?

Content vs. Form

With the dawn of the so-called “information age,” archivists have been forced to develop new strategies for dealing with the copious amounts of data that now come our way. Our method has concentrated on making increasing amounts of data available to users through the use of computer technology, and turning ourselves into shiny, new “information professionals,” shunting data from archives to users on demand. Such a shift...
Final Thesis Prep Review - Fall 2016

Student: Anthony, Jonathan
UG
Date: Tuesday, December 13, 2016
Room: 402

Project:

Re-thinking stuff

Panel Report:

How do you place them in the narrative?

Is there a turn of view of stuff?

outside of woman

Man of stuff, but stuff is unappealing

Faire is the most exquisite essay

Review focus: Relevance.
vibrant matter J. Bennett Duke material obsession
digital manner

the animation & tobacco

by music to the notion of stuff animate or what scale will be most productive

lost & found
new storage system
does prob

stuff

Hans Abbe's ' reactionary is easy
test & fail

love the scenario!!
look for examples with re

- people don't know who