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
thesis 2016-2017 ‘re-thinking stuff’

jon anthony

thesis 2016-2017 ‘re-thinking stuff’

design thesis
jonathan anthony
2016-2017
syracuse university

‘rethinking stuff’

main advisor:
professor daniele profeta

secondary advisors

professor jonathan louie
professor ted brown

professor jonas brown

school of architecture
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 ‘zeitgeistic’ – 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
tchotchke
things
goods
trinket
souvenir
baggage
matter
rummage

stuff (digital)
matter
data
files
screenshots

stuff (abstract)

ideas
memories
information
thesis 2016- 2017 - ‘re-thinking stuff’

jon anthony

thesis 2016- 2017 - ‘re-thinking stuff’
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.
Learn More

♥ 87 likes
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
physical storage of accumulation

physical storage of collections
little mermaid “you want thingamabobs? i’ve got twenty”
digital storage

institutional storage

infrastructural storage

‘designed’ places of storage

objects of 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 fourty-four (44) by fourty-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.
thesis archive.2

the collection and exhibition of information

a. information is arranged by content. content includes words that the project is interested in, readings, related precents 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.

d. 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.
storage studies

...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
honey-pot ants
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.
thesis 2016-2017 're-thinking stuff'

fridge
Fridge

Filled with stuff
food and beverages get stored here

Divided
fridge is divided to allow for easy separation and legible property lines

Allocated
four rooms divide the fridge into storage areas

Blurred
sharing of food, exchanges, borrowing, property blurring

Network
the fridge is part of a larger network of shared storage spaces in the home

College fridge
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

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 placed in the fridge to maintain the health of the fridge ecosystem as a whole. sodas that prioritize 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 maintained
- 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...
suburban home
stuff is active
going 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
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 compartmentalized
stuff is maintained stuff that prioritizes the life of other stuff first. surveillance, fences, and security keeps the health of the storage ecosystem.
Jon Anthony

Thesis 2016-2017: 'Re-thinking stuff'

Stallbard 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.

- stuff is nested
- stuff is compartamentalized
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.
charlie override (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. Mile’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...

Alison and Peter Smithson -- from the House of the Future to a House of Today

Jon Anthony

thesis 2016-2017 're-thinking stuff'

log
The System of Collecting

JEAN BAUDRILLARD

Among the various meanings of the French word objet, the dictionary gives this: ‘Anything which is the cause or subject of a passion, that of personal possession, whose essence is invested with affective memory’. It is a way of life that occupies our daily lives and our personal possession, the loved object. Indeed, this everyday passion often outstrips all the others. What is most significant is that it is tempered, diffuse, and regenerative in its impact on keeping the lives of the two subjects or of the collectivity on an even footing, and in supporting the project of survival. In this respect, the objects in our lives, as distanced and abstract as they may be, are the key to understanding the way we make use of them at a given moment, how much more, something profoundly related to subjectivity: for one thing, an object is a relaxed, material body, it is also, simultaneously, a realm over which I hold sway, a thing whose meaning is grafted onto itself. 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 things, that the refrigerator is defined in terms of a practical transmutation, is that the object so much as a freezing mechanism. In this sense, I utilize it, possess it, and to some extent, I am the object. Possession cannot apply to an implement, it is not the object’s to possess it. Rather it is an object once it is divested of its function and made relative in this sense, all objects that are possessed submit to the subject’s operation and participate in a mutual relationship in so far as they refer back to the subject. They thereby constitute themselves on the basis of which the subject seeks to piece together the personal microcosm.

At Home in The Museum?

My title is at once personal – as it has been less than a year since I joined the Museum of Modern Art in time for its 75th birthday to mark the occasion – and an homage to Phyllis Lambert on her 80th. I thought to offer as an homage to the founder of an institution that lectures and displays architecture in ways that have repeatedly stretched the boundaries of a museum and the conveniences of architectural exhibitions some reflections on episodes in the history of the world’s first Department of Architecture in an art museum.

Somewhere along the way my title acquired a question mark, even as I ponder now, nearly daily, the perennial question of bringing architecture into the gallery and the challenges of representing architecture when, more than ever, it has become a cultural field in which building is only one of the tools at our disposal rather than always the raison d’être. As a historian, I try to frame things in longer trajectories, and thus I want to point out that tensions surrounding the function and the technocratic and architectural exhibitions have accompanied the rise of modern architectural institutions at least since the mid-nineteenth century, when for the first time the French Salon des Beaux-Arts included architectural exhibitions – relatively empty – as part of the programme of events. Although Charles de Wailly reports he was fond of hiding behind the curtains of the display to overhear the public’s comments, which were few and far between, to judge by reports of the generally deserted architecture gallery, Architecture was not fully at home in Salons, and when Alexandre Lenoir founded the museum des Monuments Français, he quickly dismantled parts of buildings confiscated from ecclesiastical and aristocratic settings, deploying them as both picturesque and didactic fragments, but effectively elevating them to the status of sculpture rather than dealing with the complex organic building of which they were so many mementos or monastic paroxysms. It was no less present in the very first attempts to render architecture comfortable at home, the remarkable house museum of Sir John Soane, where the fragments were not only with one another but also with Soane’s ownframmented and illusionistic architecture, making a rich 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?
Order 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, crumbles

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 environment 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...
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<td>Project: re-thinking stuff</td>
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<td>Evaluation Completed by: Brown, Ted</td>
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*Remember to upload your Thesis*

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**Project: re-thinking stuff**

- In practice of captured grapes, for another...
  - fresh
  - temporary, limited to time...
  - property

- story, facility -> house -> refrigerator
  - how stuff operates
  - story
  - collectivity
  - matrix
  - exhibiting
  - archiving

- time
- static - all... only does not mean our time

- property
  - divide
  - allocate
  - blur

Problem of scale [more of less - poles]

Object or object and its relationship

1 - see something complex (event)
2 - invisible infrastructure/events
3 - Cornell box - thematic
4 - scientific system - teacher

---

Return evaluation to Carol Pezzi in Slocum 201 by November 11, 2016 for students.
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 carpets 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 a question about the nature of 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 asked 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 the archive has been changing, becoming more ephemeral, less fixed as we continue to immerse ourselves and architects in the world of databases and automated access to perform more routine daily tasks. Information is coming from a wide variety of sources, and with the aid of computer technology and microforms, the content of records, as far as people 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 form of content/information have to be a reflection of the professionals’ use of computer technology, and turning ourselves into shiny, new “information professionals,” shunting data from archives to users on demand. Such a shift in mindset is the question addressed in this article.

Content vs. Form

With the dawn of the so-called “information age,” archivists have been developing 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 researchers 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 in mindset is the question addressed in this article.

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<td><strong>Date:</strong> Tuesday, December 13, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Advisor:</strong> Profeta, Daniele</td>
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<td><strong>Advisor 1:</strong> Louie, Jon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advisor 2:</strong> Brown, Ted</td>
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**Observations:**

- How do you place them in the society?
- Stuff is... something.
- Is there a turn of view of stuff?
- Outside of mind.
- Nothing of stuff, but stuff is enormous.
- Riddle is the most exquisitely.

*Remember to upload*
thesis 2016-2017 're-thinking stuff'

vibrant matter
J. Bennett Duke
material obsession
digital harms

the animation & telling life

by means of a system of stuff
animate a

what scale will be most productive?
lost & found
new storage system?

Is it a problem?

stuff

proof: relevant stuff

lost & found

stuff
ARC 505 THESIS PREP DOCUMENT

Advisor Approval for Submission Form

Beginning in Fall 2016 there will be an additional requirement for the submission of Documents. For every project (individual or team), the thesis prep student(s) must have Advisor's signature on, and submit to Carol Pettinelli, a hard copy of this completed the deadline for submission of the Thesis Document.

As stated in the syllabus:

“A final version of the Thesis Prep Document that incorporates the Committee’s suggested Final Review and has been approved by the Advisor must be uploaded to the School archive December 19 in order for the student’s earned grade (which is determined by the Committee on final Thesis Prep Review) to be posted with the registrar. A grade of “F” will be posted if no Thesis uploaded to the archive by the deadline.”

Student(s)' Name(s) ____________________________ Jonathan Paul Anthony

Advisor's Name ____________________________ Daniele Profeta

I have reviewed the final version of the Thesis Prep Document (PDF) to be submitted named student(s) and approve it as meeting the requirements for thorough document components, ambitions, critical development and outcome of the semester’s work at the final review.

Advisor’s Signature ____________________________ Date ____________