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The sacrifice of space: transgressive tactics for micro-apartments

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The Sacrifice of Space:
Transgressive Tactics for Micro-Apartments

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2016

Honors Capstone Project in Architecture

Capstone Project Advisor: David Shanks, Asst Professor

Capstone Project Reader: Anne Munly, Professor

Honors Director: Stephen Kuusisto, Director
Abstract

The following Capstone Project is an architectural thesis on today’s prevalence of micro-apartments. After identifying a contention, the project created a design solution in an attempt to mitigate the problem. The result was a semester of research, as well as a semester of design iteration. This was represented in multiple ways, such as through drawings, models, and books. With the help of a primary advisor, in addition to a committee, the thesis was developed through a series of presentations and meetings. The following is a culmination of that effort, resulting in over one hundred pages of work in architectural education.
Executive Summary

This thesis contends that people are willing to live in small spaces for big payoffs. Why else would someone respond to a Craigslist ad for a 100-square-foot apartment?¹ Why else would someone live in a room the size of Ikea furniture? The answer can be found outside, with significant urban amenities within walking distance.

The site is NYC, the epicenter of micro-housing. The thesis follows young professionals that live in spaces exemplary of tenement housing. It doesn’t matter though, as one exclaims, “My living room is Central Park!”² As a result, micro-apartments near urban points of interests were studied. It’s here that the thesis discovered a design solution to an existing housing crisis.

“There are 1.8 million one- and two-person households and only one million studios and one-bedrooms to meet this housing demand,” states the City’s website.³ In response, Mayor Bloomberg announced the adAPT NYC competition, encouraging the private sector to submit designs for micro-apartments. In the end, nArchitect’s My Micro NY won the competition. The project will be the first micro-apartment building in NYC, demanding rents of $2,000-$3,000 for 260- to 360-square-feet rooms in Kips Bay.⁴

But problems exist with this solution. Not only is the project nowhere near affordable for young professionals, but also it's located on the periphery rather than adjacent to urban amenities. This thesis proposes an alternative, with micro-apartments infiltrating desirable

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neighborhoods like the Upper West Side. By redesigning residual spaces for alleys, driveways, fire escapes, and windows, the project provides affordable housing near important urban spaces.

Real estate developers, economic forces, and government sanctions are all creating micro-apartments. Few things are left to fight back, such as building codes and the ADA. Despite this, tenants of micro-apartments contribute more to the life of the city than their more affluent counterparts. They rarely travel or stay indoors, opting instead to enjoy local urban attractions. However, some might argue they do so by residing in spaces unsuitable for living. Using various modes of representation through a satirical perspective, this thesis creates a design solution that mediates between these two perspectives.
Transgressive Tactics for Micro-Apartments

To: Kathryn and Allen Honig
By: Matthew Honig
Advisor: David Shanks
250 sq ft
MY MICRO NY architects

300 sq ft
GUERNICA pablo picasso
The amount of micro-apartments that can fit inside a typical NYC penthouse.
So here's to the little things.

This thesis contends that people are willing to live in small spaces for big payoffs. Why else would someone respond to a Craigslist ad for a 100-square-foot apartment? Why else would someone live in a room the size of Ikea furniture? The answer can be found outside, with significant urban amenities within walking distance.
What's in your catalog?

400

1 million

1.8 million

The amount of studios and one-bedrooms in New York City, according to the City’s government.4

The amount of one- and two-person households in New York City, according to the City’s government.2

This minimum square footage of an apartment according to New York City’s building code, according to Business Insider.3

This is the percentage of New York City homes made up by one- and two-person households, according to New York City’s government.60

1 million

The amount of one- and two-person households in New York City, according to the City’s government.5

What’s in your catalog?
Room to experiment. The site is NYC, the epicenter of micro-housing. As a result, micro-apartments near urban points of interests were studied. It's here that the thesis discovered a design through a one bedroom micro-apartment housing. It doesn't matter though, my living room is Central Park!
New SÄD mini refrigerator $99.99

New REÄLISTIC workspace $299.99

New PÄTHETIC microwave oven $49.99

New IMPOSSIBLE bed frame $299.99

New CRÄMP hot plate $69.99

New SÄD mini refrigerator $99.99
Felice Cohen pays about $700 to rent her 90 square foot micro-apartment. Feeling a full bathroom is above the entrance, a bedroom is above the entrance. For instance, the rest of the space is quite unusual. For instance, the bedroom is above the entrance, a full bathroom is above the entrance.
MICROSCOPIC microapartment

90 sq ft

$6999

90 sq ft
“NYC is my bäckyärd.”
Minutes it takes to walk from Felice's micro-apartment to Lincoln Center.
Architect Luke Clark Tyler pays upwards of $800 in order to occupy this 78 square foot space in the heart of New York City. Sharing a bathroom with three other people, Tyler not only lives here but also works from the space.
78 sq ft
799
CLÄUSTRÖPHÖBIC micro-apartment
$799.99
“My Midtown Mansion.”
5 Minutes it takes to walk from Luke’s micro-apartment to the Theater District.
Chef Grayson Altenburg pays approximately $1,100 to call this chic 100 square feet home. A hot plate on one side of the space constitutes his kitchen, while a shower and toilet at the foot of his bed are the bathroom. No door separates the bathroom from the kitchen space.
ILLEGAL MICRO-APARTMENT

100 sq ft

$10999
"Central Park is my room."
Minutes it takes to walk from Grayson's micro-apartment to Central Park.
There are 1.8 million one- and two-person households and only one million studios and one-bedrooms to meet this housing demand,” states the City’s website. In response, Mayor Bloomberg announced the adAPT NYC competition, encouraging the private sector to submit designs for micro-apartments. In the end, nArchitect’s My Micro NY won the competition. The project will be the first micro-apartment building in NYC, demanding rents of $2,000-$3,000 for 260- to 360-square-feet rooms in Kips Bay.

Downsize without compromise.

“There are 1.8 million one- and two-person households and only one million studios and one-bedrooms to meet this housing demand,” states the City’s website. In response, Mayor Bloomberg announced the adAPT NYC competition, encouraging the private sector to submit designs for micro-apartments. In the end, nArchitect’s My Micro NY won the competition. The project will be the first micro-apartment building in NYC, demanding rents of $2,000-$3,000 for 260- to 360-square-feet rooms in Kips Bay.
This is the median size, in square footage, of a studio apartment in NYC according to Naked Apartments. 3,000

The median rent, in dollars, of a studio apartment in NYC according to Naked Apartments. 2,300

This is the largest size, in square footage, of a micro-apartment in nArchitect's My Micro NY project according to Business Insider. 360

The highest rent, in dollars, of a micro-apartment in nArchitect's My Micro NY project according to Business Insider. 3,000
Priding itself as the solution for rising costs of living and limited space, this little piece of Manhattan was designed by nArchitects with the help of the City. Stylist John Doe loves it here, being able to spend large amounts of money for a space as large as some people’s garages.

ScaRRy outdoor fencing

$3999

John, Stylist, Kips Bay
360 sq ft

$2999.99

OVERPRICED micro-apartment
“...4 towers, 10 floors, 1 community.”
The amount of amenities available for tenants in nArchitect's My Micro NY project. 16
"Addressing this challenge requires us to think outside the box, and as it were, outside the current zoning regulations."

- Former Mayor Michael Bloomberg

This is the smallest size, in square footage, of a micro-apartment in New York City according to Business Insider.
"Expanding the availability of... micro-apartments... is part of [de Blasio’s] plan to bring down housing costs."

- The N.Y. Times

3,000

The highest rent, in dollars, of a studio apartment in architect Shy Micro's project according to Business Insider.
Minutes it takes to walk from John's micro-apartment to Kips Bay Towers.
a developer who is building...told me,

'...Don't worry, you won't need any more services, because the buyers won't be sending their kids to school...

...there won't be traffic.
here, there won't be traffic.'

He said it like this was a positive thing.'

The percentage of residences in Kips Bay...
Sacrificing your space

But problems exist with this solution. Not only is the project nowhere near affordable for young professionals, but also it’s located on the periphery rather than adjacent to urban amenities. This thesis proposes an alternative, with micro-apartments built in alleys, driveways, fire escapes, and windows, the project provides affordable housing near important urban spaces.

Real estate developers, economic forces, and government sanctions are all creating micro-apartments. Few things are left to fight back, such as building codes and the ADA. Despite this, urban designers are looking to the future of buildings and the city. They are designing new spaces for local urban living. They do so by residing in spaces unsuitable for indoor life, opting instead to enjoy local urban restaurants. They rarely travel or stay in hotel rooms. They are designing temporary living spaces for urbanites who are looking for a change. However, some might argue that these micro-apartments contribute more to the problem than to the solution. This thesis explores this tension of creating micro-apartments and the impact on local urban living.

Using various modes of representation, this thesis creates a satirical perspective. Through a satirical perspective, this thesis explores the tension between these two perspectives. It creates a design solution that mediates the existing urban living spaces and the urban designer’s perspective. It explores the impact of local urban living on important urban spaces and the future of building codes and the ADA.
Coming soon to your home

500,000

This is the minimum amount foreign investors have to spend in order to receive green cards through the E-8 program, according to the New York Times.21

88 million

The price American Sanford Weill sold his 15 Central Park West penthouse to Russian Dmitry Rybolovlev in 2011, according to New York Magazine.22

74.4

The percentage of residences in Executive Plaza that are not primary, the highest in the City, according to The New York Times.20

100.5 million

The most expensive real estate transaction for a home in the history of NYC, made this past year at One57, according to Forbes.23

100.5

New York Magazine reported in 2011 that Russian Dmitry Rybolovlev bought Sanford Weill’s penthouse for 88 million.22

Plaza City

0
Dmitry, Fertilizer Tycoon, U.P.W.

Fertilizer oligarch Dmitry Rybolovlev paid $88 million so he could occasionally call this Upper Westside penthouse home. At only 6,744 square feet, he’ll have no problem spending 10 months out of the year in his other, much larger properties.

$34,999,999

LIVE-IN maid service

Larger properties: 2x3

do NOT span the entire year in the other, much larger properties, spending 10 months out of the year. It’s possible to live in this home. It’s possible to occasionally call this Upper Westside penthouse home. It’s possible to live in this home. It’s possible to occasionally call this Upper Westside penthouse home. It’s possible to live in this home. It’s possible to occasionally call this Upper Westside penthouse home.
The amount of months out of the year that the penthouse sits unoccupied.
10

Minutes it takes to walk from Dmitry’s penthouse to anywhere.
The amount of months out of the year that the penthouse could be occupied.
At this point, you may be wondering how much one of these studio costs. At more than $2,300 a month, will allow you to call one home. CALL NOW!

**PRICELESS**

As a member of one of these luxurious apartments, you'll enjoy all the benefits it has to offer. A walk through the floor of your deck, a sense of privacy only

WHERE'S THE BATHROOM??

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE!

Located a mere 5 minutes from Lincoln Center, these GINORIOUS 85 sq. ft. studio apartments are

Look no further, we have a solution.

Are you a young professional? Have you dreamed of living in New York City?? Are you looking

155 West 66th Street
www.rentapage.com

**AVAILABLE NOW**

**RENT/FEES**

- No Parking
- No Laundry on Site
- Essential
- No Smoking
- Dogs OK -wood
- Cats OK -purr

$2,300 / 1BR - 853sq - AMAZING STUDIO APARTMENTS! (Upper West Side)
At this point you may be wondering how much one of these spaces cost. A mere $1,500 a month will allow you to call one home. CALL NOW!

Parcels

As a resident of one of these luxurious apartments, you'll enjoy all the benefits it has to offer. A sunny roof or the feel of your bed's mattress. A sense of privacy only.

Where's the bathroom? Where is THE BATHROOM?

GOOD TO BE TRUE!
Located a mere 5 minutes from Central Park, these GINORMOUS B&S studio apartments are TOO

Are you a young professional? Have you dreamt of living in New York City? Are you broke?

$1,300 / 1BR - 854 SF - AMAZING STUDIO APARTMENTS (UPPER WEST SIDE)
At this point you may be wondering how much one of these gems costs. At mere $3500 a month will allow you to call one home. CALL NOW!

PRICELESS

As a tenant of one of these luxurious apartments, you'll enjoy all the benefits it has to offer. A closer look at the door of your bed and a sense of privacy only

WHERE'S THE BATHROOM? WHERE'S THE BATHROOM?

Look no further, we have a solution!

Are you a young professional? Have you dreamed of living in New York City?? Are you broke??

$3500 / 1BR - 850SF - AMAZING STUDIO APARTMENTS (Upp West Side)
At this point you may be wondering how much one of these luxury apartments will allow you to call one home. CALL NOW!

Priceless.

As a resident of one of these luxurious apartments, you'll enjoy all the benefits it has to offer. A college right at the foot of your door, a sense of privacy only windows can provide. The touch of a kitchen to clean up!

Where is the bathroom? Where is the bathroom?

Good to be true.

Located a mere 5 minutes from Central Park, these GORGEOUS 855 sq ft studio apartments are TOO

Look no further as we have a solution.

Are you a young professional? Have you dreamed of living in New York City? Are you looking...

$800 / 1 BR - 855 SF - AMAZING STUDIO APARTMENTS (Upper West Side)
Are you a young professional? Have you dreamed of living in New York City?? Are you broke?!?

Look no further, as we have a solution!

Located a mere 5 minutes from Lincoln Center, these GINORMOUS 100 sq. ft. micro-apartments are TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

Where's the bathroom?? WHERE ISN'T THE BATHROOM??!

As a tenant of one of these luxurious apartments, you'll enjoy all the benefits it has to offer. A shower sticking out on the front of the building? A sense of privacy only no doors can provide?? The lack of a kitchen to clean up??

PRICELESS.

At this point you may be wondering how much one of these gems cost. A mere $800 a month will allow you to call one home. CALL NOW!
I'm a reporter with Curbed NY. I just came across this ad on Craigslist and I'm wondering if you have some time to talk about these listings?

Hi,

8800 / 1br - 10012 - INCREDIBLE MICRO-APARTMENTS
To: lxyw-5559402953@housescargibls.org
Hello,

I am interested in your apartment to rent. I am available on Saturdays and Sundays to view the apartment, or during the week after 6pm. I am looking to move in on May 1st at the latest June 1st. I can be reached at [REDACTED].

Thank you,

[REDACTED]
Thanks. Looking forward to hearing from you.

I'm interested in the apartment. Do you have income but I am getting assistance help. Your credit score is low. Have a small pool. We can contact me.

AMAZING MICRO-APARTMENTS

To: 2ssgg-5554034272@house.crgmail.com
$800 / 1 br - 100 ft² - INCREDIBLE MICRO-APARTMENTS (Upper West Side)

Are you a young professional? Have you dreamed of living in New York City?? Are you broke?!?

Look no further, as we have a solution!

Located across the street from CENTRAL PARK, these GINORMOUS 100 sq. ft. micro-apartments are TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

Who needs a living room?? CENTRAL PARK IS YOUR LIVING ROOM!!!

As a tenant of one of these luxurious apartments, you'll enjoy all the benefits it has to offer. A bathroom in the hallway? A sense of privacy only no doors can provide?? A lack of storage that requires pockets?!?

PRICELESS.

At this point you may be wondering how much one of these gems cost. A mere $800 a month will allow you to call one home. EMAIL NOW!
Incredible Micro-Apartment

To: [Redacted]
From: [Redacted]

April 25, 2016 at 7:11 AM

Sent from My Phone

Very interested. Please call to schedule appointment

Thank you
Hello Sir or Madam,

I am interested in this project.

Could you provide me some more info?

Best,

AMAZING MICRO-APARTMENTS
To: 2559-5554034272@housescr@ilings.org

Original message:

Please flag unwanted messages (spam, etc.)

About our Privacy Policy:

https://housescr@ilings.org/privacy

Original email:

https://housescr@ilings.org/messages/5554034272
Original craigslist post:
http://craigslist.org/about/help/email-relay
http://craigslist.org/mnhb/abo555462693.html

[Blacked-out text]

How you doing my name's [Blacked-out text]

I'm looking to move into the one bedroom ASAP. I'm a

I'm looking to move closer to my shop. I would love for you to contact

April 25, 2016 at 7:42 AM
Inbox - iCloud
Hi [Name]

I am interested in learning more about this listing. Please send any information you can. Also, I'd like to schedule a viewing if possible. Thank you in advance! I look forward to hearing back.

[Signature]

AMAZING MICRO-APARTMENTS
To: [Email Address]
Tel: [Phone Number]
$800 / 1br - 100ft² - FANTASTIC MICRO-APARTMENTS (Upper West Side)

Are you a young professional? Have you dreamed of living in New York City?? Are you broke?!?
Look no further, as we have a solution!

Located around the corner from CENTRAL PARK, these GINORMOUS 100 sq. ft. micro-apartments are TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

Who needs a living room?? CENTRAL PARK IS YOUR LIVING ROOM!!!

As a tenant of one of these luxurious apartments, you'll enjoy all the benefits it has to offer. A shower in the hallway? Your neighbor's window in your bedroom?? Strangers continuously walking through your personal space???

PRICELESS.

At this point you may be wondering how much one of these gems cost. A mere $800 a month will allow you to call one home. EMAIL NOW!
Hi,

I hope to hear from you soon!

I have heard a lot about the status. What are the requirements? I have been working on getting one of the units. What are the requirements? I would love to see more of it, if you have photos. I will be willing to check the place too. I am interested in the details: the kitchen, bathroom, etc.

What about the microapartments? I would love to see more of it. If you have photos, I will be willing to check the place too. What are the other details? The kitchen, bathroom, etc.

About me, I am in the mid 20s working as a full time model from Philippines. I have been living here in NY for 4 years now.

I already started looking. I might move earlier. I found the best place:)

My name is [redacted], and I saw your post about microapartments. I wasn't able to see any numbers at the listing you posted, so I am emailing you instead. I am currently renting a room in [redacted]. I am not really in a rush. I also want to find the place that suits most of my preferences. That is why I am currently renting a room in [redacted].

Hi,

April 24, 2016 at 11:29 PM
Thank you and have a nice day.

That’s a California number, but I’m back here in New York searching for my new home.

Please give me a call at your earliest convenience.

I’m currently in the process of moving back to the city. I’m here now, and I’d love to see your apartment.

I’m quite interested in the listing I saw on Craigslist.

Hello!

UWS micro apartment

To: 255-55403477@HouseApartments

From: [Redacted]
Yes how are you? My name is [Redacted]. I am looking for a nice home. Clean quite drama free. I do have a [Redacted] which pays for everything. My number is [Redacted].
Are you a young professional? Have you dreamed of living in New York City?? Are you broke?!?!

Look no further, as we have a solution!

Located around the corner from the 72nd street subway stop, these GINORMOUS 100 sq. ft. micro-apartments are TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

Where's the bathroom?? WHERE ISN'T THE BATHROOM??!

As a tenant of one of these luxurious apartments, you'll enjoy all the benefits it has to offer. A bathhouse in the hallway? Being able to touch both sides of your room at the same time?? The sense of safety that comes with living in a space directly adjacent to a fire escape?!!

PRICELESS.

At this point you may be wondering how much one of these gems cost. A mere $800 a month will allow you to call one home. EMAIL NOW!
Hello,

I'm interested in your micro apartments for rent. I'm a grad student at [redacted] and a 3rd grade teacher. You can contact me at this email or my email [redacted].

I also wanted to ask you if there is a kitchen in the unit or a shared kitchen in the building.

You may also reach me at [redacted].

Looking forward to speaking further with you about these units.

Thanks!

[redacted]

April 26, 2016 at 2:06 PM
Thank you kindly!

We are very excited to come across the ad - hope to hear from you soon.

Help with choices

I am a college graduate currently working in the food industry. Greater credit and rental history, very respectful and easy to get along with. I am 20s male. No pets and nonsmoker. Happy to

Help? My name is [redacted] and I am writing about the micro apartment ad on Craigslist. Are any still available?

To: 4d4lz-5558717900@nyc.craigslist.org

Micro Apartment
Hello, my name is [Redacted] and I am interested in renting a 1 or 2 bedroom apartment. I am looking for a location that will accept a one child family. I am looking to move anywhere by December June.

I have no pets.

My annual income is [Redacted].

I am a full time employee with one child in the family.

Please contact me so we can schedule a viewing. Thank you.

[Redacted]

April 26, 2016 at 4:40 PM
Hi [Name],

I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

Is it still available? I'm looking to move the first week of May, and thought this place was perfect.

I'm still interested in the room.

I just saw your posting on craigslist. I'm very interested in the room.

Best,

[Name]


WORKS CITED:


5. "AdAPT NYC Request for Proposals.


9. "A Brief Tour of a 100-Square-Foot New York City Apartment.


12. "Micro apartments are finally coming to New York — and that's good news for renters.


14. "Micro apartments are finally coming to New York — and that's good news for renters.

15. "Micro apartments are finally coming to New York — and that's good news for renters.

16. "Micro apartments are finally coming to New York — and that's good news for renters.

17. "Micro apartments are finally coming to New York — and that's good news for renters.

18. "Micro apartments are finally coming to New York — and that's good news for renters.


Images Cited:


