

# ARCADE

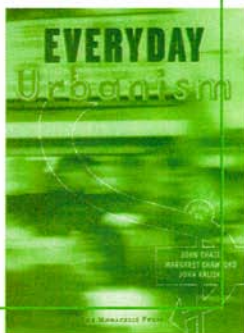
\$6.00

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## THE FUTURE OF HOUSING THE MARKET, THE MORALS, AND THE POLICY OF NORTHWEST HOUSING

TRIBUTE TO DAVID GULASSA

THE CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS OF PUGET SOUND SUZANNE BRITSH PYATOK, PART II MICHAEL PYATOK  
SHOULD BE BUILT PROJECTS MICHAEL LUIS URBAN CENTERS AND TRANSPORTATION LUCY STEERS



## EVERYDAY URBANISM

REVIEWED BY GRACE KIM

As a book of essays written primarily by academics from Southern California, it's no wonder that *Everyday Urbanism* takes on an academic tone. While I generally found the topics to be of interest, at times the overly complex language or unrealistic proposals discouraged further reading.

The essays are grouped into two sections: "Part 1 - Looking at the City" and "Part 2 - Making the City". This organization gives cohesion to the diverse body of topics and allows for a non-linear reading of the book; single essays can be read out of sequence without missing a major premise or thesis.

The methodologies of observation and analysis permeate the book, the best example being Walter Hood's essay, "Urban Diaries: Improvisation in West Oakland, California". His socially minded projects were successfully presented in a disciplined series of observation, analysis, solution, and vision. However, Hood's attempt to highlight social problems and potential solutions seems idealistic and confrontational to the intended users; the reality of proposing that a church contribute a 15' wide strip of their parking lot to provide space for prostitute housing is a naive and unreasonable expectation. Furthermore, the storybook-nature of his visions diminishes the impact of his proposed solutions.

Mona Houghton's, "The Urban Bricoleur," presents a stark contrast to Hood's pedantic analysis. Her descriptive words thoughtfully characterize the lushly landscaped world of found objects created over many years by an aging recluse. "Ernest disappeared around a bend. I sped up my pace but stopped when my eyes found him again. He was standing in a small clearing, head back, youthful in his tan leggings and tight, dark green T-shirt, both of which looked like he had snagged them out of a child's bin at the Goodwill. But his face is what really caught me, angel-like wonder, reveling in the satisfaction of what is, a connection made. Ernest was peering up at a skylit of blooming wisteria, stems heavy, bunches of blue hanging down from an arbor, fat bumblebees diving in."

The accompanying photographs of Zen-like portals and overgrown paths are carefully composed and possess a mystical quality, juxtaposing black and white images with color.

Although not intended as a summary, the last essay serves as an anti-climatic conclusion to the book's diverse body of work. "Quotidian Bricolage," presents a series of student projects that resulted from two years of design studios taught at the Southern California Institute of Architecture by Margaret Crawford and John Kaliski. A brief explanation of the program and a role presentation of selected student projects abruptly conclude the book without discussion of the lessons learned. While the work was intriguing as a culmination of "looking" at and "making" the city, I felt shortchanged with the summation of their efforts.

Grace H. Kim spends her everyday in Seattle as an architect with Bangarjee and as an urban activist with Action: Better City.

TO PROVIDE A CROSS SECTION OF VIEWPOINTS, 2 PROFESSORS FROM REGIONAL SCHOOLS WERE SOLICITED FOR THEIR INSIGHTS ON EVERYDAY URBANISM. EXCERPTS OF THEIR COMMENTS FOLLOW.

*Everyday Urbanism* left me with a mixed reaction to the topic. The authors seem to associate the disadvantaged, the drug addict, the prostitute, and the unemployed with the everyday. Are they suggesting that the rich and famous or the yuppie does not experience the everyday? Is there some kind of hidden benevolence in these authors' words...a kind of design charity that attempts to mitigate the guilt of their class? John Chase seems to be the most forthright in his social position (as more an observer of the everyday, rather than a participant).

The most useful essay in the book, "The Present City and the Practice of City Design", provides a summary of urban design history and practice by John Kaliski. His discussion of the elusive elements of city design: ephemerality, cacophony, multiplicity and simultaneity, is both dense and thought provoking. He argues that much of the "existing everyday world is more potent and beautiful than the ideal cities of professional urbanists... [Good] city design ferrets out, values, encourages, and intensifies the irregularities and juxtapositions of daily life with regard to both program and form." I agree.

Paul Hirz is an Associate Professor of Architecture at Washington State University. His current interest is landscape legibility.

*Everyday Urbanism* is the product of a collective dedication to the issues of socially responsive, improvised and imaginatively executed architectural production. It counters the trend that privileges "star" designers, large-scale products and the abstraction of technology and society. In this search for a different practice and pedagogy, the authors seek to reinstate urbanism as a diverse set of collective practices, as it was before it was commandeered and controlled as a professional practice in the modern period.

The book clearly offers an insightful model for architectural practice and design education. It is also potentially instructive for a range of related activities and disciplines. In challenging who makes urban space and what constitutes "good" urban form, it questions who and what has pedagogical value.

Dr. Sherry McKay teaches architectural history and theory in the School of Architecture at the University of British Columbia. She has explored issues of gender and cultural difference in a range of seminars, publications and exhibitions.