



2015

## On Innovation

We have started to doubt the innovation narrative. What if our thirst for the cutting edge is misguided? What if all this running does not bring us to the front? What if the nature of the new is not about disruptive innovation but about connections with people and places other than ourselves?

What if the importance of design is in its ability to foster exchange instead of revolution? Our questions are driven in a large part by our need to survive. We reside in a converted warehouse in Brooklyn and work on projects in Manila, Hangzhou, San Jose, Cebu, Lima, and Bogota. The geographical gulf in our work cultivates a necessary fondness for resilient identities. We do not comprehend most of the languages we hear so we must listen closely, make things up as we go, and relax.

Our projects are conceived as an ongoing archive of the foreign bodies we encounter in everyday practice. We invite more associations in our work than we can realistically handle because overlapping ways of thinking are more interesting than an ideology that must be continually transgressed. We attempt to build moments of conviction upon a fragmentary universe of fickle consumer trends, friction-free markets, political unrest, and mind-numbing technological advances.

We are drawn to the aberrant situations and alternate rationalities in a project. We spot an imbalance in our environment and produce a story about it: a setback dictate that exacerbates density, a curtain wall constraint that makes us rethink thinness. Our designs seek to refract these existing conditions and nest commentary in architectural form. Our formal accretions become a tacit knowledge of these places and their communities.

We are inspired by the many imperfect visions of survival on our endangered planet. The reality of environmental catastrophe is indeed frightening and if innovation is a form of exchange then perhaps we can design spaces that we have not yet seen—spaces in which irreconcilable desires co-exist. Architectural form could then be a tacit knowledge of our responsibility to dream as a community.

This is not a light task. It comes with the duty of thinking about design as a way of knowing-in-group. As we sit together in the darkness holding hands with strangers, geometry is our campfire hymn. We use measurement to manipulate,

influence, and affect form. Rationality is sensible only as a system that we have incrementally translated.

Perhaps this is a foolhardy goal for a small studio in the age of corporate behemoths.

At CAZA, we all share a tenderness for these fledging realities in the form of that "very odd family of deer," as Dr Seuss wrote "whose horns are connected, from one to the other, whose horns are so mixed they can't tell them apart, can't tell where they end and can't tell where they start!"

We have posed ourselves the challenge of making environments out of a deep affection for that which we don't control. Our romance with the idea of a manifold and optimistic future breeds an epistemological seriousness with regards to our methods. We must train, like amateur boxers, in the absence of our opponent and yet remain committed to their presence. We are natural adversaries who will fight for the chance to recognize the other person in a ring and share a delightful exchange of blows. The preservation of this wild meeting with the unknown is, as designers, our gift to the world.