

# TEMPORARY SPACES IN PUBLIC PLACES



# ABSTRACT

This project began with the desire to construct something tangible in the landscape. As the importance of the use of public space became clearer, a realization that building within public space was the direction that this project was headed. The more I explored the idea of implementing experimental design on public space it became evident that this was not the type of project that needed a plan or sections in order to visualize the design, in fact the idea of plans or sections as necessary supplementing graphics was rejected altogether. The project became a series of installations that explored how the public reacts to temporary installations on public property. The emphasis on the temporal quality of the installations would allow for editing and revisions based on the types of reactions received. The installations are an exploration of temporary design and how important that it is to the design process. The projects created were completely use-able and helped deepen my appreciation for the power of not only design, but built work.

# TEMPORARY SPACES IN PUBLIC PLACES

2011 Senior Project, Rodrigo Ormachea

Presented to the faculty of the Landscape Architecture Program at the University of California, Davis  
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Bachelors of Science of Landscape Architecture.

Accepted and Approved by

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Claire Napawan, Senior Project Faculty Adviser

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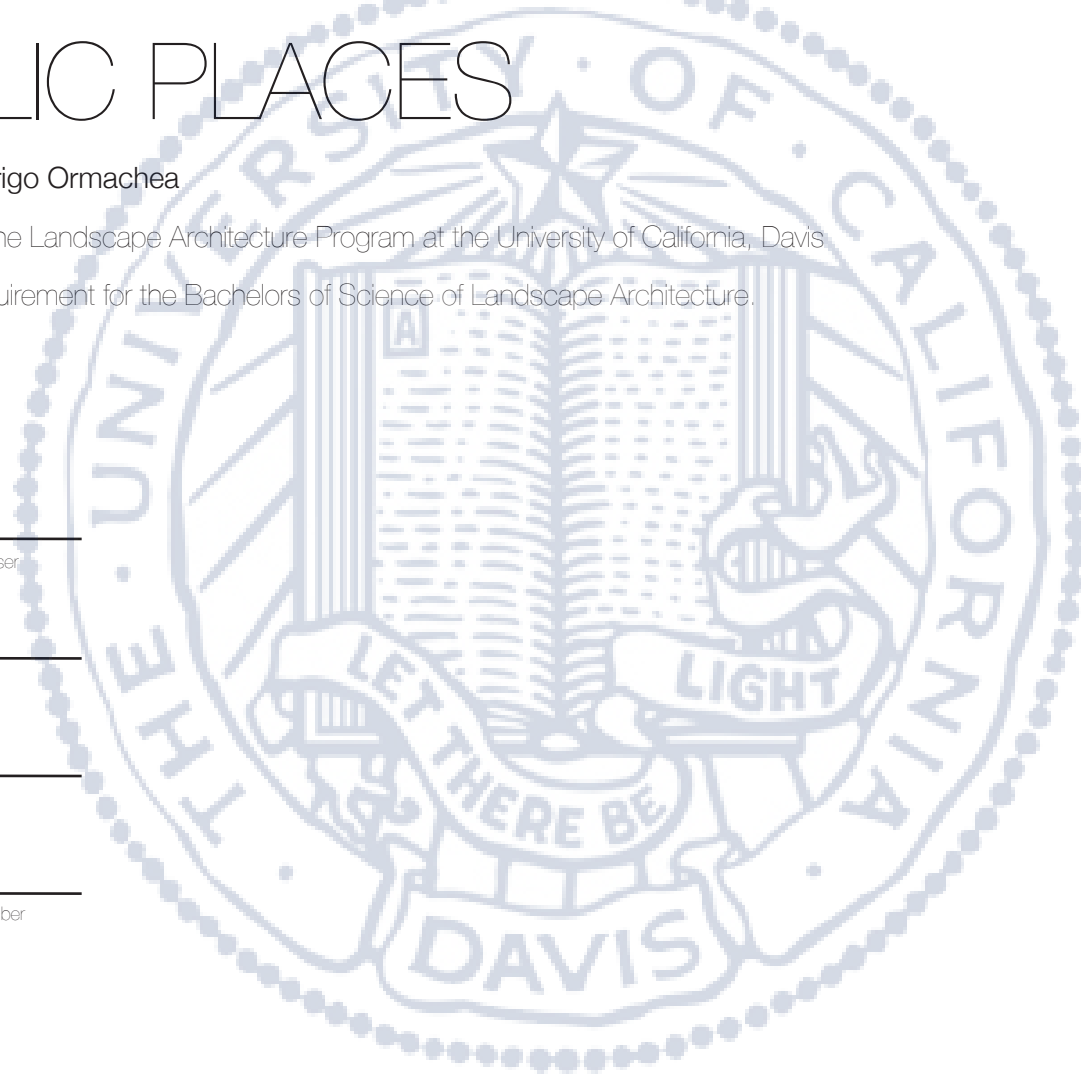
Michael Rios, Committee Member

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Bob Morgan, Committee Member

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Carlos Francisco Jackson, Committee Member





# DEDICATION

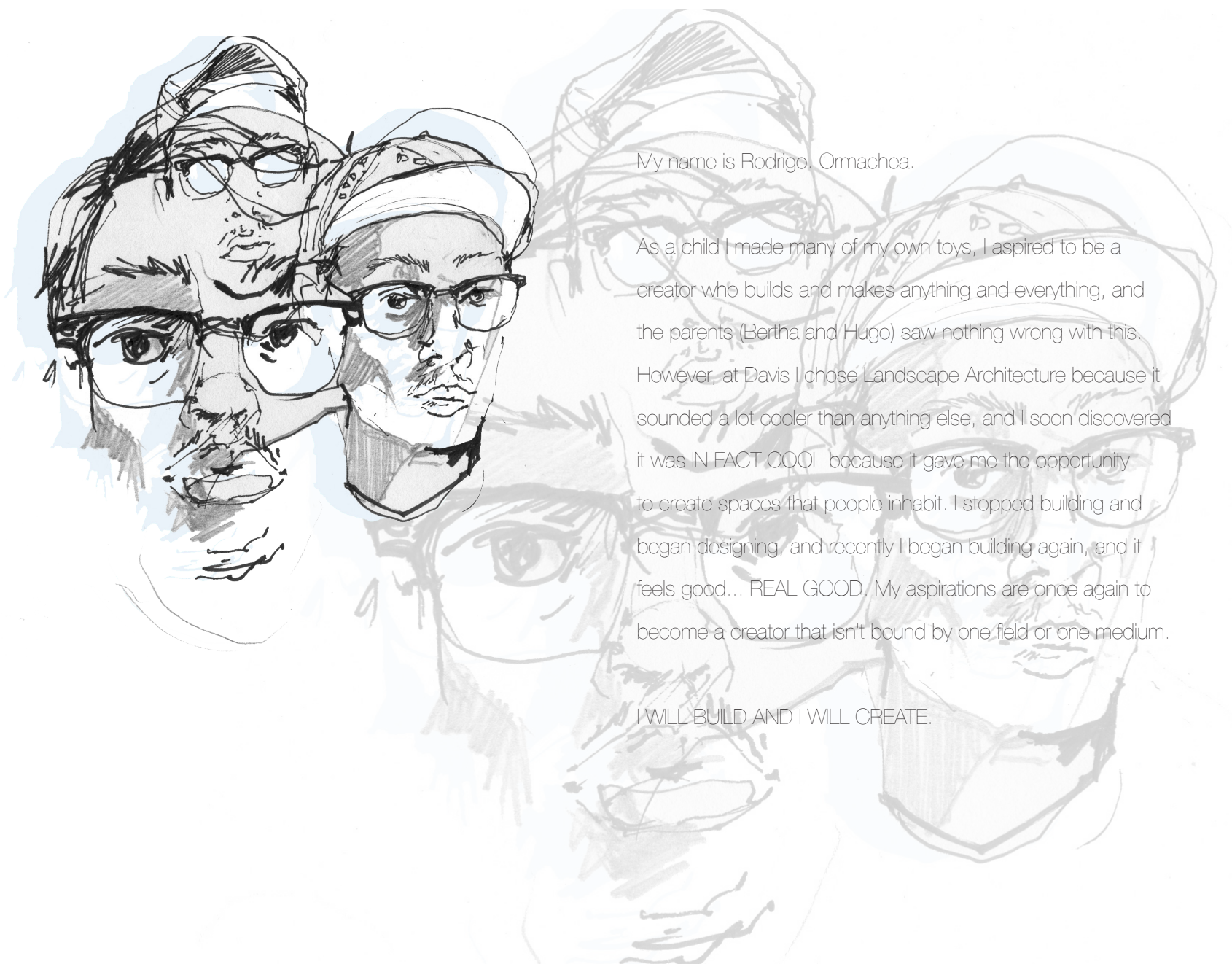
I dedicate this body of work to my family BERTHA, HUGO, SERGIO, and GABRIEL, for the constant encouragement of creativity in our household and within our family. The emphasis on creativity has been a constant within all of our lives, and without that I would not be at the point that I am today. How much you all inspire me cannot be put into words.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To all my friends and peers who have participated, encouraged or been a part of any of the built projects that reminded me of my genuine love for building, I cannot thank you enough. You all showed me what true comradery is about, and the bonds we've made I pray will last a lifetime. You all know who you are and I cherished every moment we all spent together, and without it my will power to complete this final project would have suffered heavy blows.

To the warm house that served as my refuge from the stresses of studio life, I extend a heartfelt holler. Marissa, Amanda, and Susie, my supportive ladies, thank you for keeping me loved and grounded. .

Lastly, to the occasional drink or two, thank you for reminding me that there is a life outside of studio



My name is Rodrigo. Ormachea.

As a child I made many of my own toys, I aspired to be a creator who builds and makes anything and everything, and the parents (Bertha and Hugo) saw nothing wrong with this. However, at Davis I chose Landscape Architecture because it sounded a lot cooler than anything else, and I soon discovered it was IN FACT COOL because it gave me the opportunity to create spaces that people inhabit. I stopped building and began designing, and recently I began building again, and it feels good... REAL GOOD. My aspirations are once again to become a creator that isn't bound by one field or one medium.

I WILL BUILD AND I WILL CREATE.

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# PART 1 : RESEARCH

## INTRODUCTION

### *PUBLIC SPACE*

Public Space is characterized as an area within a city that is accessible to all, excluding no one based on their background, gender, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic background. Public space is recognized as sidewalks, pavements, streets, parking lots, parks, markets, downtowns, waterfronts, civic spaces, campuses, squares, and plazas. (Hou 2010). Much of our everyday urban existence occurs within the shared city spaces defined by both public and private buildings. (Graham 2008) These elements, known collectively as the public realm, are spaces that all citizens can occupy by right. (Graham 2008). The term 'public space' has left many to define it in various different ways. "Public space is the common ground where civility and our collective sense of what may be called 'publicness' are developed and expressed. Marc Francis (Hou 2010). Others believe that the accessibility to public space within a city is what adds to its diversity, therefore adding to a city's appeal. What is important to remember is that cities and communities are in constant change, and for this reason permanent design aren't always an immediate solution

### *PUBLIC-PRIVATE*

The distinction between private and public space often delegates certain members of society to one or the other. Private space works at a personal and individual level, pertaining to the home. Recent society has seen an emphasis on elevating private life, with more and more products released that do not require consumers to even leave their homes. The notion of the privatization of public space would help account for the increase in personal life matters.

Strip malls as prototypes for any city adds to

# THE POWER OF THE TEMPORARY

Temporary uses are seen as tools of empowerment: revealing the possibilities of space. (Haydn 2006). The debate over the use of public space has led to experimental approaches in the implementation of design. Temporary design can also allow for temporary uses, or uses that aren't planned.

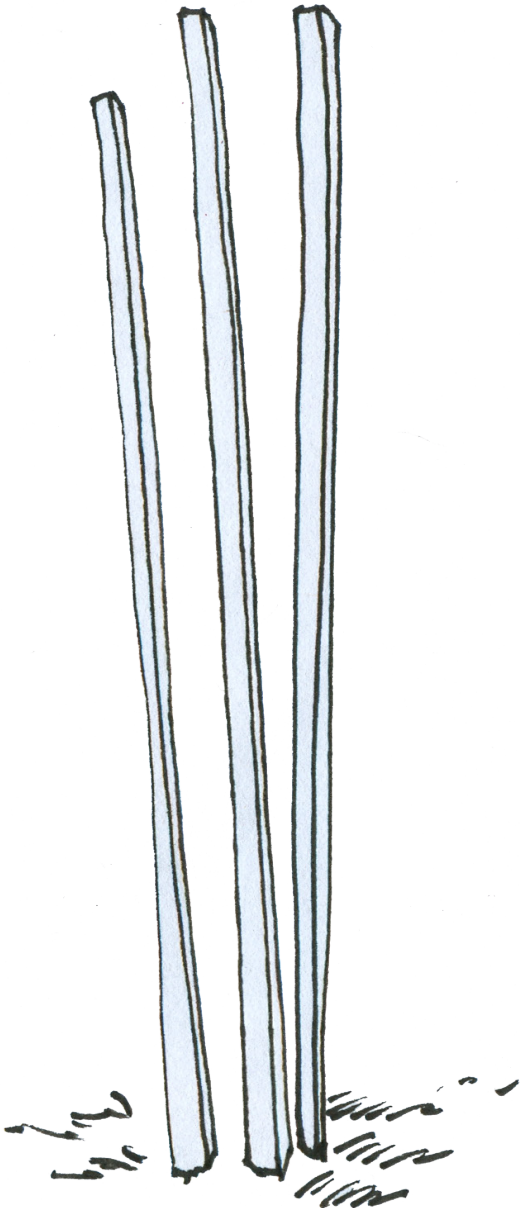
## TEMPORALITY IN THE FIELD

Temporary is the antagonist to urban planning and architecture. The relationship between temporary and planned is that one is long term and the other adjusts to rapid changes of use. Ignoring the use of the master plan, temporality offers a different set of tools and vocabulary to designing spaces for specific uses. In the urban context new

relationships develop between the planners and the users as they begin to meld together more and more. Planners and users become actors in the urban sphere that feed off of each other. The role of the institutionalized planner or designer evolves in temporary situations that invite outside participants who would otherwise not be part of the process.

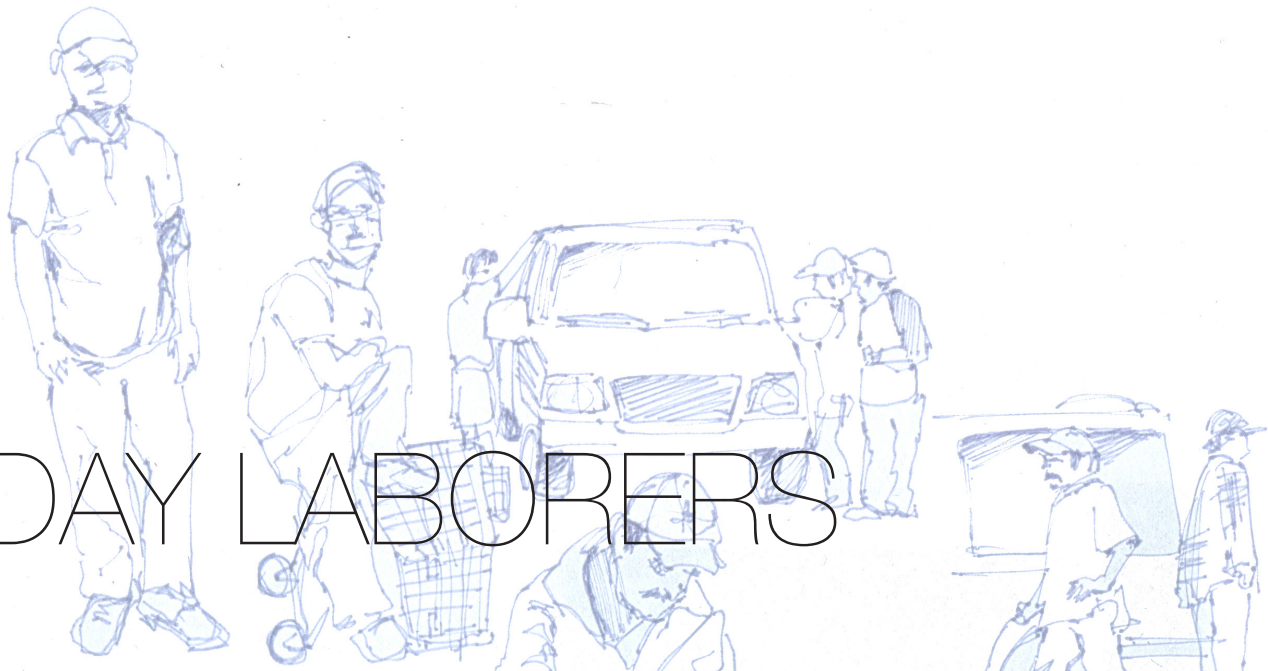
## THE DESIGN PROCESS

Temporary design allows for, and even seeks errors for it is those errors that get designers closer and closer to solutions. Temporary design works on a trial and error bases allowing for the mishaps to steer design into a better direction. Contrary to permanent design which is final, temporary design remains an open system that encourages modification and revision.





# DAY LABORERS



## LOCAL LABORERS

Many cities have areas where day laborer gathering sites are commonly known. In Berkeley laborers gather near 4th and Hearst. In Sacramento they congregate outside of the AMPM along the corner of 47th St. and Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. Despite the fact that many day laborers are illegal immigrants of Latino descent, they place themselves within public space in order to get what it is they need, a job. A sense of place is generated from their mere presence around corners and streets.

## INTERVIEW WITH HERNAN

For one day data was collected from a Sacramento day laborer's account of his day-to-day life. Hernan moved to LA from Guatemala and then heard of job opportunities around Sacramento, to where he promptly moved. Speaking with Hernan it was



Figure 2.1

Understood that while the gathering of day laborers in this particular area is not formally organized, the participants themselves have a general understanding of each other's situations allowing those laborers in more need money to advance above others. Translated Hernan stated, "I live in a room with 3 other guys who labor along with me, and we try to look out for each other. We are all in similar situations."



Figure 2.2

## A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Day laboring seems to be synonymous with a cutthroat competition for random day jobs. While this type of behavior does occur, so does the sense of community within this impromptu distribution of jobs. In their search for jobs, day laborers are able to create a sense of place surrounding their presence at various locations. The corners they stand at becomes known locally as the corner one goes to hire day laborers.



# HOMELESS





Figure 3.1

### *WHO ARE THE HOMELESS??*

Reasons for homelessness vary immensely with often negative stigmas or connotations of vagrancy. As citizens of society certain rights are given. A right that is not guaranteed however is a home. Some define homelessness as not sleeping/living under a roof. Others define it as "living in conditions with other people in an involuntary capacity (Kleniewski, 2002). Whatever the reasons are that make a homeless person homeless the fact is that those individuals must use public space as private space.



Figure 3.2

### *PUBLIC/PRIVATE SPACE*

While the distinction between private and public space is quite evident to most, for homeless people the line is blurred. For them they are marginalized by society as vagrants for living in the streets, but are they not doing what we all should be allowed to? The Public realm is also the domain of the homeless. It is where they spend much of their time, and where some of them are forced to take care of human needs, such as rest sleep socializing, and, sometimes urinating and defecating. (Graham 2008).



Figure 3.3

### *TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS*

Many homeless people explore public space for the creation of their own temporary homes. Tent communities in densely shrubby areas are an example of not only temporary homes, but also temporary communities. While temporary appropriations of land are not long-term solutions, such as shelters, they do solve immediate issues homeless people face on a day-to-day basis.



# FOOD/ MARKET VENDORS



## THE CREATION OF TEMPORARY NODES

Temporary nodes are instances within public space when the presence of individuals or groups of individuals creates hubs of use in areas not intended for that particular use. Taco trucks are an obvious method of creating a hub of food consumption in areas void of the means to provide either food or the means to eat food. The food trucks are temporary and therefore do not impose on areas permanently. Their presence is subtle yet powerful, delivering food to areas where food is a chore to acquire, as well as creating a sense of place surrounding the trucks themselves. Similarly street food vendors create hubs around themselves in areas where there is no food available yet hungry people are in abundance. The downtown Davis night scene has recently seen supplemented by a street taco vendor who gains the attention of flocks of hungry, though drunk college students.



Figure 4.1

## REGULAR NODES

Markets are examples of regular nodes because they re-occur in the same spots often weekly. Vendors take over public space, usually in the form of parking lots and transform them into temporary commercial centers. The social exchange within street markets extends beyond the buyer and the seller because the space created forces interactions between all participants and facilitators and thus the marketplace becomes a cultural exchange as well as social one.



Figure 4.2

Seattle's recent creation of a night market mimics the ideals set forth by Taipei's many markets. The night market itself can be temporary or even ephemeral, the processes and the outcomes can have a lasting impact on reshaping the public space and social relationships in the community. (Hou 2010). While many temporal appropriations tend to be individualistic, the creation of nodes has the power to strengthen communities lacking the means to act like a community.

# PRECEDENT STUDY: PARK(ing) DAY



hi





Figure 5.1

Rebar Group is an interdisciplinary firm based in San Francisco whose work deals with the intersection of art, design and activism. Their work encompasses visual and conceptual public art, landscape design, urban intervention, temporary performance installation, digital media and print design. The result of much of their projects seeks to re-use existing spaces to re-create use in areas that are lacking in purpose. Working primarily in public space, the group seeks to address through their work questions on the role of public space in society.



Figure 5.2

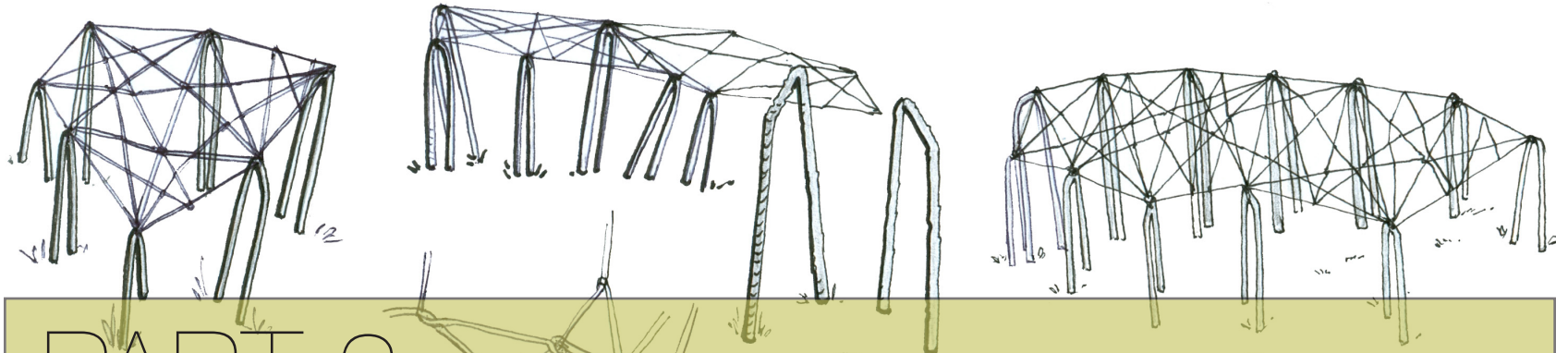
In 2005 ReBar launched their project that used the payment of metered parking spots within San Francisco as the canvas for improvised green space. It became known as PARK(ing) Day. For two hours the group turned a metered parking spot into a city park, which was well received in the area lacking open green space.

With much of San Francisco's downtown area devoted to spaces for vehicle placement, the need for open public green space in developed areas became quite evident. The project is now known as the international PARK(ing) day,



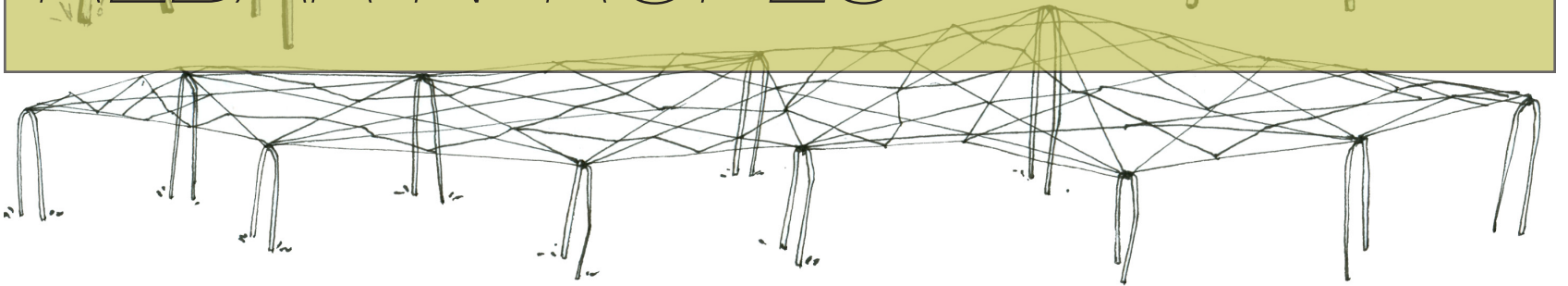
Figure 5.3

which encourages participants to extend beyond just creating green spaces, but rather uses the parking spots for a broad range of public needs. Installations have spanned from pools, vegetable gardens, and community art classes, all with the goal to return unused, or negatively used public space back to whom that space was originally intended for. While PARK(ing) day installations last only a couple hours, they explore the innumerable possibilities that lay within the public sphere. It is the temporality of the project that offers cities flexible solutions and promotes social exchange



PART 2

INSTALLATION 1  
*REBAR N ROPES*



## DESIGN INSPIRATION

Staying true to the goal of re-using resources, this installation was conceptualized from the abundance of leftover rebar from a previous school project. Thrown together with rope bought from the hardware store, the construction of REBAR N ROPES became more and more of a reality. The security of the rebar matched with the intertwining rope familiarized itself to a hammock, and thus an installation meant for sitting and relaxation was realized.

Thinking back to hometown displays of temporary uses of public space during Fourth of July celebrations and parades, the idea of the portable lawn chair came to mind. The idea is to be able to travel to locations with the rebar and the rope and be able to install within a short period of time to be used temporarily.

## CONTEXT MAPS

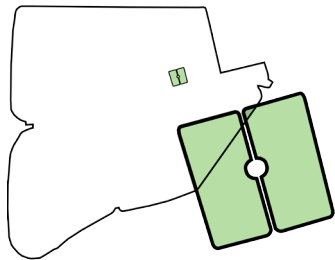


Figure 6.1

### *INSTALLATION 1 : UC Davis Quad*

The first installation was built on the UC Davis quad, a centralized location amidst the heart of collegiate culture.

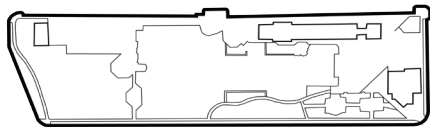


Figure 6.2

### *INSTALLATION 2: City of Davis Central Park*

The second installation in Central Park of Davis, CA was chosen in order to observe how a family oriented atmosphere would influence the manner in which the installation was met.



### *DESIGN INTENTION*

This installation is meant to be an intrusion upon the landscape that encourages users to react to and use the seat without any formal instruction. Since the installation does not initially read as an object for seating purposes, the observations would be looking for instinctual reactions from strangers. The installation is meant to be inviting to passerbys and encourage participation and interaction with this object in public space. The hope is that if the public takes it upon themselves to interact with the installation, then hopefully they continue interacting and modifying public space to suit their needs.





## USERS

The installation on the campus is geared toward university level students or users related to the university.

The Central Park installation is meant for families in a casual environment that is much more on display.



Figure 6.4





Figure 6.5



Figure 6.6



Figure 6.7

## INSTALLATION

*REBAR N ROPES* was installed from two different approaches, determined by the context of the two sites. Factors that determined the approaches for installation include the users of the sites. The campus installation was subject to security patrolling so the installation was done at night so that users or participants could return the next day to find an installation on the once barren quad. The second approach dealing with Central Park was done in broad daylight, due to the amount of families and casual participants

that would be more inclined to inquire what it was that was being installed. The results of these two installations varied widely and this is due directly to the types of users and the exposure of the process. Campus students passed by the installation as if it were not there at all. This reasoning is attested to the correlation to a collegiate setting where art studio installations appear throughout the campus and students took on an art appreciation approach where they took notice from afar.

The structure in central park was built not only in broad daylight but also during the heights of weekly family and student outings to the farmer's market. The hammering of the rebar and the Intertwining of ropes drew in the attention of children first and then their accompanying adults. Inquisitive children pondered such questions as what is it, immediately answering their own question with it looks like a spider web, and the immediate when can I climb it.



Figure 6.8

## RESULTS

The resulting reactions and interactions with the two installations relied on one factor, the intervention of the designer. When the designer was not present to explain the purpose or intention of the structure, the installation was generally ignored. Once again this reasoning is also derived from the context of the location. The collegiate setting and the presence of art installations elsewhere places the installation in the category of what is referred to in this project as a art gallery installation that negates interaction, making



Figure 6.9

people viewers and not users. Results for the second installation on the quad however, received much more use because the designer was present to facilitate use. The average user seems to await permission, either verbal or written, and this case is no exception. As passerbys iquestioned the purpose of the intervention they became curious and inquisitive. This places importance on the designer's role as a facilitator. The next step would be to get users to make their own conclusions and decisions.

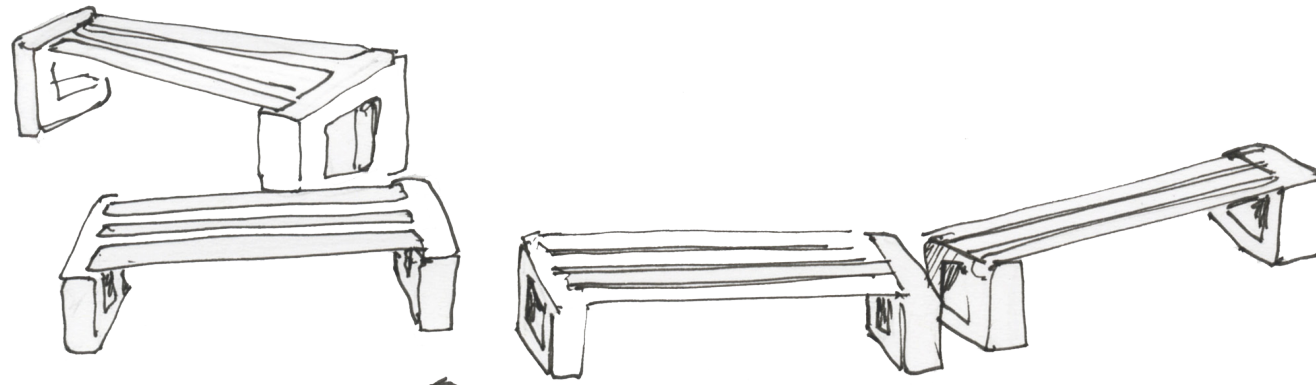


Figure 6.10

## RETALIATION

The Quad installation lasted 5 days, eventually taken out due to maintenance cutting the lawn. The whereabouts of the Central Park installation is still a mystery. The fate of the second installation could be attested to city maintenance. More interesting enough though would be if the installation was ordered to be removed. As is the case with installation 2, planned removal by the designer was never intended.





# IMPROMPTU EXERCISE

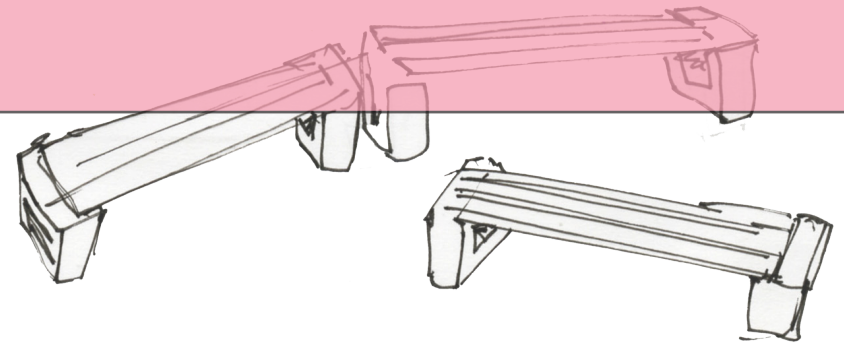




Figure 7.1

### *DISCOVERY*

Walking throughout public space one often stumbles upon opportunities that allow the everyday user to take on the role of a designer. It has become a foreign concept that everyday users have the capability to rearrange an outdoor space in a way that suits their liking. Walking through the UC Davis campus some of these opportunities exist. The Wellman building patio contained numerous un-bolted benches.

### *INTERVENTION*

The formal arrangement of the benches was typical of any public seating arrangement. The opportunity was taken to rearrange the benches however desired.



Figure 7.2

### *RESULT*

This impromptu design experiment fostered no formal plan or tactic, but involved simply moving benches into an un-traditional pattern that radically changes the space. Through an action that took less than 30-minutes, a space was transformed into a space that hardly served the same purpose as the space before,

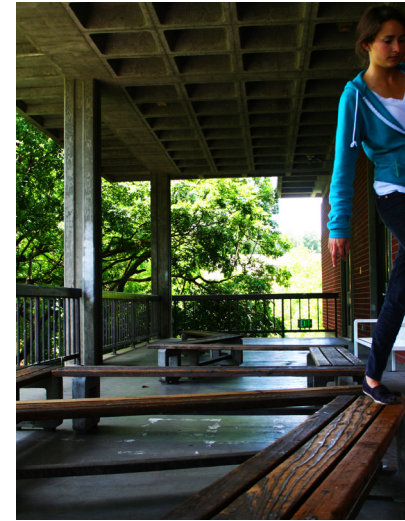


Figure 7.3

### *LESSON LEARNED*

This exercise proved to exemplify one of the many points of this senior project, which is that of the power of the temporary. Although minimal intervention the space was made, the effect was radically different, but more importantly the process required NO formal design education, and yet the participant takes on the role of designer.

An architectural sketch of an installation titled "STAKED SPACE". The sketch is composed of numerous vertical, hand-drawn lines of varying heights and thicknesses, creating a dense, textured environment. In the upper right, two human silhouettes are shown: one standing and one sitting on a chair, both facing the vertical lines. In the lower right, another pair of silhouettes is shown sitting on chairs, also facing the lines. A large, semi-transparent olive-green rectangular box is overlaid in the center of the sketch, containing the text "INSTALLATION 2" and "STAKED SPACE" in a thin, black, sans-serif font. The overall style is a loose, gestural line drawing, typical of conceptual architectural or design sketches.

INSTALLATION 2  
STAKED SPACE







## MOON-LIT INSTALLATION

In the fashion of this project *STAKED SPACE* uses left over lumber acquired from a previous class installation. The installation takes vertical wooden stakes and arranges them in a layout that creates an outdoor room. Equipped with three moveable chairs, the space encourages groups of people or individuals to use the space. Waiting till nightfall, the installation was constructed with careful attention to passing by security guards and police. The entire process takes about two hours, and then however long it takes to find the chairs throughout campus to place within the space. Contrary to *REBAR N ROPES* the use of recognizable chairs within the installation would attract users into the space since some of the forms were familiar.

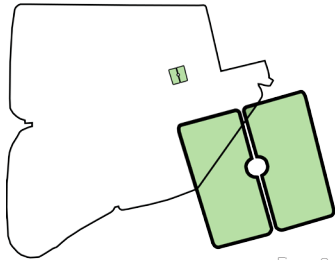


Figure 8.15

The installation was placed on the UC Davis quad due to its heavy circulation of students.

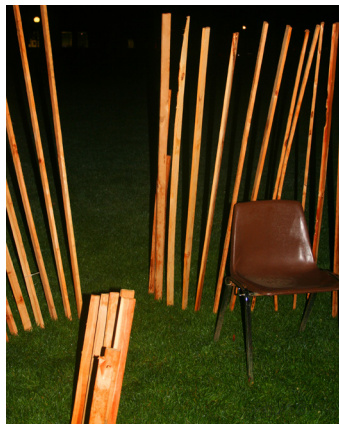


Figure 8.2



Figure 8.3



Figure 8.4

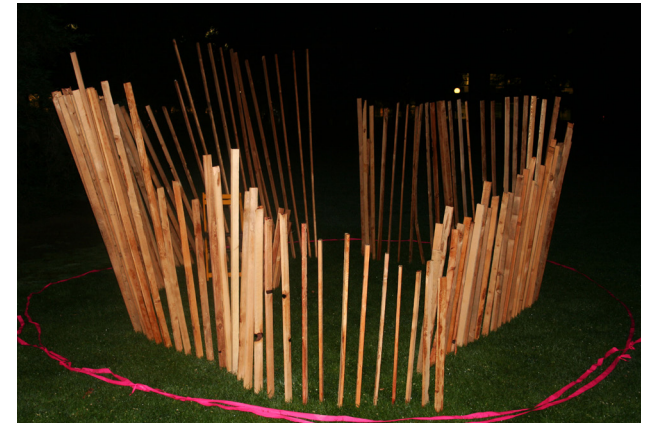


Figure 8.6



Figure 8.5



Figure 8.7

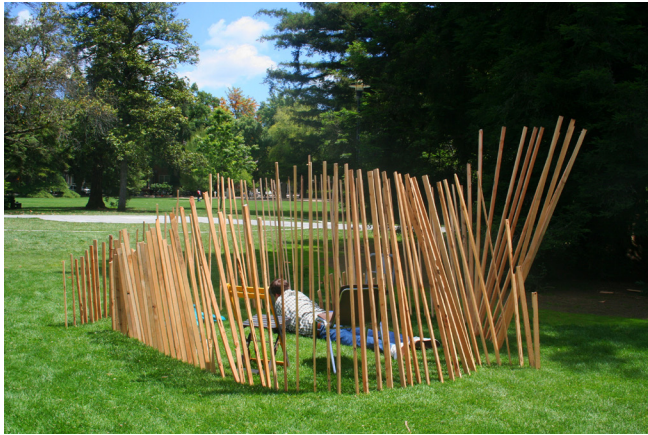


Figure 8.8



Figure 8.9

## *OBSERVATIONS*

The placement of the structure was off the normal path of heavy pedestrian circulation. For pedestrians to come in contact with the structure, their foot patterns would need to skew off their normal paths. First observations showed that passersby took the approach they had with ROPES N REBAR, in that they took notice of the structure from afar, but failed to change their normal patterns to explore what the structure was. However as the day wore on, more and more observers began to observe the installation at a closer distance. As the weather brightened up passersby began entering the structure and sitting in the recognizable chairs. The installation achieved in getting users to actually use the structure, if even for a moment.



# CONCLUSION

Throughout my experience with Landscape Architecture I found my desire to build stippled. Creating spaces and designs through 2D and 3D representations of designs became the status quo. I never challenged this approach to design, but rather accepted it as a standard.

TEMPORARY SPACES IN PUBLIC PLACES uncovered my eyes to a myriad of approaches to design that stray from the conventional and expected method. Using publicly owned spaces without formal permission was a liberating experience that gave me a new hope for the future of not only Landscape architecture, but also design. Removing the limitations and regulations enforced by legalities and authorities, makes the design process limitless. The installations are by no means permanent, but rather created temporarily so that they may be edited, rearranged, placed and re-designed, to maximize its use. What I discovered from this project is that the embracement of imperfect systems is crucial to the design process. What I want readers to take from this project is that it is not a final design, but a design process that I believe anyone is capable of. The ability to make thoughts and design ideas tangible is an important tool to have, and TEMPORARY SPACES IN PUBLIC PLACES, helped me realize that.

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