

THE FIRM  
OFFICE POLICY

PRINTED: NOVEMBER 26<sup>TH</sup>

5th, 2019

## THE FIRM

### we believe

THE FIRM believes architecture is too slow.

THE FIRM believes the following:

- architecture is slow because of buildings codes;
- architecture is slow because of governing regulations;
- architecture is slow because of atomized teams of expertise;
- architecture is slow because of risk;
- architecture is slow because of the singular final product;
- architecture is slow because other mediums are fast.

THE FIRM believes that as a result of slowness, architecture and architects have become the odd ones out. Sam Jacobs references Alejandro Zaera Polo, who describes the action of architecture as having been diminished to the mere thickness of the building's envelope; consequently, the rest of the building - the form, program, and more - is determined not by architects, but by developers who favor tendencies of efficiency rather than design [see Jacobs]<sup>1</sup>. The gift of the envelope to the architect is an act of both pity and antiquated tradition towards the stubborn architect by a society that has quickly continued forward. As a result, THE FIRM rejects riding on the coattails of past architecture and instead takes the position of reasserting architecture as a field that actively transforms spaces, specifically urban, both physically and socially.

THE FIRM believes in the architectural legitimacy of terms such as "makeshift" or "temporary," defined by Merriam-Webster as "a usually crude and temporary expedient" and "lasting for a limited time," respectively. THE FIRM does not consider crudeness or impermanence as adverse qualities ... they are simply qualities.

Historically, temporary architecture has continued to exist besides permanent architecture, often as acts of opposition. The ancient Romans built large, temporary, wooden structures to host plays and festivities, called Ludi, in response to the Roman government's strict regulation of permanent

---

<sup>1</sup>Jacob, Sam. "Opinion: Sam Jacob On Architecture Regaining Its Social Significance." *Dezeen*, Dezeen, 16 Jan. 2014

amphitheaters [see *Ancient Rome: A Sourcebook*]<sup>2</sup>. British architect Inigo Jones' "Design for a Temporary Arch Ornamented with Putti and Allegorical Figures of Music and War," 1622, was paper architecture that proposed a design considered too progressive attached to the idea of the temporary [see Yale Center for British Art]<sup>3</sup>. Aldo Rossi's *Teatro del Mondo*, 1979, was a temporary floating theater that traveled through Venice and reworked the traditional delineation of architecture and space [see *La Biennale di Venezia*]<sup>4</sup>.

THE FIRM believes in architecture that intentionally defies the structured boundaries of traditional cities searching for unfound conditions in the urban fabric. Stan Allen states that material practice is about continual experimentation to find the misalignments between the "geometric structure of the planned city" and the out-of-sync nomadic inhabitants [see Allen]<sup>5</sup>. How do inhabitants reclaim urban environments? How are spaces unofficially reprogrammed to serve the people? THE FIRM investigates the dynamic behavior of urban dwellers as the baseline for dynamic urban conditions.

THE FIRM believes in the positive consequences of bottom-up urbanism and acts of rebellion. Consequences such as user-specific architecture, higher utilization of spaces, and relevant reactions to changing contexts. The opposition to top-down urbanism and figures of authority forces expressive action, eliciting compelling solutions to the problematic norm.

---

<sup>2</sup>Dillon, Matthew, and Lynda Garland. "The Public Face of Rome." *Ancient Rome: A Sourcebook*, Routledge, 2013, pp. 54-109.

<sup>3</sup>Hargraves, Matthew. "Design for a Temporary Arch Ornamented with Putti and..." Yale Center for British Art, Yale.

<sup>4</sup>"Il Teatro Del Mondo Edificio Singolare." *La Biennale Di Venezia*.

<sup>5</sup>Allen, Stan. "practice vs. project." *practice: architecture, technique + representation*, Routledge, 2009, pp. 11-23.

## **we are**

We are pragmatic expressionist realists.

We must work efficiently and effectively at all times. We must earnestly express through action the physical and abstract deficiencies we have discovered in our urban environments. We must work in the real; everything we do and make must be geared towards the real. We work in the real in order to physically demand change in our cities as a physical environment necessitates a physical catalyst.

Together, we are THE FIRM, a group dedicated to cultivating and leading a collective of ever-changing individuals such as you and me to bring change through guerilla urbanism.

As defined by THE FIRM, guerilla urbanism is the tactical performance of (un)sanctioned actions that seek temporary physical and permanent philosophical changes within the urban environment.

The management of THE FIRM falls in the hands of the administrators - the thinkers who dedicate their lives to experimenting with the urban. The administrators are planners, organizers, testers, publishers, and ultimately, architects. As the context of architecture expands, we too must widen the scope of the architect.

Responsibilities include:

- i. Properly following all steps of THE FIRM's method to plan and create successful guerilla urbanist actions;
- ii. Thorough quality control of all produced actions and respective instructions to ensure there are no miscommunications with both members and urban targets;
- iii. Publish and disseminate THE FIRM's works so members can become active guerilla urbanists in their cities.

The action of THE FIRM falls in the hands of the members - the fluid group of dedicated doers of guerilla urbanism, including you, me, and the administrators<sup>6</sup>.

Responsibilities include:

- i. Performing applicable guerilla urbanist actions (GUA) according to provided recipes/instructions;
- ii. Experimenting and adjusting actions when confronted with new variables at the sites;
- iii. Introducing qualified people to THE FIRM;
- iv. Maintaining proper and clear records of guerilla urbanism performances.

---

<sup>6</sup> use of "you and me" to denote that both reader/member and the administrators all partake in the doing act of guerilla urbanism

Aesthetics include:

- i. White long sleeve t-shirt [see Carhartt Workwear Long-Sleeve Pocket T-Shirt]<sup>7</sup>
  - a. One (1) marker required in t-shirt pocket [see Sharpie PRO Permanent Markers, Chisel Point, Black]<sup>8</sup>
- ii. Black work overalls [see Carhartt Shoreline Bib Overalls]<sup>9</sup>
  - a. One (1) nametag required attached to left strap of overalls [see C-Line ID Badge Holders, Clear]<sup>10</sup>. Name must be typed in size 16 Courier New font on cardstock paper [see Staples Cardstock Paper, 110 lbs, 8.5" x 11", White]<sup>11</sup>
  - b. One (1) tape measure required in right pocket of overalls [see Stanley 25ft. PowerLock Tape Measure]<sup>12</sup>
- iii. Black work boots [see Timberland PRO Direct Attach 6" Steel Toe Boots]<sup>13</sup>
- iv. Reflective construction safety vest [see HiViS Supply Work King S313 Class 1 Surveyor's Safety Vest]<sup>14</sup>
- v. Black workman's hat [see Browning Men's Workman's Hat, Black]<sup>15</sup>
- vi. Black frame polarized protective sunglasses [see Oakley Clifden Sunglasses]<sup>16</sup>
- vii. Black durable watch worn on the left wrist [see Casio's G-Shock GAS100B-1A]<sup>17</sup>

Members must appear to be permitted to change spaces for the public to perceive them as such.

#### **we follow**

We follow Assemble Studios and their practice culture. We honor their Cineroleum project as an immaculate example of architectural intervention that expresses an issue in the urban environment. The Cineroleum was the product of an investigation into the potential re-use of the UK's 4,000 unused gas stations. Assemble Studios successfully created an intervention that existed both physically and socially, attracting movie patrons and additionally interacting with the passing drivers. However, THE FIRM see Cineroleum as too permanent, more of an architectural building than an architectural action [see Assemble Studios]<sup>18</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> US\$22.99-27.99+tax

<sup>8</sup> US\$22.89+tax for 12ct.

<sup>9</sup> US\$139.99-154.99+tax

<sup>10</sup> US\$25.29+tax 50ct.

<sup>11</sup> US\$17.29+tax 250ct.

<sup>12</sup> US\$9.88+tax

<sup>13</sup> US\$145.00+tax

<sup>14</sup> US\$64.99+tax

<sup>15</sup> US\$16.99+tax

<sup>16</sup> US\$226.00+tax

<sup>17</sup> US\$160.00+tax

<sup>18</sup> <https://assemblestudio.co.uk/>

We follow DoTank Brooklyn. A collective of friends that performed public, unsanctioned interventions and archived their records on Vimeo<sup>19</sup> and Flickr<sup>20</sup>. We study their temporality and the trail of artifacts left behind after their apparent disbandment and consider DoTank as a predecessor of THE FIRM from whom we can learn from. DoTank continues to exist as pages untouched for nearly a decade on Tumblr<sup>21</sup>, Vimeo<sup>22</sup>, and Flickr<sup>23</sup> while their Facebook, Twitter, and official webpage no longer exist, producing a fragmented digital identity.

We follow Public Ad Campaign. A one-man team of Jordan Seiler, Public Ad Campaign aims to provide illegal access to advertisement displays, allowing for the replacement of consumerist ads with statements, art, and more to spark dialogue in cities. Seiler manufactures makeshift keys for cities and their specific advertising methods and is on a mission to provide everyone with that access through his project PublicAccess. Similarly, we provide a curated catalog of guerilla urbanist actions that dissatisfied urban dwellers can begin with in order to spark change in their cities. However, THE FIRM intends to do a wider much wider range of actions afforded through the collaborative nature of THE FIRM, whereas Public Ad Campaign is individually run and specializes in the interruption of advertisement [see Public Ad Campaign]<sup>24</sup>

We follow Bonnie Ora Sherk. We enjoy her boldness to not just create a park under a concrete bridge underpass, but to also import livestock, taking the extra step to strongly oppose the existing urban condition. Although Bonnie Ora Sherk attacked the existing urban condition, she still had to go through the proper channels for the legality of her actions whereas THE FIRM does not collaborate with established governances due to the muddling of the message [see Bonnie Ora Sherk]<sup>25</sup>.

---

<sup>19</sup> Video sharing platform

<sup>20</sup> Photo sharing platform

<sup>21</sup> <https://dotankbrooklyn.tumblr.com/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://vimeo.com/groups/dotank/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.flickr.com/groups/dotank/>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.publicadcampaign.com/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://alivinglibrary.org/art-landscape-architecture-systemic-design/bonnie-ora-sherk-featured-sfmoma-show>

## we do

### THE FIRM method<sup>26</sup>

- i. Identify target site and target audience.
- ii. Conduct reconnaissance and survey the site and audience.
- iii. Perform analysis of the site and audience, seeking weaknesses or leverageable information.
- iv. Develop and design the guerilla urbanist action.
- v. Analyze developed action by wargaming<sup>27</sup> and take appropriate action.
- vi. Receive approval from THE FIRM's administrators.
- vii. Produce applicable documents and disseminate among members and the public.
- viii. Collect appropriate documentation from members for all actions for archiving.
- ix. Curate archive according to relevant urban issues, highlighting major trends or deficiencies.

We do physical practice. The essence of THE FIRM is creating physical space that actively protests unfavorable urban conditions by revealing and critiquing the issue and providing a temporary solution. The tangibility of the physical is a unique asset that cannot be replicated otherwise. The physical produces unavoidable attention that requires a response from the target audience.

We do literary and illustrative practice. we create instructions/recipes of guerilla urbanism. Similar to paper architecture, THE FIRM's literary and illustrative practice seek to promote the ideas of the guerilla urbanist actions independently from the physical architecture. While not nearly as separate from the physical and real as paper architecture, this literary and illustrative architecture aims to be both supportive to the real and independent. The instructions/recipes lead to the physical, but they do not need the physical.

We do digital practice. We maintain a parallel digital identity to support THE FIRM's physical entity. The engrained temporality of THE FIRM is offset by the permanence of the digital identity. Archives, online activity, and more track THE FIRM's physical existence.

We do curatorial practice. We collect, maintain, and organize a dynamic, heightened catalog that reacts to public opinions, policies, and issues. Similar to THE FIRM's fluid membership, THE FIRM's representation is also fluid and active in response to current context.

### Mediums

We do through architecture/intervention. We create architecture/intervention that redefines and rearranges space, recycling existing space through addition, subtraction, and/or manipulation rather than destroying and building new space. Expression and commentary require context, and the

---

<sup>26</sup> Based off the U.S. Military Decision Making Process (MDMP).

<sup>27</sup> Wargame - a military exercise carried out to test or improve tactical expertise.

destruction of space means the destruction of context, without which our actions have no meaning.

We do through film/video. We record and produce film/video that showcases both the temporary architecture and its interactions with the urban. We produce three types of film/video. The narrative process video, illustrating the procedure of the GUA performance. The silent observation video, a film focused on the interactions between architecture/intervention, urban dweller, and city. The temporal time lapse video, focusing on the end of the guerilla urbanist action and what occurs after its dissolution. Does the site revert to its pre-existing condition? Does change occur post-action?

We do through drawing/writing. we create communicative documents that are succinct, clear and easy to propagate. While visuals often supersede barriers of language, clarity of written works is similarly important for explicitly expressing ideas of urban rebellion. We write manifestos and create recipes that provoke physical actions and reactions. The physical is resource-expensive; thus drawing/writing is another method of expression.

#### **we do not do**

We do not build with the intent of permanence. Permanence is a notion that brings a false sense of security and many times, destines architecture for future failure. Likewise, permanence becomes a barrier to progress by turning architecture into a stagnant, stubborn barrier.

We do not perform without purpose and knowledge. We must have a reason such as demanding change and improvements to a space that has been clearly forgotten about.

We do not collaborate with authority. We may guide them, point them in a certain direction, or force a reaction but we do not work with authority. We do not follow codes or zoning rules, nor do we ask for permission. However, we respect the safety of others and do follow zoning rules and codes that pertain to safety.

#### **we archive**

We archive the administrator's first run-throughs of interventions with photos and videos on the internet. we archive proceeding runs of interventions by members. we archive all methods and sites of interventions digitally.

We maintain two archives: the raw, all-encompassing archive and the directed and curated archive. The raw archive stands as a total collection of all submitted materials by THE FIRM's members; a searchable database of THE FIRM. The curated archive is the face of THE FIRM showcasing the success of guerilla urbanism.

We archive in order to propagate and create THE FIRM's legacy. We archive because we acknowledge THE FIRM's mortality. We archive in the hopes that beyond the life of THE FIRM, THE FIRM's archives may continue to encourage and facilitate guerilla urbanist actions as necessary.



## **bibliography**

Allen, Stan. "practice vs. project." *practice: architecture, technique + representation*, Routledge, 2009, pp. 11-23.

Dillon, Matthew, and Lynda Garland. "The Public Face of Rome." *Ancient Rome: A Sourcebook*, Routledge, 2013, pp. 54-109.

Hargraves, Matthew. "Design for a Temporary Arch Ornamented with Putti and..." Yale Center for British Art, Yale, <https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/vufind/Record/2069832>.

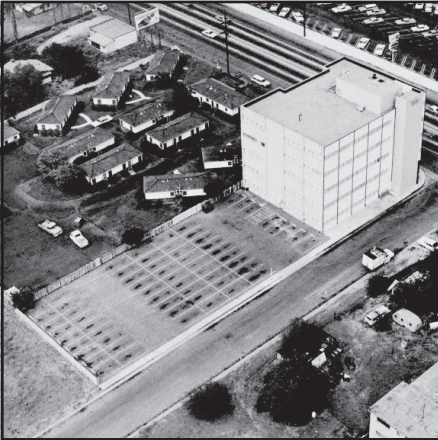
"Il Teatro Del Mondo Edificio Singolare." *La Biennale Di Venezia*, <https://www.labiennale.org/en/asac/activities/il-teatro-del-mondo-edificio-singolare>.

Jacob, Sam. "Opinion: Sam Jacob On Architecture Regaining Its Social Significance." *Dezeen*, Dezeen, 16 Jan. 2014, <https://www.dezeen.com/2014/01/16/opinion-sam-jacob-how-architecture-can-regain-social-significance/>.

Sadler, Simon. *Archigram: Architecture Without Architecture*. Mit Press, 2005, pp. 3-8, 194-197.



CATALOG 1A: SITES



# CATALOG 1B: SITES

