MOSAIC

A PUBLICATION OF NYU GALLATIN SCHOOL OF INDIVIDUALIZED STUDY

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United Kingdom - Ireland

MARCH 2023
AMERICAS SCHOLARS
Costa Rica

MARCH 2023
DEAN'S HONOR SOCIETY
Prague - Vienna - Budapest
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As the Pandemic receded and precautions against COVID-19 lifted nationally and internationally this academic year, we were extremely happy at Gallatin’s Office of Global Programs to curate trips for Gallatin’s Scholarly Communities—also known as Scholars Groups—, almost in the same manner as we did before the biggest global public health crisis of our lifetimes. Topics that Gallatin Scholars Groups covered were wide-ranging and interesting representing the varied interests and expertise of Gallatin faculty who are leading them. Sara Murphy led Albert Gallatin Scholars this year, and participating students explored the topic “A United/Disunited Kingdom” in their travels to the United Kingdom and Ireland. Americas Scholars traveled to Costa Rica under the mentorship of Matt Stanley, and the theme for their scholarly inquiries was “Post-Colonial Science in the Mid-Anthropocene.” Karen Hornick was the faculty mentor for the Dean’s Honor Society, and the topic for this scholar group was “Arts, Politics, and Society in Habsburg Lands.” Dean’s Honor Society traveled to Austria and the Czech Republic to learn more about the topic. As always, while learning from Gallatin faculty about all these issues in the seminars dedicated to each group, students in Gallatin’s Scholarly Communities added international perspectives to this experience through the field trips to the aforementioned destinations through engagements with local NGOs, scholars, and excursions. In this issue of the Mosaic, you will find representative writings, artwork, reflections, and poetry from participating students.
A United/Disunited Kingdom

Albert Gallatin Scholars

UNITED KINGDOM & IRELAND

January 2023

A United/Disunited Kingdom
This poem tells a story of solidarity, a connection forged between Jewish and Irish immigrants, tailors, and dockers, through the pains of labor struggle. These communities, though different and riddled with their own contentions, came together to aid one another in their fight for workers’ rights and successfully achieved their demands. While walking through London’s East End, I was struck by this story and moved by the echoes of marching footsteps on streets and neighborhoods now greatly changed over the course of time. The poem is overlaid on top of images of these revolutionary Dockers and Tailors from 1889 and several keywords from the poem are replaced with digitally collaged words from the Great Tailors’ Strike Balance Sheet of 1889 that records the financial contribution of the Irish Dockers to the Jewish Tailors’ efforts. My work aims to bring the voices of the past to the present through historical poetry, combining the written word and images to illuminate a remarkable moment in London’s history that time should not forget.
BALANCE SHEET
OF THE
GREAT STRIKE OF EAST LONDON TAILORS,
For 10½ hours per day.
EXTENDING FROM AUGUST 27th, to OCTOBER 2nd, 1889.

Introductory Note by the Secretary on behalf of the Strike Committee.

In presenting this Sheet before the attention of the public, we beg to take the opportunity of offering our heartfelt thanks to all sympathisers who so readily and freely responded to our appeal for help, and more so to those who did not even wait for our appeal. And while, considering the importance of monetary assistance in such critical times to save the starving soldiers from bending before the whip of starvation, we express our utmost appreciation at the way in which sympathisers of all grades, rich and poor, laborers and manufacturers, subscribed to our funds, we cannot refrain from emphasizing with great pleasure the fact that the readiness and fraternal spirit shown to us by the various Trade Organizations and other English Working Men's Bodies armed us with a most effective weapon to carry the fight to victory. We only hope that our brethren all over the Globe will not fail to take a grand lesson of courage from the Dock Labourers' Strike, as well as from this of the Tailors and of others, which will mark a new and splendid epoch in the history of Labour; a lesson that will lead the workers of all countries to their complete emancipation and real happiness.

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* This Balance, or whatever may come in, will be handed over to the Silverstone Strike Fund, in accordance with the decision of the Committee.

Audited and found correct,

H. COOMBE, West End Branch, Amalgamated Society of Tailors.
J. T. JEWELL, Dragon Branch, Amalgamated Society of Tailors.
H. J. CLARKE, Dock, Wharf, Riverside & General Labourers' Union.
W. PARISH, Treasurer.
WILLIAM WESS, Secretary,
October 22nd, 1889.
This artwork was inspired by London, our first stop in the UK. For every activity we did, whether it was walking around the vibrant East End or visiting the Black Cultural Archives, there is a small, graphically-designed illustration. While on the trip, I paid attention to the infrastructure, architecture, and overall urban design elements that differentiated London from other cities I'd visited. I was particularly struck by the seamless and efficient operation of the Tube, which starkly contrasted with the subway system in New York City. I grew curious about the origin of the Tube: Why did it have that name? What is the history of its ownership? How was its construction affected by the world wars? Was it always a symbol of connectivity or did it begin with exclusionary motives? Intrigued by its history and construction, I delved deeper into its origins and discovered the London Transport Museum. The museum houses an archive of posters that have adorned the walls of Tube stations since 1908. These posters are not only informative but also visually stunning and reflective of the cultural zeitgeist of their respective eras. In an attempt to highlight the art institutions we visited and the historical tours we embarked on, and pay homage to the creative collaborations of the many Tube posters, I created NYU and the Tube: A Match Made in London. The “A Match Made in London” portion underscores the role of effective transportation in the deep exploration of new places, and the pedagogical qualities of a railway system that unexpectedly amplified the intellectual curiosity that NYU encourages in its students.
As a descendant of Jamaican immigrants from the Windrush era, my trip to London was one filled with emotions that I never thought I would experience. The city that I had always heard so much about, the city that my grandparents, parents, and even older siblings had once called home, was now my destination for an adventure that I knew would be nothing short of unforgettable. As I walked through the streets of London, I couldn't help but feel a deep sense of sadness and pain at times. This was a city that had a history of slavery and oppression, a city that had profited from the forced labor and exploitation of my ancestors. The buildings, the streets, and the very fabric of the city were built upon the backs of enslaved people who had been stolen from their homes.

When I explored London, I also discovered a vibrant Caribbean history and culture that was alive and thriving in the heart of the city. One of my favorite areas to visit was Brixton. From the sound of reggae music that echoed through the streets, to the delicious smells of jerk chicken and curry goat that filled the air, I could feel the spirit of Jamaica all around me. But it was also impossible to ignore the fact that this culture had been born out of struggle and resistance as discovered by my trip to the Black Cultural Archives. The Windrush generation had faced discrimination and prejudice at every turn, from housing to employment, and even in the justice system. My family had experienced these injustices firsthand, and their stories were a constant reminder of the struggles that people of color continue to face today.

As I visited museums and historical sites, I learned more about the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade and the legacy of oppression that had been left in its wake. It was a history that had been whitewashed and hidden away for far too long, but now, it was finally being brought to light. And yet, even in the face of all this pain and adversity, I was struck by the resilience and strength of the people who had come before me. The Windrush generation had fought against all odds to make a life for themselves and their families in a country that often treated them as second-class citizens. They had built their communities, their businesses, and their cultural legacy, all while navigating a system that was stacked against them.

As I left London, I felt a sense of pride and gratitude for the sacrifices that my ancestors had made, and for the legacy that they had left behind. The last stop on my trip to London with AGS was The Kings Cross Railway Station, which ironically was where my grandfather 60 years prior worked, built train tracks upon his immigration to London. It was also where he lost his life in a tragic workplace accident in 1965. I didn't know that at the time but in a way, it was a full-circle moment that I am eternally grateful for. The struggles of our Caribbean ancestors paved the way for me and for future generations to live a life that they could only dream of. And while there is still so much work to be done to combat racism and inequality, I know that their spirit and determination will continue to guide us forward and be a part of us descendants forever.
The art piece is a mixed-media installation that combines knitted elements with found objects and traditional textiles. The installation is intricately knit with various symbols and motifs that represent the cultural divide between Britain, Scotland, and Northern Ireland as well as many of the constituents of the once expansive British empire. The frames are held together precariously by the wool and stocking elements, symbolizing the fragility of the illusion that is the “United” Kingdom.

On the starting side of the tapestry representing the British symbol is a gate, specifically the Crowned Portcullis, which illustrates the British's desire to protect their traditions and maintain their governmental separation from modern ideals. Gates historically symbolized power, status, and a way to keep the outsider out. Who the outsider is, changes as history progresses, but it seems the gated mindset still resides within the culture of Britain. Moreover, the gate symbol on the piece is dyed into the fibers of the wool using a gold coloring, further insinuating the hold that tradition has over the British government.

Continuing onward in the tapestry and history, the Scottish symbol of an individual's silhouette connoting their passion and enthusiasm for the people is shown. The figure can be seen all around the new Scottish Parliament, from the towering windows to the lights overlooking the semi-circle seating arrangement.

The set-up and positioning of these figures show Scotland’s commitment to the community and the needs of all its citizens indiscriminately as the lawmakers make decisions within the watch of the public eye.

The knitted tapestry is surrounded by various found objects that further emphasize the cultural divide. Although the wool is knitted together and continuous, it does not mean that the progression of ideas remains the same. The piece is littered with stockings stretched to bear weight in many places. There are holes in some of them to show that the bonds may be breaking as modern ideas infiltrate the archaic establishment.

The installation is meant to convey the tension and dis-union between these two cultures, with the knitted tapestry serving as a physical representation of the divide. The combination of traditional textiles and modern found objects highlights the ongoing struggle between the two cultures and the different paths they have taken in their respective but shared histories.

At the very bottom, the last piece of knitted wool contains a shadow of a dove, and within it a partial peace sign. This is specifically about Northern Ireland and the period of The Troubles which has slowed today but has not completely disappeared. However, peace is growing with each new generation and thus this installation ends on an optimistic note that as the tapestry and history go on, peace will also continue to grow.
The Black Cab Tours: The Troubles of Era in Northern Ireland between Protestants and Catholics

Lesley Tan

Learning about the conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, I quickly realized that these labels do not simply refer to religious identification, but also political identities constituted by their complex histories. A central tension amongst these groups is national identity. Whereas the Protestants align their identities with the British, the Catholics desire for Northern Ireland to join the Republic of Ireland outside of British rule. It was during the couple of days spent in Belfast, Northern Ireland, with other scholars that I learned more about this tension amongst the Protestants and Catholics especially during the Troubles era.

On our second day in Belfast, we hopped on black cabs that whisked us around the city to explore murals detailing this period of intense conflict began in the 1960s.

The popularity of black cabs originated in the 1970s due to the disintegration of public transportation in the city.[1] There was obvious divide in the usage of these vehicles — Catholics travelled along the Falls Road whereas Protestants travelled along the Shankill Road to go in and out of the city center.[2] Driving through Belfast, the segregation between Protestant and Catholic communities was extremely apparent especially given the miles of peace walls erect across the city that tangibly divided these communities.

For decades before the Troubles, Catholics within Northern Ireland were treated as second class citizens without being allowed to vote and many could only work in menial jobs.
In 1964, Catholics held a peaceful protest against their status within the country led by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association against the majority Protestant government. However, this conflict quickly became violent with riots breaking out on both sides. To attempt to end the conflict, the British Army intervened by deploying troops which only served to escalate the conflict. The end of the Troubles came about with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 by both sides. With 2023 marking the 25th anniversary of the signing of this agreement, it is still present, however, that there is an immense amount of tension that exists between both parties. [3]

Standing in front of elaborate murals on the peace walls, I saw snippets of these tensions. These murals showcased tributes to the Irish paramilitary activists who dedicated their lives to fighting for Irish freedom and others devoted to loyalist Protestant members. Amongst murals advocating for Irish independence, some featured important international activists including abolitionist Frederick Douglass and Civil Rights leaders Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks to signal solidarity with the movements these leaders led against injustice.

Another mural featured two joined hands reaching from the barred windows of jail cells, one arm dressed in the Irish flag, the others’ sleeve featuring the Palestinian flag which expresses Irish solidarity with Palestinians in recognizing the similarities between Israeli occupation with British occupation.

As we stood at a memorial honoring the lives lost from the Troubles era, the tour guide pointed to makeshift covers situated above rooftops next to the peace walls to protect these homes from the molotov cocktails and other destructive strategies those from the other side would employ. With physical walls separating these communities, I wondered if reconciliation is truly possible.

I remember an anecdote that my tour guide shared, how even in a mixed workplace with both Catholics and Protestants, it is common for people to tell within the first ten seconds of meeting another person to tell their religious and subsequent political affiliation despite this identity not always being completely obvious from an external standpoint.
She mentioned that there is one area, the city center, that allows Protestants and Catholics to relatively comfortably mingle with one another, a sort of “neutral zone” where both sides can even come together to grab a beer. However, the rest of the city is largely segregated and thus prejudices against both sides are reinforced. Even as of 2015, around 93% of children in Northern Ireland attend either a strictly Protestant or a Catholic school, demonstrating the lack of integration from a young age.[4] Moreover, religious conversion is rather rare on both sides, so people are born into their religious identities which are then maintained throughout their lifetime.[5]

Despite the stark separation, many people are actually in agreement with integration. In fact, 71% of people in Northern Ireland believe that integrated schools should be the norm. However, despite various calls to action such as the Education Reform Order of 1989 which delegated this task of education integration to the Department of Education, political leaders and governmental organizations have not made significant progress. Rather, this push toward reform has been driven by community action through collaboration between parents, teachers, and other community leaders to bring about change such as the Integrated Education Fund which has created 68 integrated schools since the first one in 1981.[6]

Thus, despite this sectarian divide within Northern Ireland, there have been calls for integration which was especially apparent on the peace walls through various written messages. “Nobody wants this. Bring back peace!” says Gray. “War has no winners,” says another. “Peace please, we can do this!” says Elise. I was moved by these courageous and sincere marks on the wall that invites both sides to imagine reconciliation and a Northern Ireland beyond these divides.
In Search of (That Thing): Blackness Overseas

Nick Motley

I found myself on the corner of Acre Lane and Brixton Road. Transfixed within the smiles and nods of passersby, the every-day-ness of it all. It’s the kind of look that says, “Hey! I see you!” So naturally you return the acknowledgement because they are human too. I see them. They see me.

I found love down the street. In the market. A white woman told me I was beautiful and then proceeded to ask me how I was coping with being black. I told her that it was okay... That I am okay.

Her boss (the owner of the vintage store I was in) suddenly appears, head to toe in a deep blue tuxedo with a top hat to match. Dapper Dan would have taken notes. But that’s exactly it, isn’t it? This black man was paying her bills chileee

I found kinship in the club. Akilah and Nkosikazi. The “yaaasss” and the “slayyy” meant more coming from them.

In Belfast a black man came up to me and we bonded about being the only ones and suddenly I’m the one asking how he’s coping.

I found terror in every fence, gate, and wall. Though, I found peace there too.

I found myself there.

In all of the places I have never been.
March 2023

Americas Scholars

COSTA RICA

Post-Colonial Science in the Mid-Anthropocene
This piece is dedicated to the many long hours we spent on the bus and the scenes I saw looking out the window. Many pop-up markets and restaurants conglomerate at the side of the road, which seems very convenient for passing motorcyclists. I was especially intrigued by the way in which Costa Ricans in the countryside access their food, as it is radically different from being in a city and going to the nearest supermarket. Moreover, in the U.S., it’s typical for supermarkets to have everything you need in one location. I think that this scene struck me because it showed me how (I believe) people’s relationship to food and the soil that nourishes it should be, not buying fruits and vegetables wrapped in saran wrap at your typical giant conglomerate supermarket.
Blue Morpho
Alba Quintero Retis

What flutters—
Wings, feet, eyelashes, hummingbird hearts
A butterfly has found itself on my shoulder, and I find myself
Flustered, holding my breath to not break our touch
How did you find yourself here?
Through wind spirals, falling green, all your friends leaving.
You turn my head, move the gaze to a cocoon colony
Your whole life is here—birth, life, bodies splattered on the floor
Your residue sticking to a foot that will take you to Illinois, in a JetBlue bird.
115 days, waiting to be looked at
How cruel to live to be seen and die just the same
To eat from the saccharine-coated fingers
That buy the greens, export the ground, steal your kind.
If only you weren’t so beautiful
Maybe then, you’d have a better chance at life.
A Brief Synopsis of How to Quantify a Rainforest

Ella Chapman

While exploring the vast rainforests in Costa Rica, the intuitive behavior is to admire the otherworldly beauty of the vegetation and animals. These excursions are accompanied by impressive facts and figures that the tour guides boast. “Costa Rican rainforests are home to 500,000 different species of plants, animals, and trees!” “Costa Rica is home to almost six percent of the world’s biodiversity, despite its very small size.” “Rainforests make up 51 percent of Costa Rican land!” (Gera2022). The facts are astounding, especially when you begin to think about how someone might quantify the immense amount of complex land into a comprehensible set of data. Furthermore, we may ask how one can organize that data and extract meaningful analysis considering its size and complexity.

I had the opportunity to sit down with our guide, Rodolfo J. Vieto Morales, to hear about his experience with extracting and implementing data directly from the rainforests. As a Forestry Economist at OptiForest S.A., he is an expert in the process of performing forestry plantation valuations. He has worked on all levels of the analysis, from direct observation as a forester to building models that aid in evaluating the monetary value of the land. He walked me through a step-by-step process in which this land, known for being incredibly diverse and extensive, is turned into quantitative data.
Forestry plantation investments

- **Growth:**
  - Diameter (DBH, 1.3 m)
  - Height
  - Taper

- **Yield:** (Expected products)
  - Diameter
  - Length
  - Quality (shape, knots)
  - Sap/Heartwood ratio
  - Market requirements

Growth

Precommercial thinning

Comercial thinning

Comercial thinning

Comercial thinning

Clear cut

Time ± 20 years

-$\$+$
The process, of course, begins directly on the land. Using a cluster sampling technique, trees are individually measured in proportionate areas throughout the land in question. Although there are infinite sources of measurement when working with nature, Rodolfo’s team focuses on three variables that have proven to be the most informative in predicting the growth of a forest. First, the diameter of the tree is recorded. This measurement alone will provide information regarding the amount of foliage the tree may produce, the age of the plants, and the overall health of the forest. Next, the height of a tree is measured telling how much access to sunlight the tree has, and also about the overall forest health. Lastly, the foresters determine the taper, “the rate of decrease in stem diameter with increasing height from ground level to the tree tip” (Burkhart 2012). This variable will be developed over time, and it provides information on the sturdiness and general health of a tree. If a tree has a higher taper, it will have a poor form, likely leading to a shorter lifespan.

The second category of measurements relates to the predicted yield of a forest. This tells the number of expected products a forest can sustainably provide. Once again, the trees’ diameter and length are considered. The rate of the tree’s production can also be informed by its quality, whether it has any notable shapes or knots. The foresters also pay attention to the sapwood and heartwood ratio. If a tree has a higher amount of sapwood, it requires more water to sustain the production of forestry (Song 2022). Finally, the yield of a forest is considered in the context of the current market needs, which can vary from time to time.

The combination of the growth and yield categories will then be used to determine the appropriate forestry plantation investments. Over time, higher growth and yield rates will justify higher investments, expecting a more lucrative commercial return. The revenue flow projections fall closely in line with the volume flow projections for the forests. In maximizing these investments, OptiForest also considers work efficiency, like in the process that I have just described. Additionally, they must consider current governmental regulations, taxes that may incur, infrastructure, and the cost of scientific resources.

With the enormous amount of variables contributing to OptiForest’s financial models, data governance and quality is an entirely different concern at hand. Rodolfo tells me that investments in data governance technology are a cost that his company has chosen to avoid. He explains that it is difficult to understand the value of this technology without having data governance experience, and despite how it might lead to increases in efficiency, it has been difficult to convince others to invest. Right now, all of OptiForest’s data is stored on Microsoft services, and it takes great effort to keep the monstrosity of information organized. That being said, OptiForest has certainly made the most out of these affordable platforms, and they produce sophisticated models that can accurately predict the return on investments for Costa Rican forestry. Thinking back to the first steps of the data collection process, this is an incredible accomplishment. The OptiForest team successfully turns a collection of measurements performed by hand into high-stakes predictions.
As someone who has not pushed me enough to embrace the creative side of a Gallatin degree, I went through a lot of iterations about what this project could be and ultimately decided I wanted to embrace a medium I am not traditionally comfortable with. Hence, attached to this project are sixteen of the best pictures I took of the flora in Costa Rica. Given that the main foundation for the trip was to experience the ecosystems in Costa Rica and get to know Ticos, my original project idea was to ask Costa Ricans what made them the proudest of being Costa Rican since most, if not all, of the readings from the class, were not written by Costa Ricans themselves. One common theme among the Costa Ricans I did interview was how proud they were of their country’s natural environment. Given the pride that Costa Ricans feel in the beautiful nature around them, I decided it was appropriate to design a project that highlighted how diverse and beautiful the flowers of the country were. While we were in Costa Rica, I was struck by how many different shapes and colors these flowers came in. Living in New York City you definitely do not see that much variety in the flora, even in the spring. Even in the Latin American countries that I have lived in, I had never seen such beautiful flowers before. This experience pushed me to reflect on how sometimes we forget how beautiful nature is, especially when we are constantly surrounded by the concrete jungle. Maybe that is also why it is so hard for people to connect with the fight against climate change since we are so disconnected from the natural world. Personally, being deeply immersed in nature reminded me of how big the stakes are in this Anthropocene. I hope my images, while few, have a similar effect on those who look at them.
Reflection: A Cross-Culture-Cacao

Déjà-Vu

Geneva Tenney

My mom used to tell me stories about trees and how they could heal. Her village in Colima, Mexico was quaint but rich in knowledge about the power in the roots and fruits that grew all around her and her family. She would tell me about how powerful beings from the Universe gifted humans with their kindness, their beauty, or their strength and courage. To me, they were stories to keep me believing in the unseen—in the power of speaking to the trees and singing to the winds. But I grew up in a city where the trees were not so close and their voices were muffled, so she would tell me stories about nature through food, my favorite foods, and their childhoods.

I was sitting in my kitchen at home in San Diego when I first heard the story of chocolate. I have always had a sweet tooth with a particular affinity for chocolate, so much so that for my eleventh birthday that was all that I asked for. But, it was after this birthday when I was overflowed with a variety of different chocolate bars, drinks, and cakes that my mom decided it was time for a gentle lesson. She stood above the stove stirring Abuelita hot chocolate—a Mexican household staple—in a large pot for me and my family to share. The story was quick and simple, something to pass the time as I sat anxiously waiting for my drink. I did not think twice about it—until now.

The Talamancan BriBri people in Costa Rica know the story well, too. They knew how she, during a cold and stormy night, was the only one who offered shelter to the Earth creator Sibú who was disguised as an elder man. The BriBri knew how it was through her volition that Sibú blessed her by turning her into a tsirú tree so that she would be able to share her kindness with others for generations. Tsirú, or cacao, is considered to be blessed for this reason, and as a woman, her branches are sacred and should never be used as firewood. Only women are allowed to prepare and serve the chocolate. Tsirú represents social exchange, reciprocal relations, and hospitality. Tsirú is the food for the Gods—something to be protected, valued, and nurtured.

When I stood in Costa Rican looking at the cacao tree, learning about how the BriBri used their heads to break open the tsirú, I remembered this story. Well, my mom’s version of the story only had different names. Funny, huh, how after ten years of chocolate bars, drinks, and cakes I remembered. Maybe it was my proximity to my ancestors in Mexico or touching a cacao tree for the first time, but suddenly I was eleven again, sitting on my kitchen bar stool, looking at my mom stir Abuelita.

While I was in Costa Rica I touched the tree—a gentle caress. A “thank you” for the rediscovery of a lost memory. Oh, how time just slipped away; oh how many chocolate trees I must remember to thank for the past ten years!

I came across the BriBri people's story soon after my time in Costa Rica.
This legend of the BriBri people continues flourishing in their country, as do the BriBri peoples. They continue educating anyone wanting to learn through tours of their lands and ceremonies for anyone wanting to participate. It is through this tourism that there is an appreciation for their cultural heritage and empowerment of femininity. But with an emerging monilia fungus threatening the cacao fruit and the slow shrinking of the Talamancan lands by government forces, it is more important than ever to learn—or perhaps remember—about the cacao. Still, tsirú lives on.

Histories overlapped, stories intertwined, and cultures cherished.

Maybe that is why my body remembered the story of chocolate after all these years. Perhaps it was the desire of some ancient power that connects my ancestors to theirs, or to what connects all of us: Mother Earth. Maybe it is time to remember that need for kindness, love, and friendship, just like the cacao.

Sometimes I want to think deeply about this moment—about the timing of my memories or the connection between our cultures—but I stop myself. Things can be equally as beautiful sitting in a mystery, in irony, in coincidence or, as I suspect for this moment, intricately orchestrated by some ancient power.

What I do know is that when I heard the story of chocolate all those years ago, my mind was blessed. Thank you Costa Rica for bringing that story back to me and thank you to the BriBri for keeping it alive. It took awhile to remember, but that's okay because I am reminded that good, important things just take time. What matters is that we remember and continue to keep the story alive.
120 miles from the Costa Rican coast exists an island named Isla Nublar. It is rumored that scientists have brought dinosaurs back to life and are looking to open a theme park, attracting tourists from all over the world to marvel at these monsters. Steven Spielberg’s 1993 Jurassic Park is a classic tale of civilization versus the wild. In this thrilling adventure, three scientists and a lawyer are invited to visit what will soon be a theme park of live dinosaurs in an attempt to gain their endorsement. Tragedy strikes as the security system breaks down and the scientists, along with two children, are left to fend for themselves in the face of prehistoric terror. Jurassic Park utilizes the mysticism of wilderness to establish a sense of wonder and fear, while also commenting on the dangers of trying to control and dominate nature. The film highlights the neocolonial dynamics of North American capitalism in the Global South and raises questions about land ownership, access to land, and the negative consequences of large-scale development projects.

A significant element of wonder in Jurassic Park comes from the mysticism of the wilderness. The first shot that the audience sees of the island is from a helicopter: a mountain of indistinguishable greenery surrounded by the vast ocean. As we explore the island, we see lush vegetation, plains, and forests, seemingly untouched by humans, though as we soon learn, this is far from true. This curated wilderness sets the stage for the tragedy about to unfold.

Its appeal is then the grandeur of the unknown; the characters must navigate carefully through endless trees, vines, and bushes in order to escape the dinosaurs. This environment establishes one of the key themes of the movie: the civilized versus the wild. The Isla Nublar tropical landscape provides an untamed playground for the contained dinosaurs, which function as images of unpredictability and violence, almost mystical in their power to all but the scientists who are well-versed in their field. The wild, untamed environment of Isla Nublar is derived from the perceived image of Central America in North American consciousness — a place of danger and unpredictability. The movie’s central goal of placing nature within boundaries to control it reflects Western ideals of dominance over the natural world. However, as the plot unfolds, we see the catastrophic consequences of trying to control nature, as the dinosaurs break out of their confines and wreak havoc on the island. This is a clear warning against trying to contain and control nature, promoting the idea that nature will always find a way to resist attempts at domination. In this way, Jurassic Park can be read as a commentary on the dangers of trying to impose boundaries on the natural world, and the consequences of ignoring the interconnectedness and complexity of natural systems.

Jurassic Park also highlights the effect of North American capitalism tied to land exploitation in Costa Rica.
The park's founder, John Hammond, is a wealthy entrepreneur who envisions the park as a way to capitalize on the public's fascination with dinosaurs to make a significant profit. The construction and operation of the park are presented as a way to generate jobs and stimulate the local economy, which is a common justification for large-scale development projects in the Global South. The film also touches upon some of the negative consequences of these developments, as it is hinted that the land on which the park is built was taken from Costa Rican farmers and indigenous communities. This raises questions about land ownership and access to land in the context of North American capitalism, which often prioritizes profit over the rights and well-being of local communities. The park's emphasis on Jurassic Park also highlights the effect of North American capitalism tied to land exploitation in Costa Rica. The park's founder, John Hammond, is a wealthy entrepreneur who envisions the park as a way to capitalize on the public's fascination with dinosaurs to make a significant profit. The construction and operation of the park are presented as a way to generate jobs and stimulate the local economy, which is a common justification for large-scale development projects in the Global South. The film also touches upon some of the negative consequences of these developments, as it is hinted that the land on which the park is built was taken from Costa Rican farmers and indigenous communities. This raises questions about land ownership and access to land in the context of North American capitalism, which often prioritizes profit over the rights and well-being of local communities. The park's emphasis on tourism also reflects the neocolonial dynamics of North American capitalism in the Global South.

The visitors to the park are primarily wealthy North Americans, who come to experience the "exotic" environment of Costa Rica and the thrill of seeing live dinosaurs. The film highlights the power imbalance between the tourists, who have the money and cultural capital to access the park, and the local communities, who are largely excluded from the benefits of the project.

The commercialization of wildlife is equally important in Jurassic Park, something that we encountered frequently during our own trip. The film raises questions about the relationship between technological advancement and ecological preservation. On the one hand, the park represents a significant technological achievement made possible by supercomputers. On the other hand, the film also illustrates how this progress can come at a significant cost for the environment since the construction of the park causes significant ecological disruption. Furthermore, financial motives lead the park's founders to prioritize profit and development over the welfare of the animals, leading to significant ecological degradation and the ultimate breakdown of the park's system. The film suggests that the commercialization of wildlife represents a significant threat to ecological preservation and highlights the need to prioritize environmental protection over profit.

As such, the film can be seen as a representation of some of the key topics the America's Scholars group has been thinking about this semester. The thrill of being somewhere different and 'wild' attracts people to places like Costa Rica for eco-tourism. Yet there is also an intense economic disparity between tourists and landowners in comparison to local people, especially as only wealthy tourists are able to benefit from many natural resources.
Sitting at the foot of a volcano in a moment of meditation, I looked up at the Costa Rican sky and could hardly believe my eyes. I've never hallucinated, but some amount of hiking endorphins and reflective peacefulness found their way into my vision. Throughout the expanse, I could make out a platonic geodesic structure—omni-triangulated rainbow dashes held together with bursts of star-like energy. I closed my eyes in disbelief, and my vision evolved. In the darkness of my mind, a silhouette of the rainforest arose. I could see the rainforest's life flow, a fluid, red thread weaving through the trees, shrubs, and flora. Everything was connected, communicating and coexisting in one line of energy. It was an intense, meaningful experience for me.

My visions are rendered here: the tropics' psychic energy stitched with embroidery thread and ribbons—using an upcycled t-shirt I found during our visit to San Jose. Watercolor dying completed the backdrop to each scene. In its realization, what was a pleasant daydream looks nightmarish—a grid of perfect order (top ring) is concurrent with a dark landscape interlaced with an ominous red wreath (bottom ring). One connotation suggests artificial, human-made energy systems create environmental downfall, yet a second inference offers hope.

Producing this communication disconnect, the work captures the dissonance and contradictions of energy politics, especially in the setting of Costa Rica, which is reversing a history of self-destruction through leadership in renewable energy sources. Spanish colonizers' trepidation of the unknown and unbridled provoked practices of deforestation; the loss of over 77% of the tree cover led the nation to realize the lifeblood of the planet and people lies in the forest and its self-sustaining energy. Restoring the forests and operating on 98% renewable energy, the nation is taking considerable measures towards carbon neutrality and working with earthly systems. These efforts, masking failures to decolonize energy and dependence on oil for transportation, provide an aspirational model towards climate change solutions while embodying faults and fears of dealing with the climate crisis. Thus, as the nation attempts to model a shift in a narrative (the top ring's energy grid), what was previously viewed as foreboding (the bottom ring's flowing blood of the forest) is transfigured into a symbiotic, equal collaborator. This "Age of Equalius," under which energy is redistributed back to the forest and atmosphere, generates a non-hierarchical system in which the earth and its kin collectively depend on enabling vitality. In my experience, thread and fiber have always capacitated the ability to capture energy. As argued by ecofeminist scholar Donna Haraway in her work Staying with the Trouble, String Figure practices act as material engagement of thinking practices, used to think and link our stories and connection to the earth. Reflecting Costa Rica's pride in renewable energy and the discomfort expressed by climate change anxiety, the two narratives weave a story of violence, intervention, and agency, using materiality to craft sym-poiesis: to be on this planet is to participate in weaving its collective, connective energy.
Environmental Sustainability and Mental Health: Following Costa Rica's Lead

Natassia Walker

Swiss physician, alchemist, and pioneer in several aspects of the Renaissance period, Paracelsus, says, “All that man needs for health and healing has been provided by God in nature; the challenge of science is to find it.” When I heard this quote, I was immediately taken back to our Americas Scholars trip in Costa Rica and remembered how free my mind and entire being felt being in clean air and at one with nature. As some who was diagnosed with major depressive and anxiety disorder, this was the exact prescription that I needed. A growing body of evidence supports the positive relationship between environmental sustainability and mental health. Through a review of existing literature, this paper seeks to identify and analyze the key factors that contribute to this relationship and explore the potential implications for promoting both environmental sustainability and mental health, using Costa Rica’s ecological sustainability as the basis of my thesis.

Costa Rica has long been considered a leader in environmental sustainability, and this reputation has played a significant role in the country’s tourism industry. Known for its stunning biodiversity and commitment to eco-friendly practices, Costa Rica attracts millions of tourists yearly who want to experience its natural wonders while minimizing their environmental impact. One would think that the main reason for visiting Costa Rica is for “touristy” stuff. However, while that is part of the reason, it is not the only reason. The article Mental Health in Costa Rica states, “Costa Rica is rightly renowned as a wellness destination and hovers atop international happiness surveys regularly. It is a country whose natural landscapes and people enhance millions of tourists’ happiness and mental well-being yearly.”[1] This statement demonstrates that while Costa Rica has a thriving eco-tourism business, tourists benefit significantly from the natural landscape that helps their mental well-being. The environmental sustainability movement strives to create a healthy and clean environment, contributing to better mental health.
Environmental sustainability and mental health are two of the most pressing global concerns of our time. The negative impacts of environmental degradation on physical health have been well-documented, but the relationship between environmental sustainability and mental health has only recently received attention. Environmental sustainability is not only about conserving natural resources and reducing carbon footprints which Costa Rica does an excellent job at but also plays an essential role in promoting mental health. One of the significant ways in which environmental sustainability helps with mental health is through nature exposure. Studies have shown that spending time in nature positively impacts mental health, reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Being in nature can reduce stress, improve mood, and promote feelings of relaxation and calmness. Dr. Franchell Richard-Hamilton, M.D., in her article The Healing Power of Nature, tells us that “Research on ADHD children shows that the attention span of children improves after spending time in nature...it reduces blood pressure, stables heart rate, and decreases the production of stress hormones and the nature view helps patients tolerate pain more, overcome adverse effects, and have less stay at the hospital.”[1] The quality of our environment directly impacts our mental health and well-being.

While visiting Costa Rica, our tour guide and Forestry Economist Rodolfo Vieto Morales shared that One of the critical factors in Costa Rica’s environmental success is its extensive protected area system. He also highlighted that approximately 25% of the country’s land is designated as national parks, wildlife refuges, and other conservation areas, providing habitat for various plant and animal species.

This includes some of the most famous parks in the world, such as Manuel Antonio National Park, Tortuguero National Park, and Corcovado National Park. This information was corroborated by online research stating that “Costa Rica has maintained a higher proportion of its land mass for national parks. Much more than any other country in the world- with 10.27 % protected as national parks by Costa Rican law. An additional 17 % is set aside for reserves, wildlife refuges, and protected zones.”[1] That is 27%; other reports state it is 28%, so it is not far off.

In addition to protected areas, Costa Rica has made significant strides in sustainable agriculture and forestry. The country is a major producer of coffee, bananas, and pineapples; many crops are grown using environmentally friendly practices. For example, many coffee farms use shade-grown methods that preserve forest cover and provide habitat for birds and other wildlife. Similarly, the country has implemented sustainable forestry practices that allow for timber harvest while minimizing damage to the forest ecosystem. A green environment can also provide an opportunity for physical exercise and social interaction, both beneficial for mental health. When we conserve and protect natural areas, we ensure that people have access to these healthy environments.

Another way in which environmental sustainability helps with mental health is by reducing air pollution. Air pollution has been linked to various mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, asthma, and cognitive decline. Reducing air pollution can lead to better mental health outcomes, reducing the risk of developing these conditions. By promoting sustainable transportation methods and reducing the use of fossil fuels, we can reduce air pollution and improve mental health outcomes.
Costa Rica’s commitment to sustainability extends beyond its natural resources and into its tourism industry. The country has become known for its eco-friendly hotels and lodges, which use renewable energy sources and implement recycling and composting programs. Many of these accommodations also offer opportunities for guests to learn about and participate in conservation efforts, such as tree planting or sea turtle monitoring.

Overall, Costa Rica’s environmental sustainability and commitment to eco-tourism have been significant factors in the country’s success as a tourist destination.

By protecting its natural resources and promoting eco-friendly practices, Costa Rica has become a model for sustainable tourism worldwide and demonstrates how environmental sustainability plays an essential role in promoting mental health. By protecting natural areas, reducing air pollution, promoting a sense of purpose and community, and mitigating the effects of climate change, we can create a healthier environment for people to thrive. As we continue to work towards a sustainable future, we must prioritize mental health as a crucial component of environmental sustainability.
During our trip to Costa Rica, I was immersed in a culture that views the people that inhabit the Earth as tantamount to the land itself. This nation prioritizes the safety and well-being of its citizens just as much as it prioritizes the safety and well-being of the environment. As I thought about my final project for this scholar's seminar, I was inspired to create two different collages that pay homage to a typical photo album book. In these collages, I compiled images of nature and wildlife that we had the opportunity to interact with and experience during the trip. From images of the Poas volcano to images of sloth to that of Manuel Antonio, each image aimed to demonstrate the stillness and beauty of nature: untamed and untouched by the hands of humans.

After the creation of these collages, I performed an exercise where I printed out these collages and compared them to that of my atmosphere. As I walked around New York City, I juxtaposed the environment in which I live with that of Costa Rica. The differences were quite stark. At every corner, the mechanical human-manipulated architecture of the city was overwhelming whereas in the collages I felt a calmness in the untapped and unmanipulated environment. It speaks to how different nations coexist with nature.
Wooden Fences: Costa Rican Ecotourism and Architectural Propaganda

Sophia Opferman

From the moment we stepped into Carara National Park, one of 28 national parks in Costa Rica, I noticed the fences lining the paved trails. While I am typically not one to notice this type of thing, I quickly took note of these fences because of their particular appearance. They were made of thick wooden logs, cut to fit into one another to form multi-railed fences. Perhaps these types of fences are common, but I was drawn to them because, unlike the metal fences that I have so often seen along outdoor paths, these wooden fences seemed like a natural extension of the park, which helped create a sense of oneness between the architecture and the park's natural environment. The fencing also served a functional purpose as it created a quasi-natural barrier between nature and tourists, allowing us to experience nature without infringing on it. In this way, the wooden fence added to my experience of the national park, helping to ground my perception of my surroundings while evoking an appreciation for Costa Rica’s commitment to sustainability and the care with which they interact with their natural environment.

My experience at Carara National Park was one of many examples of ecotourism that I would partake in during our ten-day trip. Ecotourism is defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education” (Upadhaya, 2022) and is a pillar of Costa Rican tourism. Ecotourism offers Costa Rica, along with numerous destinations around the world, a number of benefits. Firstly, because of the income generated from tourism, ecotourism industries offer significant financial returns per hectare of land. A 1996 study of Amboseli National Park in Kenya found that overwhelmingly due to ecotourism, the park’s land value was estimated at around $40/ha, compared to a rate of $0.80/ha for similar lands used for agriculture. Thus ecotourism offers a financially viable alternative to more harmful land practices such as agriculture, mining, and hunting. Other potential benefits include improvements to local economies resulting from increased support for local businesses and financial support for land preservation garnered through tourism-related fees. (Stem et al., 2003) As such, ecotourism in Costa Rica supports broader efforts toward conservation that have, according to the world bank, made Costa Rica “the first tropical country in the world to have reversed deforestation, [with] its highly biodiverse tropical rainforests now cover[ing] close to 60% of the country, [after] having shrunk as low as 40% in 1987.” (World Bank, 2022)

Later in the week, as I walked along another path during our visit to Paos Volcano, I noticed the same fences that I had seen in Caracas. This time, I reached out to touch it and realized that while it appeared to be made of natural wood, upon closer inspection, it actually felt like some type of dense plastic. This seemed curious, given Costa Rica’s claimed commitment to environmentalism. Would it not have made more sense to simply make the fence out of natural wood? However, the hyper-realistic wooden logs,
which arguably could only be achieved using synthetic materials such as plastic, directly contributed to my experience as an ecotourist, further immersing me in the story of environmentalism. And what if this was the point? What if a faux-idealized model of wooden logs, rather than less-than-perfect real wood, was meant to convince me, as the consumer, of the exceptionalism of Costa Rican ecotourism?

The Costa Rican government and economy directly benefit from their environmentalist reputation, specifically from tourists buying into the story of conservation and of the ecotourist model as a form of mutually beneficial tourism. As such, while faux wood may not seem particularly sinister, which it isn't, I argue it is a clear-cut example of greenwashing and an example of architecture as propaganda, as the architecturally reinforced semi-faux sense of oneness with the environment obscures the shortcomings of ecotourism, particularly as they pertain to local communities and the sustainability of ecotourism practices.

While Costa Rica’s identity as a conservationist hub is, as shown above, supported by its very real contributions to global sustainability, made particularly important by the fact that despite making up only 0.03% of the globe’s land mass, Costa Rica supports 5% of global biodiversity. (Costa Rican Embassy) However, in their study of Costa Rican ecotourism, Caroline Stem et al. are quick to highlight that, in reality, ecotourism has only a “mixed conservation impact...see[ing] legal restrictions as the most influential factor in declining deforestation and hunting rates and give[ing] tourism only minimal credit for these changes.” (Stem et al., 2003)

As they further highlight, the broader efficacy of conservationism through ecotourism is up for debate, as their findings show that the more successful ecotourism initiatives become, the more they will attract tourists, therefore increasing the rate of human-nature interactions resulting in an increase in “solid waste generation, habitat disturbance, and forest degradation resulting from trail erosion.” (Stem et al., 2003)

Moreover, while ecotourism offers a financially competitive alternative to environmentally harmful practices, there is additional skepticism regarding the actual benefits for local communities. Critics highlight how “ecotourism, like mass tourism, is still driven by the dynamics of capital accumulation and does not seriously challenge systems of power and unequal accumulation...Although ecotourism is conceptualized as small-scale and locally controlled, in practice, it may become little more than a marketing ploy as economic concentration and corporate influence within the ecotourism sector increase. (Horton, 2009)

As eco-tourists, and tourists more generally, it is important to consider the stories we are being told and why, even down to seemingly insignificant architectural features. After all, if, as British architect Norman Foster claims, “architecture is an expression of values,” (Foster, 2014), then faux wooden fences are a symbol of Costa Rica’s commitment to ecotourism and propagandizing a very specific narrative of conservationism, perhaps even to the dismay of Costa Ricans and the environment itself.
Dean's Honor Society

PRAGUE, VIENNA & BUDAPEST

March 2023

Arts, Politics, and Society in Habsburg Lands
The Jewish Museum in Prague During WWII

Abby Roll

The Jewish Museum in Prague houses Europe’s largest collection of Jewish artifacts. The existence and documentation of these artifacts today can be attributed to a strategic and persistent effort by Jewish scholars in Prague to maintain a material representation of Jewish culture, society, and livelihood in the face of Nazi occupation. A unique and debated consideration in the history of Prague’s Jewish Museum is the fact that the Nazis permitted the transfer of these objects to the Jewish museum from communities throughout Bohemia and Moravia, as most items were confiscated during World War II following the closing of Jewish communities and the transfer of Jews to concentration camps. It has been speculated that the transfer of these objects was permitted by Nazis with the goal of creating a “museum of an extinct race.”[1] However, an analysis by Leo Palvát, the current director of the Jewish Museum in Prague, reveals that this decision was more likely one of convenience. Nevertheless, this convenience was used to the advantage of the museum staff, whose preservation and documentation efforts represent an act of resistance under this oppressive regime.

The Jewish Museum was initially established in 1906 by academics August Stein and Salomon Hugo Lieben in response to the demolition of the central section of the Jewish ghetto in Prague.[2] It was intended to preserve the materials housed in the synagogues that would be demolished in the process, as well as “in order to improve the image of Czech Jewry, and as a way of making the public at large aware of the important contributions to Czech science and culture.”[3]

In this sense, it was the destruction of Jewish culture and community which permitted the existence of the museum. A few decades later, the museum would serve a similar purpose on a larger scale. In the face of antisemitism at the turn of the century, the museum avoided discussion of controversial topics such as the Zionist movement, conflicts between nationalist movements, and Czech anti-semitism.[4] This in part aided in the museum establishing its authority as an objective academic entity, which would serve an especially important purpose during World War II.

The interwar years were a time of stability for the Jewish population and the Jewish museum. Under its liberal democracy, Czechoslovakia was “the only state in Europe to officially recognize the Jewish people as an entity, and grant them minority rights.” In addition, an improved education system aided in a renewed interest in Jewish history, permitting the continued development of the Jewish Museum at the time.[5] However, this was disrupted by the Nazi annexation of Czech lands in 1939, and the establishment of the “Jewish Exodus Center,” the implementation of Jewish laws, and the process of “Aryanization” which led to the exodus of over 27,000 Jews from the Czech lands.[6] This meant not just a loss of their livelihood and rights, but also a loss of property and material possessions. The functioning of the Jewish Museum during this type, therefore, was a direct result of this loss.[7]
In the face of this persecution, the Jewish Museum was able to continue its operations through both the persistent efforts of museum staff to preserve Jewish artifacts and culture, as well as through the ways in which this goal simultaneously benefitted the Nazi regime by giving them a place to store abandoned property as they carried out this exodus.[8] In December 1941, the museum was turned into a storehouse for abandoned synagogues in Prague, following the prohibition of divine worship.[9] As the deportation of Jews progressed in 1942, the Jewish community became increasingly concerned over the survival of important documents and objects and requested that valuable objects from surrounding communities which had been closed down be transported to the Jewish Museum for preservation, transforming it into a central museum representing Jewish culture in Czech lands. This was approved by the “Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung” or Central Office for Jewish Emigration, in May 1942.[10] In addition to the private property acquired from deportees, as well as documents and books important to the community, the Museum also “acquired the Pinkas, Klausen, High and the Old-New synagogues, in addition to the Ceremonial Hall”[11] Although plans to keep the museum open were spearheaded by the museum staff and Jewish community in Prague, the Museum was controlled by Nazi authorities and closed to the public during World War II. The staff, despite fearing their own persecution at the time, worked diligently at their goal, collecting from 136 former communities in Bohemia, and Moravia, handling 212,822 objects, creating 101,090 catalog cards,[12] photographing every Jewish site and synagogue before their demolitions, and putting together five exhibitions, three of which were presented to an elite group of Nazi officials over the course of the War.[13]

This persistence by the museum staff served as a form of resistance in the face of Nazi occupation. According to Dutch professor and historian Natalia Berger, “Even though it was clear to them that they themselves had little chance of surviving, they thought of the work they were doing in documenting the Jewish cultural property as the only hope for preserving its memory for the sake of future generations.”[14] Although the museum staff’s “usefulness” to the Nazis initially delayed their deportation, eventually, every member of the museum staff, except for specialist Hana Volaková, was deported and subsequently killed in concentration camps. Although, according to Leo Palvát, the establishment of the museum, for the Nazis, meant “a more efficient organization of the confiscation of Jewish property” and “facilitating the process of liquidation of the Jewish population,”[15] the ability of the museum staff to use this to their advantage, as well as to the advantage of the preservation of Jewish culture and history, displays a unique form of resistance that, for at least a few years, was able to exist in tandem with a regime that was directly working against this goal.
Madonna in the Meadow(s) of Vienna

Abigail Lenhard

Walking through the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien I rounded the corner and entered Kabinett 10, a small room in the very corner of the building on the expansive level one. While turning into this empty inconspicuous room I scanned from left to right, initially underwhelmed, and wrote off the space as a handful of 1500 Italian religious works not more noteworthy than any other collection of the same. However, upon my 180° ending, I saw that on the wall I was standing in line with, hung a very noteworthy 1500 Italian religious work: Raphael’s Madonna in the Meadow (Madonna del prato, 1506). I sort of laughed when I realized the painting was there– I had no idea it was in this museum, nor even that it was in Vienna. While I am not a scholar on the work or its lineage, the piece is a very recognizable part of the Western art historical canon, and to find it almost haphazardly in the corner of a Viennese museum was incredibly shocking. This isn’t to discredit the Kunsthistorisches Museum at all, they have a terrific collection of important works, I just hadn’t seen this particular piece on any guides, posters, or promotional materials as I had seen the other famous pieces being marketed. I admired the work, laughed off my surprise, and left the space content with having seen it.

I decided to visit the nearby Albertina Museum following the Kunsthistorisches Museum. A slightly smaller institution, I went excited to see their temporary exhibition, but I also decided to visit their permanent “staterooms” that had previously been the residences of the Hapsburg rulers. On my journey through the Hapsburg quarters, I strolled between the beautifully decorated rooms and appreciated the art sprinkled throughout. Towards the end of that experience, I entered a bright yellow room, and there in front of me was once again Madonna in the Meadow. What hung in front of me was the same size and with an identical scene, but the varnish had a much more yellow patina and the wood panel had visibly warped. Had I not seen the original an hour early, I would have rushed to the label to see if this truly was the real Madonna in the Meadow. This version, the label reported, was created by Johann Scheffer von Leonhardshoff, and it was called Madonna in the Meadow, Copy after Raphael. I left amused at the parallel and intrigued about Albertina’s choice to display the master copy at all.

Another two days passed in Vienna, and I went on a personal field trip to the Museum of Art Fakes in a different part of the city. This collection displays a variety of fakes, forgeries, copies, and other oddities to discuss the differences between those types of dupes as well as historic art forgers. The collection is small and housed mostly in a cellar. I made my way around the room reading about what type of fake masterpiece each work was and its provenance as an inauthentic item. Towards the end of my visit, I rounded the only corner in the picture gallery, the one area in the room not immediately visible upon entry, to find yet another Madonna in the Meadow. I sighed at the serendipity of it all.
It is not extraordinary to find a copy of a Raphael painting, he is one of the most well-known artists of all time. It is not extraordinary to find a copy of a Renaissance painting in a museum about fakes and forgery. However, finding this last piece completed the trifecta: the masterpiece, the master copy, and the non-master copy.

The version in the fake museum was unframed and much larger than the other two. No one painted this with the intention to claim it was by Raphael, but the work was painted to be a rendition of his masterpiece. The Museum of Art Fakes noted on wall text that under Austrian law, a creative must be dead for at least 70 years before a copy may be created without legal ramifications. While the unframed piece had little biographical information, it feels safe to assume that the work was made after 1590. To contrast, the master copy from Albertina was labeled as being from 1815/1820, so some 300 years after the original production.

Finding the three variations all within three miles of each other was astonishing, but more so, it forced me to reflect on how I allow my assumptions to dictate how I engage with art. While in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, despite not knowing that Raphael was kept there, I never questioned if the painting was real or a copy. I assumed the work was real immediately, it never crossed my mind to do otherwise. The prestige of the space and the condition of the work both automatically allowed me to assume the best, even though the piece seemed tucked away.

Then, while in the Albertina, I allowed myself to laugh at the reproduction because I had the knowledge the work wasn't original. The piece's condition wasn't stellar, but that could be explained away by age and panel's inherent vice. Would it be so absurd for a masterpiece to be hung in a reputable museum that used to be home to Europe's most powerful dynasty? Then, for the final work, being in a space dedicated to fakes guided me into dismissing it as the least skilled of the three, despite it still being technically impressive.

To complicate the parable, on the same floor of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, in Saal 10, there was a master copyist, working on a copy of a Pieter Bruegel the Elder piece. I believe it was Children's Games. A to-scale master copy was painstakingly, expertly being painted, and if I see it in a few years hanging somewhere, I'd have assumed it was the original had I not seen the pairing already.
Angel Baby

Aiyana Lapeyrolerie

“I turned around and to my left – just as a little child, afraid or in distress, will hurry to his mother – anxiously, to say to Virgil: ‘I am left with less than one drop of my blood that does not tremble. I recognize the signs of the old flame.’ Virgil, the gentlest father, Virgil, he to whom I gave myself for my salvation and even all our ancient mother lost was not enough to keep my cheeks, though washed with dew, from darkening again with tears.”[1]

In preparation for visiting Central Europe with a profound love for angels – an obsession with angels. I was told to keep my eye out for angels.

Any and all angels became a calling card for me. Every angel statue, image, painting, or even slight reference to angels found its way back to me. There was a fondness and warmth and immediate joy in each angel I came across. I had never considered myself a religious person up until this past year. Suddenly through a return to Dante, an artistic practice that resembles graven image devotion, and an over a-year-long fixation on angels symbolically, literally, and figuratively – angels became a way to feel a connection with something beyond me.

The incomprehensible beauty, terror, and lightness of the angel capture whoever is in awe of the angel. Myself, obsessed with angels, pursues making something greater than the thing you’re looking at, something that captures you – “the angel.” Angel is all-encompassing, engulfing.

Entering cathedrals in Central Europe brought tears to my eyes. The angels adorned everywhere. I was consumed.
My Father texted me to tell me that my Aunt is praying for me while I’m away. And he asked to light a candle for my “Momma Dee” if I have the chance.

In Vienna, at St. Peter’s I lit a candle for my Grandmother. My father responded to my photos: “Momma Dee is even more blessed,” and commenting on the coincidence, “The church and parochial school we attended in Reserve was also named St. Peter’s. You did well in choosing this church.

My Grandmother reminds me of pineapple upside down cake in Texas for my Father’s birthday, and being so little I can be held all in her arms, and Mardi Gras when I was five and the freedom of my kindergarten body, and eating cucumbers when I found out my Grandfather had passed, and New Orleans in July, and how I was always the baby. And thus began the baby’s subconscious.

I described my wishes to be “As happy as I was as a child,” and expressed envy for the baby’s body form. A wish to be light and little and wash the body away. The references to my nostalgia for my baby self and the baby-ness ideals became noticed by my peers. One suggested a video that I then proceeded to watch in the hotel bathroom and burst into tears over the sentiment that “True maturity is re-finding what you lost in trying to grow up.”

I was looking for the lightness and great big beyond of angels, and wishing for the weightlessness of infancy.

“I was pure and prepared to climb unto the stars.”[2]

In the repeated imagery of the triumph of the Heavenly Angels over the Rebel Angels, I found an increasing fondness for Lucifer. And in the rare yet not unseen baby imagery I found an increasing yearning for the new form.

Following the fall, Lucifer too yearned for the paradise to which he can never return. While he gained the freedom to reign in Hell rather than serve in Heaven, he could never look to the stars beyond the mountaintop again. His old form was destroyed. A beauty. Lucifer, who was so beautiful that the other Angels called him the Son of the Morning. Who once brought light?

Loss of the paradise of childhood. The first life. Not without sin and not without punishment, but without the weight of the second body, second beauty, second life. The veil is lifted. The world is clearer but the light of naivety fades. And the purified form can never return. Lightness like that cannot be regained.

How can I wash the body away? Destruction of an old form and creation of a new form.
I want to be a child and an angel.
Angel baby.
It’s the same.
And I am told to, “Stay that way. Don’t let the world change you.”

I feel myself already turning in anxiety for my mother and father with the naivety of a child. And my cheeks already darken with tears in the fear they won’t be there.

In my time as a newborn adult, in a second body and a second life. I would like to be engulfed by the angel too.
“Allegory of Vanity” by Antonio de Pereda A winged genius embodies "Vanitas", the reminder of the transience of all things mortal. Objects are arrayed before her in Baroque profusion as if in a still life, which allude to time rapidly draining away, the futility of power and the fleeting nature of life's joys. The table surface bears the inscription "nil omne" (all is trivial).

It’s all about being a child and being a baby and being an angel and being light.
If there were a fingerprint for place, it would be the light. Perhaps the sun pitches her rays a little differently toward each city, perhaps it’s the specific refraction off buildings, soil, grass, and concrete, perhaps the quality of light is imbued with the quality of emotion so tied to a place’s people, perhaps there is no difference.

The light in Prague was flat as if the sun were not some dot a million miles away but an enormous diffuse plane somewhere just above the clouds. I saw it the first morning I woke up, didn’t even need to step outside. Had thought at first it was the jetlag, my scrambled circadian rhythm fogging my eyes. The light spilled into my room so softly, so unobtrusively that it might as well have asked permission for entry.

I’ve made it my business to fingerprint, arresting fractions of seconds on magical strips of chemical-laden plastic rolled into tiny metal tubes. It’s a sort of reverse detective work, looking not for something hidden so much as for what is everywhere, what is so apparent and close to us as to become invisible—the quality of light. I’m a fish trying to study the color of the water.

Have I captured it? Can you capture it? Perhaps a photo isn’t a cage but a flower, photosynthesizing weightless, moving, light into a blossoming, shimmering, translation; light made intelligible. In Vienna, the light made sense in the greenhouse, told me here it was loud, reverberated off leaves like a shaking symphony.
Here it was unavoidable, unapologetic, like a thick liquid I had to wade through. It was sharp, cut into the fenestrations as if each were a bullseye’s struck center.

Would a theatrical performance be anything if not for the framing? If not for the focus of light on the stage? If not for the absence of it from the audience? The opera house in Vienna was an enormous cavity filled 20 stories high with thick black darkness, save of course the shining stage. Perhaps it was the light, not sound, that erupted off the stage into me, that so saturated my senses.

I’ve always been astounded by just how bad paintings photograph. The museum website is a sort of graveyard, the life of each painting sucked dry by the pixels. Maggie Nelson knows why, she told me through the page on the flight over: “Try, if you can, not to talk as if colors emanated from a single physical phenomenon. Keep in mind the effects of all the various surfaces, volumes, light sources, films, expanses, degrees of solidity, solubility, temperature, and elasticity, on color. Think of an object’s capacity to emit, reflect, absorb, transmit, or scatter light; think of ‘the operation of light on a feather.’” I had seen Klimt’s Kiss a thousand times from thousands of miles away, seen it fiber-optically reconstituted, and yet it may as well have been a different painting—texture flattened, refraction off gold turned to a hex code.
In Budapest, the hour before dusk, light divided shadow from the illuminated. As the angle of the sun approached near horizontal, half the city turned dark. Not half like a bisected circle, some yin-yang, but the half of each structure, each person, each blade of grass faced at once towards and away from the sun; half not so much of area but of quantity. This is contrast: a light-dark fractured whole.

Perhaps there is an element of literality to what Audrey Lorde wrote: “The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has a direct bearing upon the product which we live.” Perhaps it is the light of cities that inspires us, the shadows of night that ease us. Perhaps we ought to look at it a little closer, heed the rays.
Envisioning
Sketches of People and Museum Pieces Using One Pen

Cameron Saltsman

A pen, like a place, is shaped and reshaped as we live alongside it. In Envisioning, I sought to document what I saw of Central Europe using the same felt-tipped pen—how can rhythm, line, and form, vary within the bounds of just one felt surface? Through depictions of the paintings, people, and scenes around me, I grappled with the limitations of travel; however far the plane, train, or bus takes me, I am still with these eyes, I am still with this pen.
A nation is an odd notion. For starters, it remains clear that a nation is not the same type of entity as a quirk, atom, or multicellular organism. The nation does not naturally exist—we cannot touch ‘the nation’, observe it under a microscope, nor determine its weight or velocity. Nations are not subject to the physical laws that govern the cosmos, but to artificially constructed laws whose jurisdiction ends at the boundary of the human mind. The nation’s true reality does not exist outside of humanity’s collective imagination.

Yet, nations have been and continue to be forces that shape the modern world. They are the main arbiters and architects of international affairs. People are willing to remarkably give up their lives with pride, as well as to ruthlessly take lives with prejudice—all for these mysterious constructs. For billions of people across the globe, they are simultaneously the source of compassion and conceit, humility and hubris; the source of unbreakable solidarity and unimaginable sorrow.

In light of my interest in nations, nationalism, and the future of social identity in a rapidly globalizing world, one of the most intellectually impactful moments of this year’s trip for me was our meeting with Jan Urban, a Cold War political dissident turned professor at NYU Prague. This was a person who had not only devoted his life to political thought but also—if not more importantly—political action. Despite growing up in a nation deprived of its sovereignty and with a people deprived of their rights, Urban spoke truth to power.

Urban began his lecture by providing us with a long and detailed account of Central European history. In highlighting the region’s longstanding ethnic diversity, he noted the constructed and historically contingent nature of both Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, specifically claiming that there was no such thing as a uniquely Czech land. This statement, along with Professor Salim Murad’s fascinating research on the construction of identity presented in the prior lecture, definitely piqued my interest. I wondered whether or not Urban felt any sense of solidarity with Czechians and Slovaks both before and after the revolution.

And sure enough, he did. After I asked him about his personal feelings toward the Czechoslovak state, he brought up the Czechoslovak members of the RAF who fought and died for their country. While some academics contend “there was no strong Czechoslovak identity”¹, Urban claimed that the eventual split between Czechia and Slovakia—referred to by political scientists as the ‘Velvet Divorce’—was not inevitable. He seemed proud of and identified with the nation he had claimed minutes before was synthetically created by intellectuals and diplomats; a nation he claimed was based on a founding myth. While Urban was not arguing for Czech or Czechoslovak nationalism, his answer in addition to his past actions as a dissenter seems to indicate that he was more than committed to his nation. Why would someone risk their life for a construct, a synthetic creation of diplomats?
As the lecture ended and we went about our day, I continued to ponder this question. The question and general topic touch on a philosophical question as to what precisely we mean when we say something is a construct. In academia, the term ‘construct’ is normally used to denote the contingency of its referent; the fact that things could have been different, the fact that we have the power to create and or destroy the constructed entity. Thus, when we claim an entity is constructed—whether we’re talking about the US dollar and limited liability corporations on the one hand or gender or racial identity on the other—we are not necessarily dismissing the phenomenon in question, but emphasizing our active role in shaping society around us.

In this respect, perhaps people like Urban did not devote their lives to political action in spite of the constructed nature of their nation-state. They did so precisely because of the constructed—and that is to say malleable—nature of nations. In living a life of political action as opposed to just political thought, one realizes that social contracts and constructs that are indeed created can also be, as was seen with the French and American revolutions of the late 18th century, redesigned or destroyed altogether. Through a popular uprising in 1989, Czechs and Slovaks came together and resigned and ultimately relinquished their nation. Whether such an act falls under the category of a politics of recognition or a politics of reification, few would argue that both nations are not better off today than they were conjoined.

An Addendum

Czechoslovakia and The End of History

So, where does that leave us going forward? What is the status of social identity in Czechia now, and what will things look like in the future? In talking about the political transition of the early, Urban highlighted the importance of the Czech Republic’s adoption of a classically liberal idea that rested at the intellectual foundation of Western democracies. This idea, which Urban claimed dated back to the European Enlightenment, was that the individual should be the basic and most fundamental unit of political society.

This representation of modern-day liberalism instantly reminded me of a famous piece in international relations and political philosophy by Francis Fukayama entitled The End of History. Written in 1989 as the Soviet Union was experiencing the early onset of its eventual collapse and Czechoslovakia the early onset of its eventual freedom, Fukuyama’s landmark piece argues that the end of the twentieth century marked the “unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism.”2 Nevertheless, Fukayama prophetically noted that “nationalism and other forms of racial and ethnic consciousness” posed a considerable, if not unresolvable, “contradiction” to democratic governance. As we learned in Professor Murad’s lecture preceding Urban, questions of ethnicity and especially immigration pose a cleavage in modern Czech society. For the marginalized, there simply was no ‘end of history’ in many respects. With national-populist parties making a comeback and with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, history now seems to be restarting on a global level.
Yet, there is ample room for hope. Consider for a moment that nations that were once bitter rivals throughout central Europe are now the closest of allies. The alliances, such as the EU, were forged by acknowledging the pain of the past and recognizing shared interests. History ‘restarts’ and ‘repeats’ precisely when we fail to master it.
Leopold I
A Sketch

Jacob Jeter

9 x 12 in Graphite on Paper

March 2023

from Paul Strudel’s 1695 marble bust ‘Kaiser Leopold I’, in Kammer XX at Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer Wien

Leopold I (1640 -1705) was a Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary, Bohemia, and Croatia. His reign was known for the Great Turkish War with the Ottoman Empire and his rivalry with his first cousin, Louis XIV. The historian William Coxe in 1853 wrote of him that: “His gait was stately, slow and deliberate; his air pensive, his address awkward, his manner uncouth, his disposition cold and phlegmatic."These are all attributes I tried to capture in my portrait. The piece is intended as an intimation of the pomp, glory, and congenital diseases of a bygone era.
These images were shot using my Pentax K1000 on black and white Delta 3200 and Portra 400. Prior to the trip, it had been over a year since I had shot an image with my Pentax. In December of 2022, the advance of my camera broke and it was only until the day before the trip that I was able to motivate myself to remedy a series of loose screws. In the past few years, shooting film has experienced a pervasive revival, particularly amongst younger generations. Shoot film demands a certain level of discipline, attention, and care that is often lost when taking photos with digital devices that allow you to take dozens of photos within seconds and store them in a limitless cloud. I see this revival of film as a reaction to and against an overly digitized world. Shooting film feels like the antithesis of what it means to shoot digitally — to shoot endlessly and often mindlessly. When my camera is strapped across my body, I find myself engaging with the world in a different way. As I go walking with my camera, I find myself noticing cracks and corners, things from above and below, and people and objects that I otherwise might go unseen when the camera is replaced with an iPhone. As I peek through the viewfinder and check for focus and adjust for light, I am forced to slow down and engage with the object framed in my lens. Rather than take press a button and move on, I must plant my feet and stay settled in a place and a time before I can move. While I was in Central Europe, I took photos using both my iPhone and my Pentax. I found that when using my phone, I often opted for images of food and friends — images that would likely end up on an Instagram story or something to be sent to people from home. While I struggle to find a cohesive narrative through my images, I see them as a puzzle to look through. Through these photos, I get to sift through my memory and to retrace my steps; I look at them and think back to the places and spaces I inhabited in those isolated moments to try and retrace how and why I may have taken that image, framed something in that way, and neglected the space not captured. I see these images as living documents that allow me to revisit and reimagine these places I only momentarily moved through.
On Prague, (De) Construction, and Bees
Lauren Balser

Several times throughout our trip, our conversations flowed into an astrological territory, an area that has been patiently explained to me numerous times but that I still don’t fully understand. When everyone in my middle school got really into astrology in the seventh grade, I was told I was a Leo. I knew the general characteristics ascribed to a Leo—some fit, some didn’t—but my knowledge of my own astrological profile was seemingly complete then.

At this point in my life, I’ve long been aware of the existence of other aspects of astrology, despite not understanding anything other than my sun sign. I know what being a Leo is supposed to mean, and that’s about it (which, I’ve been told, is very Leo of me). That’s all that I know, though—what it’s supposed to mean. At Charles de Gaulle airport, I learn a bit more about my moon sign while we wait for our connecting flight (a Scorpio, for those on the edge of their seat); I sit in a terminal, listening to conversations about what this identifier means to different people and trying to cope with a red-eye with a cup of nauseatingly bad airport coffee.

We eventually make our way to Prague and have better coffee. Despite being somewhat jet lagged, I force myself awake on our first full day so I can appreciate the ambiance of the city as we make our way to Prague Castle. We spend the day looking at the way things look—the varying architectural styles of Prague Castle, a cubist café, anti-machine art in the center of town, and Baroque sculptures on the Gothic Charles Bridge. Despite being a sum of all of its varying sociohistorical and technical parts, it all nonetheless makes a sort of sense to me.

On our second day in Prague, a few of us go the National Gallery. We start with Eva Kotátková’s installation, “My Body Is Not an Island.” I find myself walking through the skeletal and dissected body of a half-man, half-fish, and deconstructing the meaning of personhood in a multiplex network and society (something I find myself doing more these days, albeit with fewer fish metaphors). Each segment of the installation is a separate narrative designed to give voice to a number of actors, human and not. One such segment tells the story of a shrimp being boiled alive.

There are several interactive aspects of the installation. Towards the beginning, we’re invited to write on a sheet of paper and hang it with other visitors’ papers. On this wall, I see people celebrating being clean, doodles of animals, children’s handwriting, and seemingly the full spectrum of human emotion. Once you’ve made your way further into the exhibit, there’s a table in the near-center of the room, upon which are dozens of cards the size of A4 sheets of paper. Some list full paragraphs, and other simple phrases, either in Czech or English. I fumble around with them until I’ve found most of the cards written in English. As I’m playing around with making what feels like a refrigerator magnet poem, I stumble into the following writing from Kotátková:

“I am a swarm of bees that lost its way. I am a moving body formed from many moving bodies. I am trying to convince all parts of myself that being in uncertainty for a while and without a clear path is okay.”
Another reads: “I am a vessel with a small crack that is not visible but makes me all the more vulnerable. There is a bit of water around that has leaked out of me. Fear of sudden movements, of falling apart out of carelessness.”

In another part of the installation, Kotátková describes having a “desire to change everything that is fixed, constant; a near-obsessive need to constantly question and define self.” The final interactive portion of the installation encourages museum-goers to sit on blue and pink pillows in the head of the skeletal fish and listen to the voices featured in the installation. Kotátková’s work is intentionally fluid, intentionally open to future changes and additions. Each iteration of it is intended to be different from the last. It encourages audience participation and action during a moment that generally prioritizes viewing, creating not just a singular installation, but a landscape of narratives.

In an interview about her installation, Kotátková discusses the friction between materials in her installation, and the tension between softness, steel, and wood. This built-in tension is something we see in architecture throughout the trip— in Prague, for instance, we see the communist-era Žižkov Television Tower covered in David Černý’s crawling baby sculptures. It feels lived-in and contradictory, even as it exists as one city. It is a quasi-definition of identity.

Throughout the trip, I kept returning to the question of what it means to be (a) ____. What does it mean to define yourself? Somewhat trivially (for me, at least), what does it mean to be a Leo? There are other questions, though, which weigh heavier on me: What does it mean to be queer? What does it mean to be non-binary? What do these things mean for a community and for the individual who defines themself with them? What does it mean to be Central versus Eastern European? What does it mean to be Western? How do you enact these meanings and make them lived-in? How do you embrace an identifier conceived in and out of opposition and contradiction?

I do not know that I have any more answers to these questions than I did before we got to Prague. If many ways, my learning on this trip was in service of more questions about identity than answers. So, I look to Kotátková’s swarm of bees. In the face of these questions, I carry Kotátková’s swarm of bees with me, full of movement and contradiction, working to be at peace with uncertainty.
Intersections of Art:
UNRAVELING PARALLEL
TRUTHS IN PUBLIC SPACE

Prague

Budapest

Vienna
Artist Statement
Mychal Pagen

In this photo essay, I reflect on my visual journey through the charming cities of Prague, Vienna, and Budapest, weaving together the diverse forms of art found within their public spaces. Through my lens, I delve into the intersection of architecture, sculpture, graffiti, and other forms of street art, unveiling the vibrant tapestry that adorns these historical, cultural landscapes, in an attempt to make sense of what I think I know about these places and their history. At first glance, these cities may be perceived through a narrow lens, defined by their historical landmarks and well-preserved architecture. However, my photographic exploration reveals a different narrative—one that expands our understanding of these places and their rich cultural histories. By bringing together different art forms in public spaces, in this layered and messy way, I aim to challenge preconceived notions and invite viewers to question the traditional narratives that have shaped our understanding of these cities. The convergence of sculpture and public art adds a layer of complexity to our understanding of these places. As statues rise from plazas and parks, they embody the aspirations, values, and collective memory of a society. However, my photographs invite viewers to examine these sculptures with fresh eyes, as they interact with the surrounding graffiti and street art. The collision of these art forms disrupts our assumptions, offering new interpretations and narratives that challenge the established historical discourse.

Graffiti and street art, often dismissed as acts of rebellion or vandalism, emerge as transformative forces within these urban environments. By capturing these transient and ephemeral forms of expression, I aim to consider the ways in which they intersect with the established art forms, sparking conversations and dialogue about societal norms, politics, and cultural identities. These uncommissioned artworks disrupt the narrative, revealing alternative histories, unheard voices, and marginalized perspectives that have often been overlooked. Through this convergence of different art forms, I want to stimulate curiosity by calling attention to the intersections between architecture, sculpture, graffiti, and street art. My photographs invite viewers to engage in a reevaluation of these cities and to question the stories they have been told. It is within these intersections that we can discover the hidden layers of a place, shedding light on overlooked narratives and unveiling the complex tapestry of a city’s history. Ultimately, this photo essay is an invitation to embrace the diverse and multifaceted nature of artistic expression in public spaces. By challenging our assumptions and expanding our understanding, we can begin to appreciate the intersections between different art forms and their transformative power. Through this exploration, we can unveil the hidden truths and complexities of a place, provoking new perspectives and fostering a deeper connection to the rich tapestry of history and culture that exists within these cultural landscapes.
Soak it up.
Work, play, dream.
Artist Statement
Sovah Woydak

The Dean’s Honor Society trip was my first time traveling to Europe. When we arrived in every city, I was struck by the highly ornamental architecture which blended a multiplicity of forms and styles. I accepted my role as a tourist and fully gawked at Prague Castle or the Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna. I found myself thinking about the meaning of these ornamental facades regarding us tourists and how their significance has changed over time. An architectural detail that continued to draw my attention across all three cities was the presence of women-shaped pillars which held up parts of buildings. I later found out that these statues are called “caryatids” and have a fascinating history and application all across Europe. In the paper “Contested Caryatids: Architecture, Modernity, and Race around 1900” Daniel Jütte positioned caryatids as embodiments of social aspirations and tears within Vienna’s bourgeois age (1). Jütte describes how caryatids were applied in mass quantities by the Jewish elite to evoke ancient Greek culture which triggered antisemitic discourse in regards to Jewish people employing decorative imagery from the Greek canon (8).

This collage represents a visual response to my exposure to different forms of architecture, particularly the mass presentation of highly detailed and ornate buildings I had never seen before. In response to the caryatids’ complex history, the collage represents the complex and charged histories present within decorative elements. At the center of the collage is a caryatid who grounds the visually chaotic mass of layered photos. The surrounding imagery depicts buildings from all the cities which have been manipulated through the application of cyanotype chemicals. I cut out paper patterns of lace and placed them on top of the chemically coated paper to create negative images which render detailed and subtle ways.

Overall the piece aims to convey a chaotic mass of architectural elements which opens an opportunity to explore the complex history of central European architecture.
“The Language of Horses” examines the noble beauty attributed to these creatures. While traveling through Central Europe, the author took note of the populous horse statues that loomed over public spaces. These horse statues seem to represent a long-forgone empire. These original war-making machines retain a certain wildness to them that modernity can’t quite capture. After all, the ragged steel machines do not compare to the sleek power and sophisticated fragility of the horse.
Notes and References

The Black Cab Tours: The Troubles of Era in Northern Ireland between Protestants and Catholics

The Jewish Museum in Prague During WWII
[10] Palvát, 125.

Angel Baby

The Velvet Paradox: Reflections on Jan Urban's Lecture
On Prague, (De)Construction, and Bees

Artist Statement - Sovah Woydak

A Brief Synopsis of How to Quantify a Rainforest

Reflection: A Cross-Culture-Cacao Déjà-Vu

Environmental Sustainability and Mental Health: Following Costa Rica’s Lead
Wooden Fences: Costa Rican Ecotourism and Architectural Propaganda


Scholar Group Participants

Albert Gallatin Scholars, January 2023
United Kingdom & Ireland

Faculty Mentor: Jacob Remes
Administrative Director: Mehmet Darakcioglu

Student Travelers: Jenny Cao, Leah Espinal, Nicholas Frederico-Motley, Yang Hu, Daniela Paternina Sierra, Mia Roberts, Xander Singh, Lesley Tan, Doniella Taylor-Ambersley, Aleah Tishler, Anastasia Vlasova

Americas Scholars, March 2023
Costa Rica

Faculty Mentor: Matthew Stanley
Administrative Director: Cameron Williams

Student Travelers: Vasi Bjeletich, Eleanor Chapman, Sam De Alfaro, Declan Dwyer, Neveah Edwards, Yasmine Garay, Madelaine Jakes, Olivia Krivitsky, Sean Krupa, Quan Le, Sophia Opferman, Alba Quintero-Retis, Angel Suero, Geneva Tenney, Abney Turner, Gabrielle Vardanega, Aidan Vuong, Livia Walker, Natassia Walker

Dean’s Honor Society, March 2023
Prague, Vienna & Budapest

Faculty Mentor: Karen Hornick
Administrative Director: Conor Brady

Student Travelers: Ahmed Armaan, Lauren Balser, Julia Barlow, William Frankle, Jacob Jeter, Allin Jia, Ethan Johnson, Aiyana Lapeyrolerie, Abigail Lenhard, Joyce Matos, Michael Pagen, Ariel Peritz-Means, Joseph Redmond, Abby Roll, Cameron Saltzman, Jenna Sharkawy, Sovah Woydak, Xinyi Zhao
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Pg. 10 - Jenny Cao
Pg. 12 - Lesley Tan
Pg. 13 - Lesley Tan
Pg. 14 - Lesley Tan
Pg. 15 - Nick Motley
Pg. 17 - Nick Motley
Cover #3 - Matthew Stanley
Pg. 18 - Aidan Vuong
Pg. 19 - Alba Quinter Retis
Pg. 20 - Rodolfo J. Vieto Morales
Pg. 21 - Rodolfo J. Vieto Morales
Pg. 23 - Gabrielle Vardanega
Pg. 24 - Gabrielle Vardanega
Pg. 25 - Gabrielle Vardanega
Pg. 27 - Geneva Tenney
Pg. 30 - Liv Walker
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Pg. 36 - Olivia Krivitsky
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Cover #4 - Conor Brady
Pg. 43 - Abigail Lenhard
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Pg. 50 - Armaan Ahmed
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Pg. 53 - Cameron Saltsman
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Pg. 58 - Conor Brady
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Pg. 65 - Mychal Pagen
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