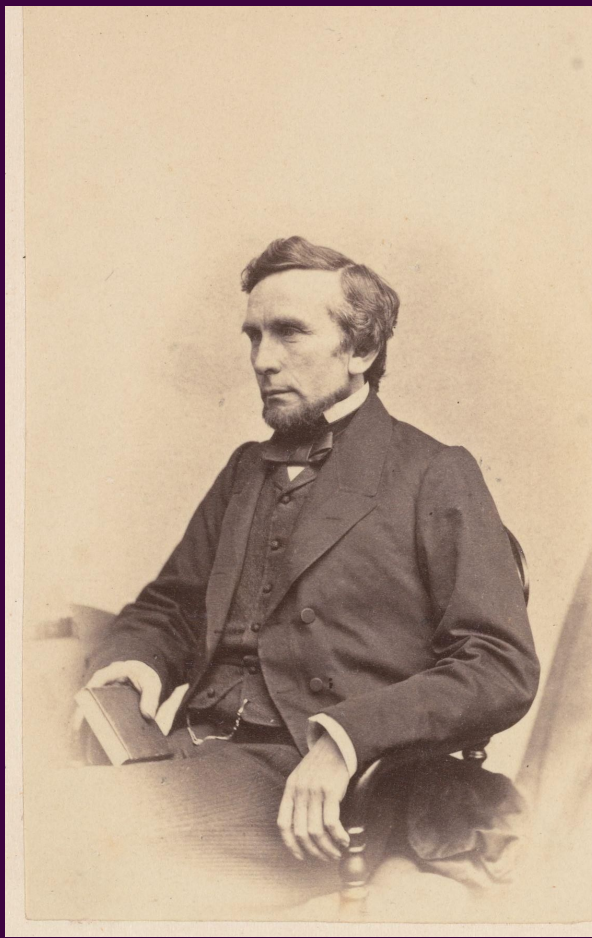


CITY 248 | ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY RESEARCH WORKSHOP

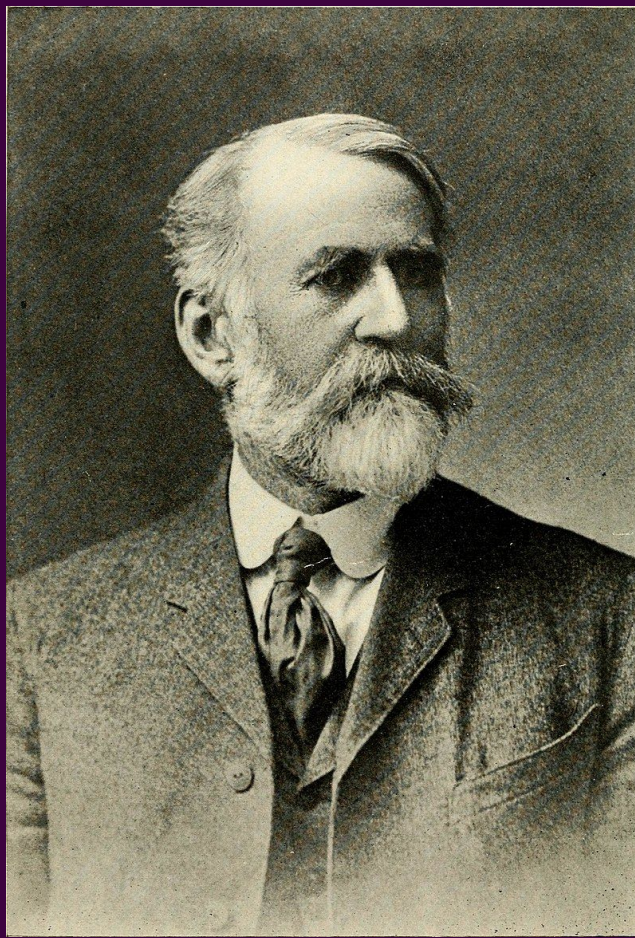
SPATIAL HISTORIES OF HEALTH



Professor M.C. Overholt | T/Th 2:40–4pm | Dalton Hall 1 | moverholt@brynmawr.edu



(Left) Dr. Edward Hammond
Clarke (1820–77)

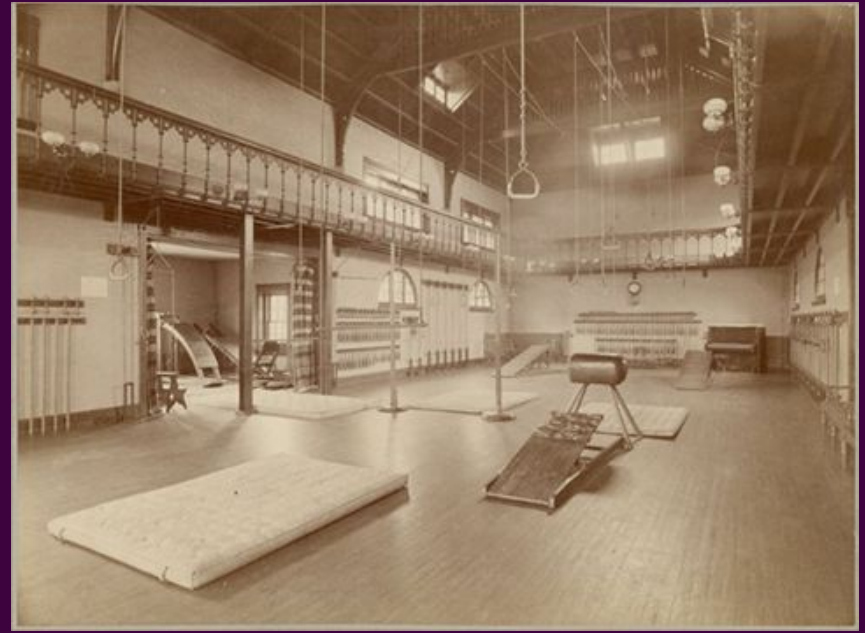


(Right) Dr. Dudley A.
Sargent (1849–1924)

*Project Credit: Alicia Walker, *Who Builds Bryn Mawr* project



Henry Parker Rolfe, *First Gymnasium*, Bryn Mawr College, c. 1885-1919.



Unknown photographer, *Interior of the first Gymnasium*, Bryn Mawr College, c. 1899.



(Left) Theodora Alice Ruggles Kitson (American 1871-1932), Statue of the Typical American Student: Female Composite, 1892.

(Right) Souvenir map for the World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park, Chicago, published 1892. Anthropology Building (where the statue was displayed) circled in red.

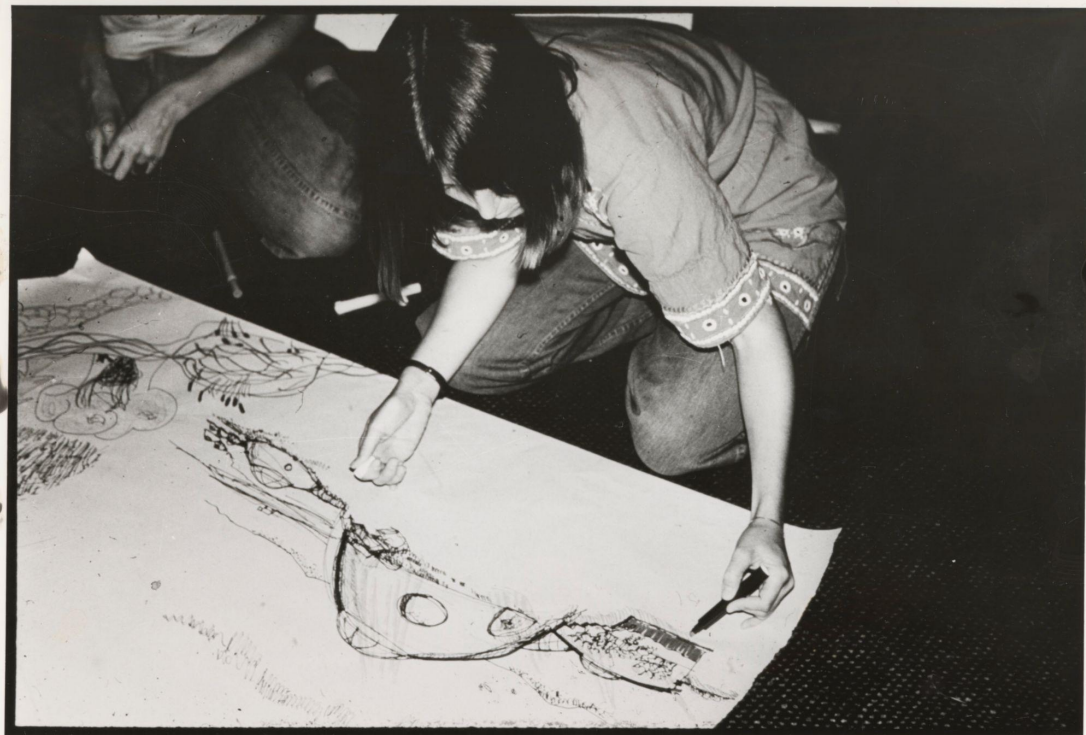


“My purpose here is to alter the terms and expand our understanding of the cultural construction of bodies and identity by reframing “disability” as another culture-bound, physically justified difference to consider along with race, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality... To denaturalize the cultural encoding of... extraordinary bodies, I go beyond assailing stereotypes to interrogate the conventions of representation and unravel the complexities of identity production within social narratives of bodily differences.”

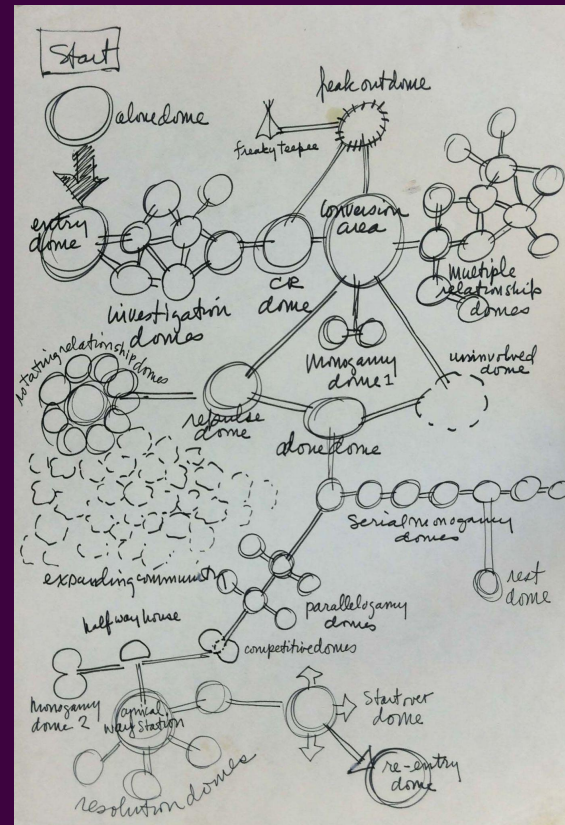
Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (1997)



Fantasizing Design: Phyllis Birkby Builds Lesbian Feminist Architecture
 Curated by Stephen Vider and M.C. Overholt
 Designed by Marissa Martonyi and XiaoXiao Guo
 Center for Architecture, New York, NY.
 Photographs by Asya Gorovits.



(Left) Woman draws in a fantasy environments workshop, 1975
 (Right) Phyllis Birkby's fantasy drawing, c. 1973





(Left) Photograph of Long Island University's Library-Learning Center, Brooklyn, NY, 1975. Designed by Davis Brody & Associates (with Birkby as project designer and co-project architect) in response to student-led disability rights activism.

(Right) Amethyst House, Staten Island, New York, 1990. Addition and remodel designed by Birkby for women in recovery from alcohol addiction.



Mia Mingus (she/her)

Access Intimacy

“Access intimacy is that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else “gets” your access needs. The kind of eerie comfort that your disabled self feels with someone on a purely access level. Sometimes it can happen with complete strangers, disabled or not, or sometimes it can be built over years. It could also be the way your body relaxes and opens up with someone when all your access needs are being met. It is not dependent on someone having a political understanding of disability, ableism or access. Some of the people I have experienced the deepest access intimacy with (especially able bodied people) have had no education or exposure to a political understanding of disability...”

SCHEDULE FOR VISITING PHYLLIS

May 22-23 Alma Routsong and Julie Weber
May 29-30 Sidney Abbott
June 5-6 Barbara Love
June 12-13 Jane O'Wyatt
June 19-20 Kate Millett
June 26-27 Judy O'Neill
July 3-4 Linda Clarke and Joan Casamo
July 10-11 Nancy Johnson
July 17-18 Charlotte Sheedy
July 24-25 March Hoffman/Artemis March
July 31-Aug. 1 Dolores Alexander
August 14-15 Barbara Asche
Alternate: Linda Kavars and JoAnn Myers

If you can't do it on your scheduled day, swap with somebody or ask LK and JoAnn.

If you've lost your list of phone numbers and addresses, call Julie and Alma (914-473-4572) and we'll send you another.

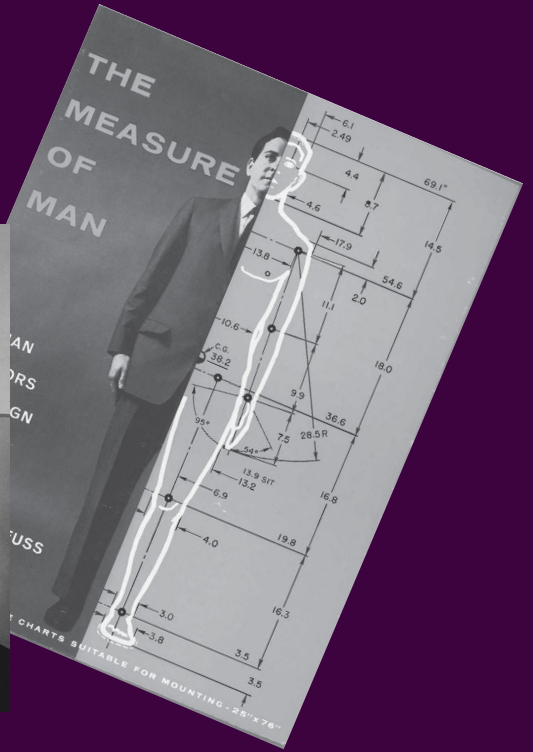
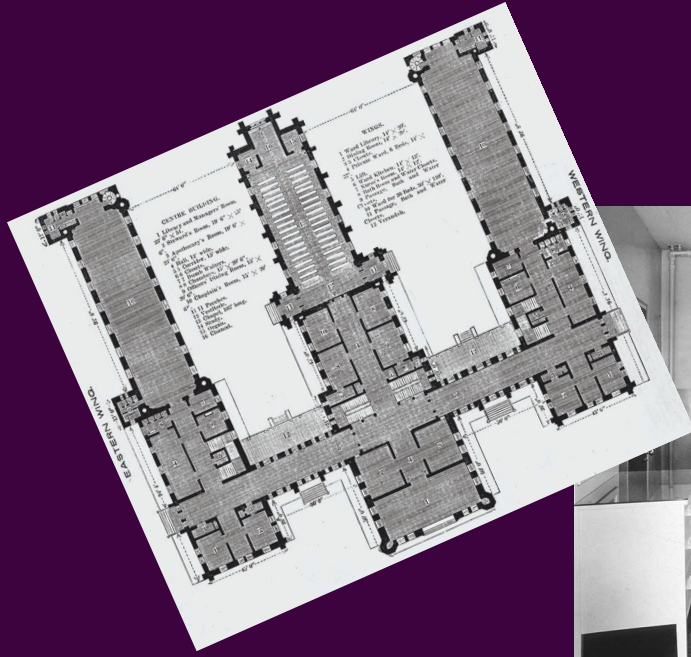


(Right) Phyllis Birkby at home with Sisters of Birkby
From left: Barbara Love, Joan Casamo, Phyllis Birkby, and Sidney Abbott, Photographer unknown, c. 1994. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

(Left) Sisters of Birkby visiting schedule

Alma Routsong and Julie Weber, c. 1993, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

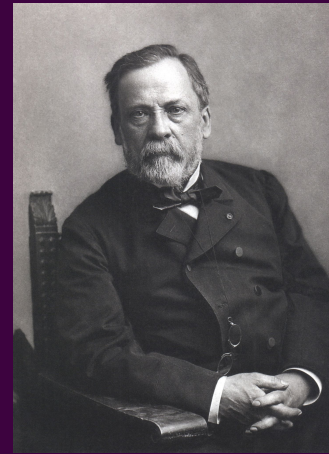
PART I. DESIGNING HEALTH



How have hospitals, clinics, maternity wards, rehabilitation centers, and other spaces of care been shaped by changing ideas about health, illness, and bodily difference?



MONTREAL'S NIGHT-MAYOR ON HIS GHASTLY ROUNDS.
(DEDICATED TO THE BOARD OF HEALTH.)



Louis Pasteur (1822–95)
Remembered for disproving
miasma theory with his germ
theory, with Robert Koch, in the
late 19th c.

Miasma theory:

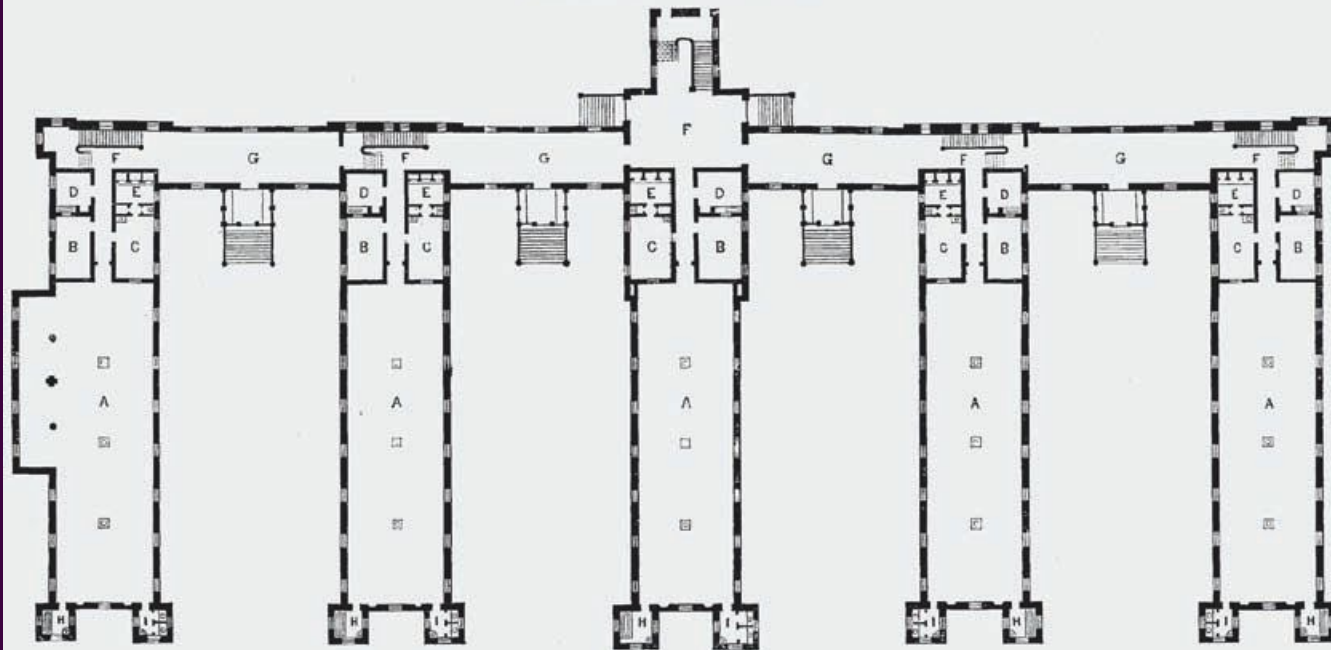
A once prevalent medical belief (4th to late 19th c.) that disease is caused by breathing "bad air" (miasma) emanating from rotting organic matter, sewage, stagnant water, etc.

GROUND PLAN OF THE "VERPLANCK" STATE EMIGRANT HOSPITAL.

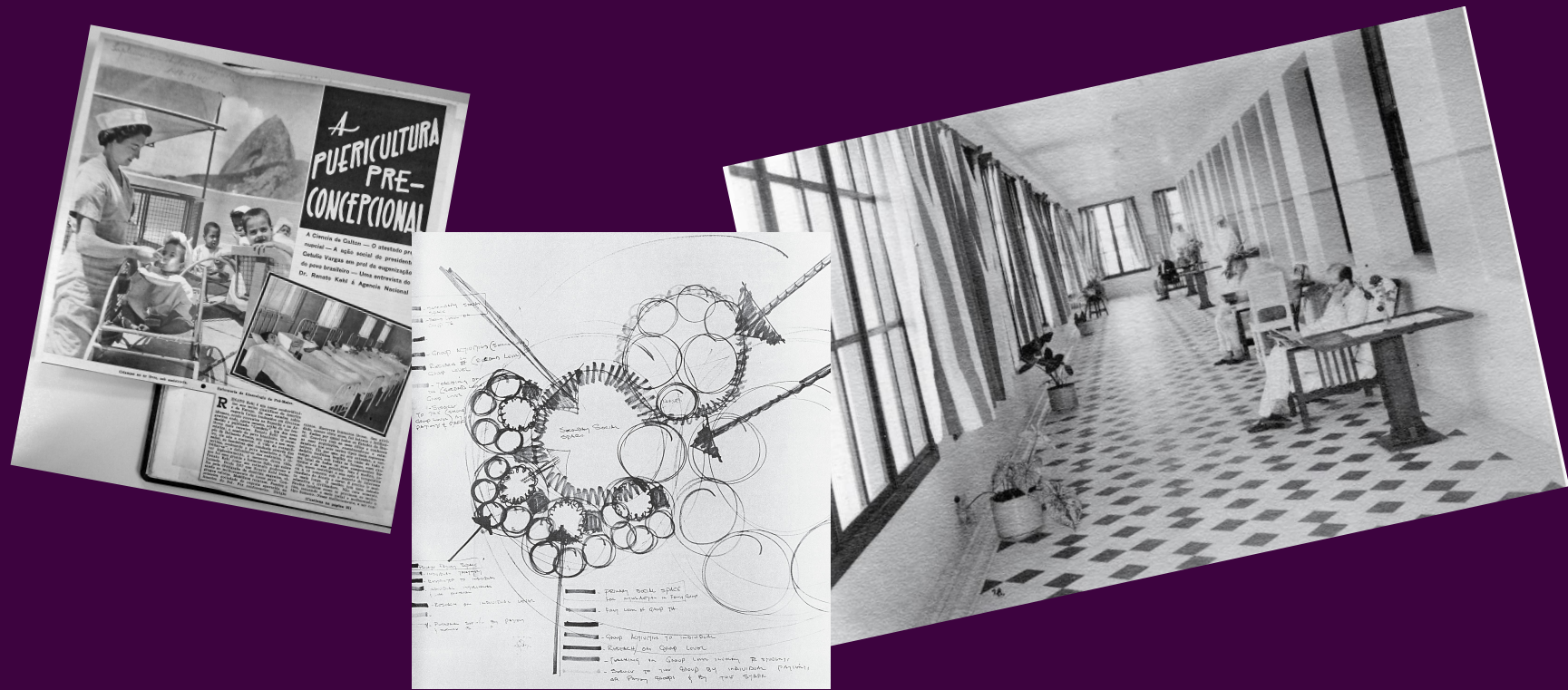
REFERENCES:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| A—WARDS. | B—DINING ROOMS. |
| C—NURSES' ROOMS. | D—SCULLERIES. |
| E—LINEN ROOMS. | F—HALLS. |
| G—SANITARIUMS. | H—BATH AND SINK ROOMS. |
| I—WATER CLOSET ROOMS. | |

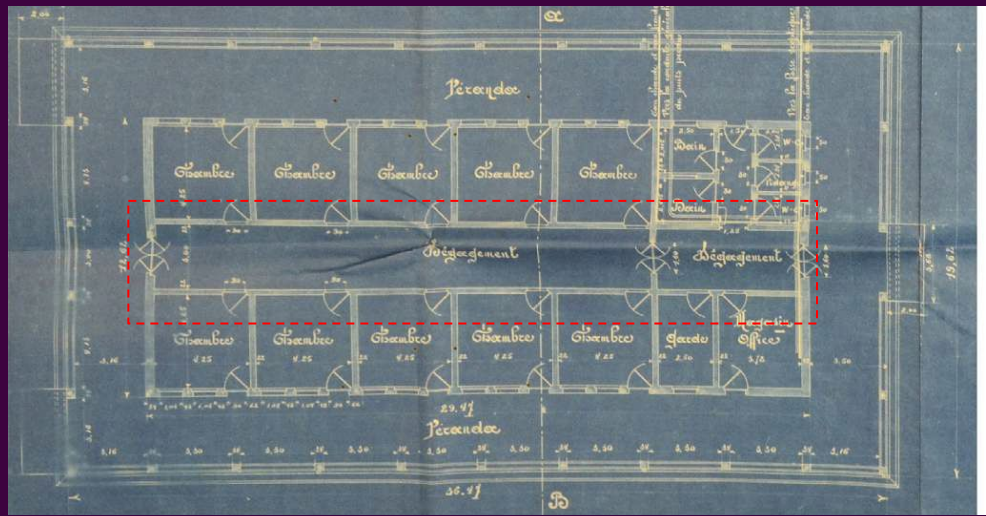
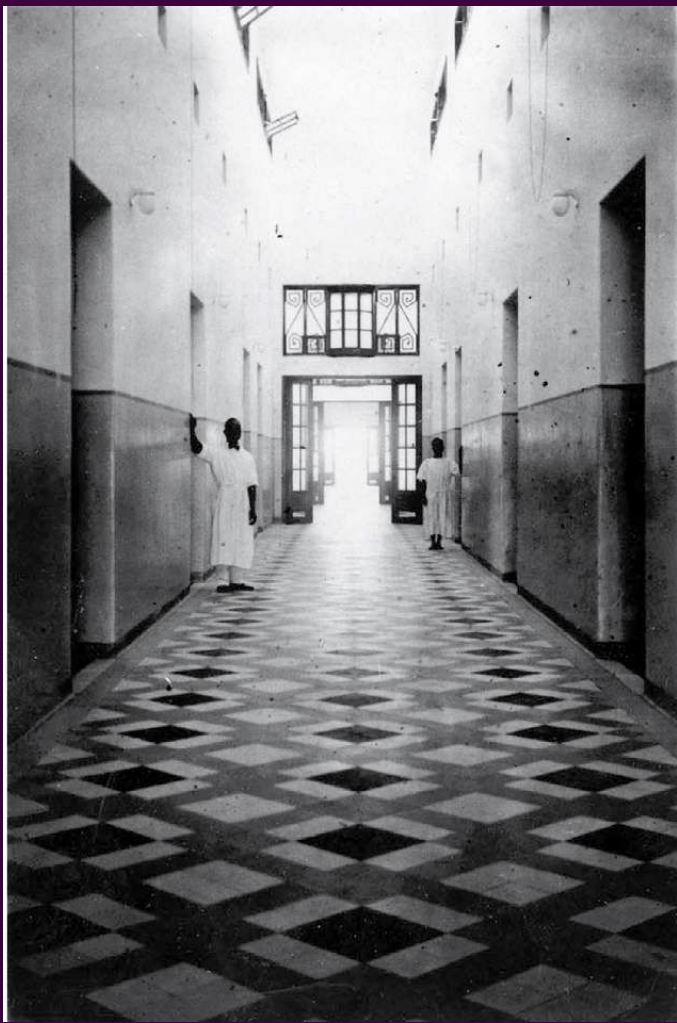
NOTE.—The lower floor of the right-hand Pavillion is appropriated for the Committee Room and Superintendent's and Distribution Offices, and a Fire-proof Vault for the Records of the Institutions.



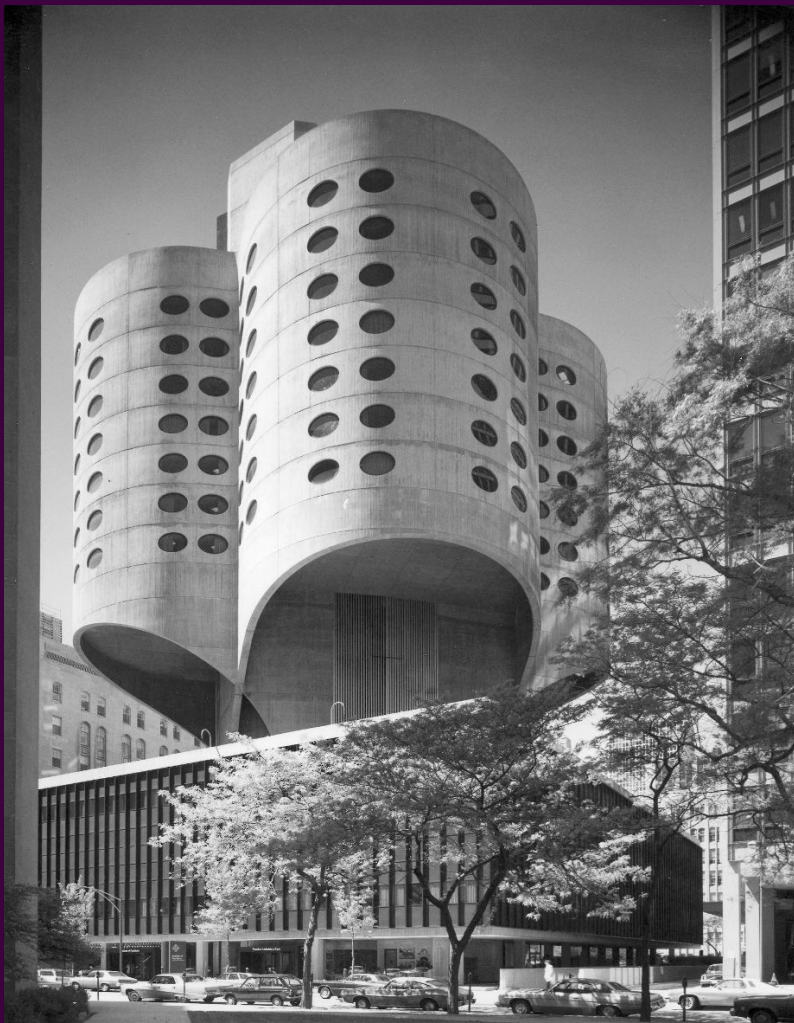
"Verplanck" State Emigrant Hospital, Ward's Island, New York, 1865.



How have these spaces, in turn, sorted, disciplined, segregated, or cared for bodies differently, producing racialized, gendered, and class-based hierarchies of care and shaping definitions of disability and mental illness?



Vander Elst (architect) and Dr. Van Hoorde, *Clinique Reine Elisabeth*, Léopoldville (now Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, c. 1928–36



Meet your baby brother

By Robert Steinbrook

JOEL CHASNOFF peered through the nursery window on the 8th floor of Prentice Women's Hospital and Maternity Center of Northwestern Memorial hospital. He was looking at his 2-day-old brother, Ari, while he clutched the small stuffed bear he had brought as a present.

Neither of Joel's parents had been in a hospital—after their births—until their teens but it was their 3-year-old son's second visit, and he was enjoying it.

"He has already been talking to some of his other friends whose parents are going to have babies," his father, pediatrician Ira Chasnoff said. "He is telling them what it will be like to be an older brother. And he said to me, 'Daddy, Mommy can bend over now.'"

JOEL'S VISITS are made possible by Prentice's new sibling visitation program, which is drawing high marks from nurses, doctors, parents, and older brothers and sisters.

The program is part of a national trend toward family-centered maternity care, in which the father may bathe, feed, and dress the baby and be present in the delivery room.

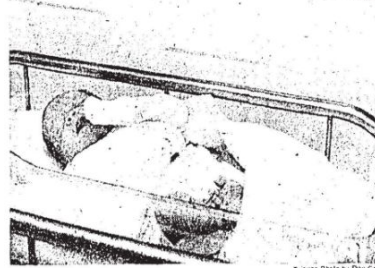
"Our assumption was that it would be good for the children primarily, to minimize the separation of the family," Judith Hicks, the nurse in charge of the Prentice program, said. "But as much as anything, the parents have been reassured."

THE HOSPITAL, at 233 E. Superior St., has few restrictions on visits. Parents are told of the plan before the mother enters the hospital.

After the child is born, half-hour visits can be arranged between 11:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. However, parents are asked not to bring their other children if there is any suspicion they are ill.

The children see the new members of their families through the nursery window and visit their mothers in a

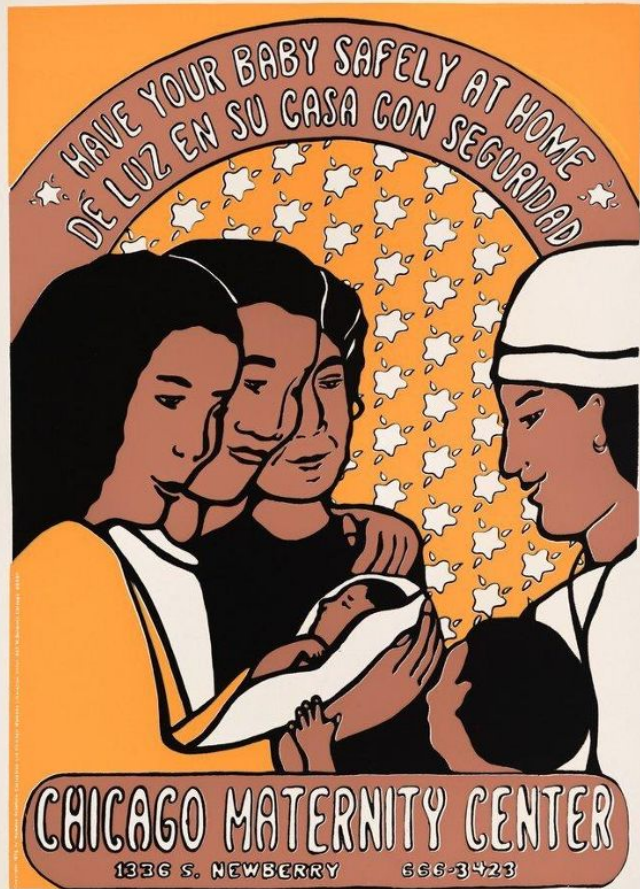
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Joel Chasnoff, 3, and his parents, Dr. and Mrs. Ira Chasnoff, take a look at newborn Ari, his brother, at Prentice Women's Hospital.

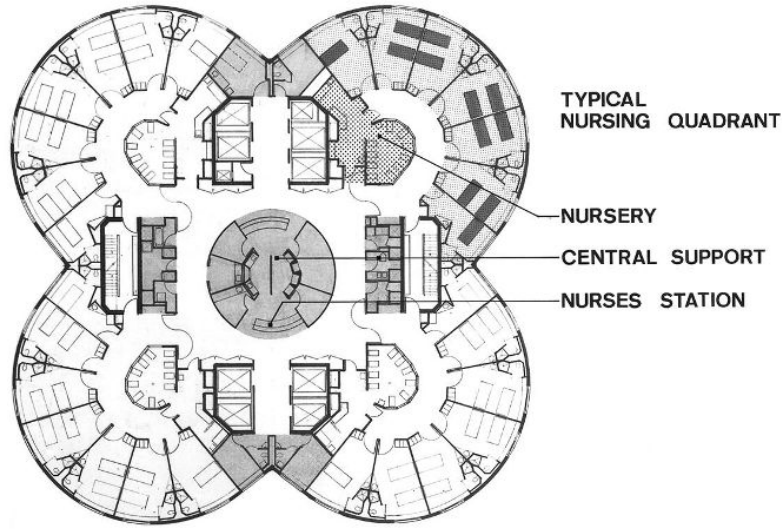
←Clipping on "family-centered care" at Prentice Women's Hospital and Maternity Center, Chicago Tribune, July 14, 1977.

←Exterior view of Prentice Women's Hospital, designed by Bertrand Goldberg, Chicago, c. 1975. Photograph by Heidrich-Blessing.

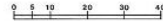


(Top) Model of typical home environments where Chicago Maternity Center medical staff would assist in child delivery.

(Left) Poster designed by the Chicago Women's Liberation Union's Women's Graphic Collective in support of Women Act to Control Healthcare (W.A.T.C.H.), 1972.



TYPICAL BED TOWER FLOOR PLAN

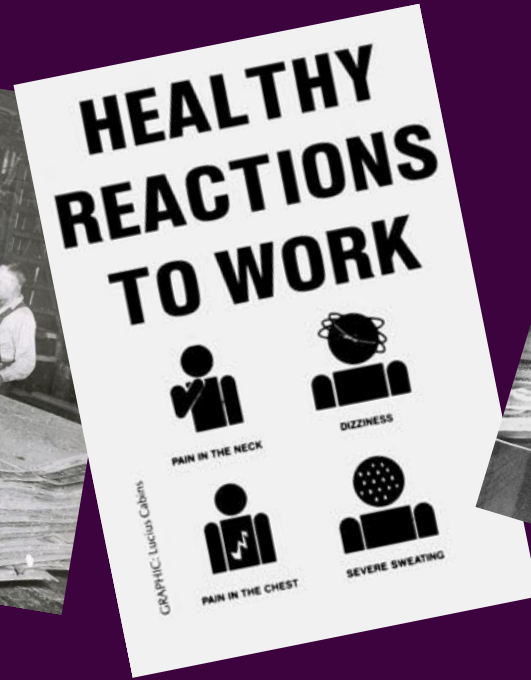


Diagrammatic floor plan of Prentice Tower's eventual quatrefoil plan, c. 1970. The nursery and central support were slightly altered in the final scheme.



Photograph of a Prentice Tower interior model demonstrating staff surveillance of multiple delivery rooms. Heidrich Blessing, c. 1969–75.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTALIZING HEALTH

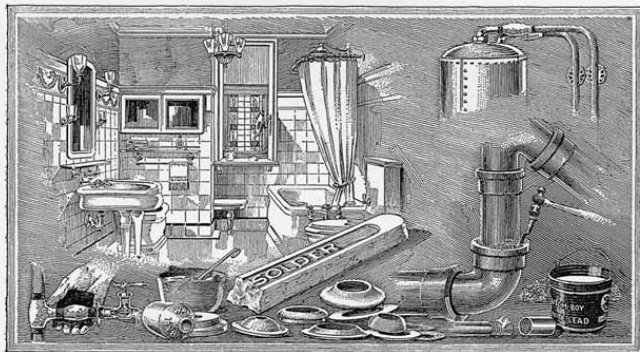


What if the very spaces designed to shelter and make us healthy can also make us sick?



Sick building syndrome (SBS) refers to a pattern of acute health or discomfort symptoms experienced by people while occupying a particular building, even when no specific illness or underlying cause can be identified. These effects may affect occupants of a single room or area or extend across much of the building.

←Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM),
Union Carbide headquarters, New York, NY, c. 1960.



Lead helps to guard your health

YOU wouldn't live today in a house without an adequate plumbing system. For without modern plumbing, sickness might endanger your life.

Lead concealed in the walls and under the floors of many modern buildings helps to give the best sanitation.

Lead pipe centuries old

Lead, therefore, is contributing to the health, comfort, and convenience of people today as it did when Rome was a center of civilization. Lead water and drainage pipes more than 1800 years old have been found in exactly the condition they were in when laid.

In some cities today the law specifies that lead pipe alone may be used to bring water from street mains into the building.

In drainage systems are lead traps made of lead pipe bent into the shape of the letter S, so that a little water will stay in the bend and prevent gases which collect in the pipe from getting out through the house.

The malleability of lead also makes it easy to change the direction of any pipe through the use of lead bends.

Joining the pipes

A plumber easily "wipes" a joint or repairs a pipe leak with lead and tin solder. Because this alloy melts at the low temperature of 358 degrees it can be applied without melting the lead pipe, which melts at 620 degrees.

Lead is also poured into the flanges of pipe-joints to make them absolutely tight. Pipe threads are painted with white-lead or red-lead to make a tight connection. Where vibration or movement of pipes may loosen a poured joint, lead wool is used; lead shredded into threads is packed into the joint in a dense, compact mass.

Rubber gaskets and ball washers containing lead prevent leaking at joints and faucets.

Lead is used to beautify the modern bathroom. Red-lead and litharge, both lead oxides, are im-

portant ingredients in making the glossy white enamel covering the iron bodies of tub and basin and the glazed tile walls.

Lead in paint

While lead is invaluable in assuring comfort and proper sanitation, its best-known and most widespread use is as white-lead in paint. Such materials as wood would soon deteriorate unless protected with paint. And the paints that give the most thorough protection against the weather are based on white-lead.

The loss of invested capital through failure to protect the surface of property adequately has led property owners to paint frequently and well. As days and months go by, more and more of them are learning the wisdom of the phrase, "Save the surface and you save all." And they are using white-lead paint to prolong the lives of their houses.

Look for the Dutch Boy

NATIONAL LEAD COMPANY makes white-lead and sells it mixed with pure linseed oil, under the name and trade-mark of *Dutch Boy white-lead*. The figure of the Dutch Boy is reproduced on every keg and is a guarantee of exceptional purity.

Dutch Boy products also include red-lead, linseed oil, flattening oil, babbitt metals and solder.

More about lead

If you use lead, or think you might use it in any form, write to us for specific information.

NATIONAL LEAD COMPANY

New York, 111 Broadway; Boston, 131 State St.; Buffalo, 116 Oak St.; Chicago, 900 West 18th St.; Cincinnati, 659 Freeman Ave.; Cleveland, 820 West Superior Ave.; St. Louis, 712 Chestnut St.; San Francisco, 485 California St.; Pittsburgh, National Lead & Oil Co. of Pa., 116 Fourth Ave.; Philadelphia, John T. Lewis & Bros. Co., 437 Chestnut St.

The Dutch Boy Painter

DECEMBER 1928

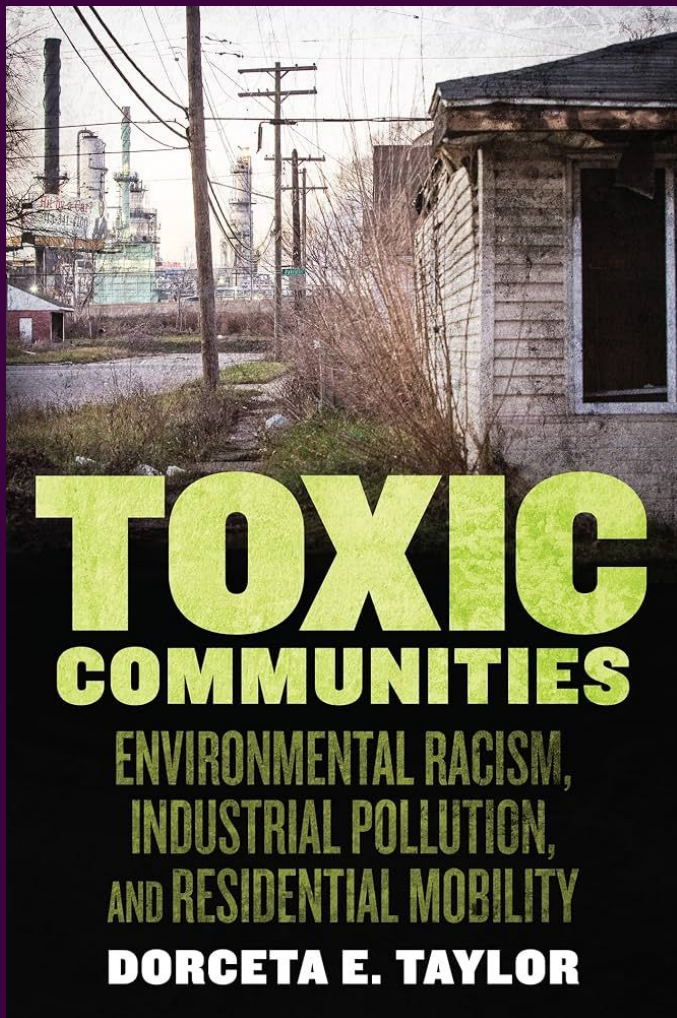


←Advertisements promoting lead for pipes and paint, 1923 (left) and 1928 (right)

In 1786, Ben Franklin warned that lead was making painters and typesetters sick. By 1922 the League of Nations tried to ban lead interior paint, but the U.S. refused to abide.



How have the materials and infrastructures of the built environment—from lead and toxic adhesives to petroleum-derived plastics and polluted landscapes—exposed different bodies and communities to different forms and degrees of risk? Who gets to decide which risks are acceptable, and whose bodies are considered expendable?



Environmental Racism

- Environmental hazards are unevenly distributed along lines of race and class.
- “Toxic communities” are produced through spatial and housing policies and practices—by governments, private corporations, and other institutions—such as racial zoning, restrictive covenants, redlining, segregation, urban renewal, and expulsive zoning.
- It is not enough to ask why people live near hazards; we have to ask who has the ability to move and what harm being uprooted might cause (distance from community, economic opportunity, social support networks, etc.)

PART III. RECLAIMING HEALTH



What would health look like if communities, rather than hierarchical institutions, were given the power to define and produce it?

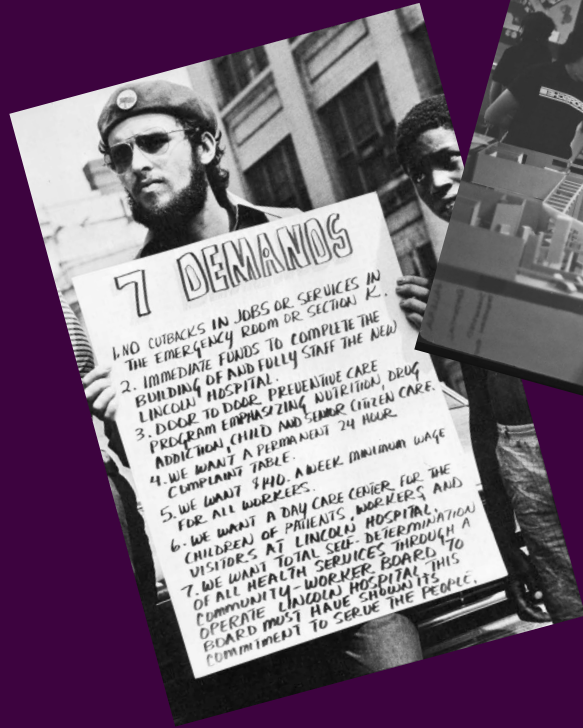


Feminist Women's Health Centers, multiple locations in California, c. early 1970s



S.E. Eisterer (she/her)

- Assistant Professor, Architectural History & Theory at Princeton
- Editor of *In the Daylight of Our Existence: Architectural History and the Promise of Queer Theory* (gta Verlag, 2025)
- Will share her work with Magnus, a historic HIV/AIDS clinic and social space in Vienna, Austria



How have Black and Latine activists, disabled and neurodivergent people, LGBTQ+ communities, women, and other marginalized communities challenged institutional models of care and created alternative spaces rooted in autonomy, mutual aid, and collective power?



Mary T. Bassett (left) demonstrating a finger stick for sickle cell screening at the Black Panther Party's Franklin Lynch Peoples' Free Health Center, circa 1970, Boston.



Center for Independent
Living, Berkeley, CA, c. 1970s

ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly “Key Word” Reading Responses

What’s a “key word?”

- Explored by Marxist thinker Raymond Williams and more recently editors of *Trans Studies Quarterly*, UPenn Wolf Center for the Humanities, and others
- Keywords are terms that are familiar yet have multiple and changing meanings
- Williams advocates moving away from etymology (the original meaning and origin of a word) and toward a cultural analysis: thinking about a words multiple meanings across geographies, time periods, and communities
- Some key words we might think of: health, normate, disability, accessibility, clinic, eugenics, environment, sickness, hygiene, care...

Weekly “Key Word” Reading Responses

- Write a total of seven responses of ~250 words each between weeks 2–9
 - I.e., you can skip one with no penalty!
- Reflect on the week’s readings (one or all) through one key word that you feel is explored through the readings, explicitly or implicitly
- Submit to Moodle, Mondays by 11:59pm EST

Annotation as Analysis: Interpreting Architectural Drawings

- **Due Friday, October 9 at 5pm (Moodle)**
- Select 1 or 2 drawings of a health space (hospital, clinic, maternity ward, etc.) and create four descriptive and analytical annotations that reveal how the building organizes bodies and constructs particular notions of health, access, and care. These might be particular rooms or spaces, thresholds, service areas, materials and surfaces, or other architectural features that merit closer interpretation
- 1000 words (250 words/annotation)

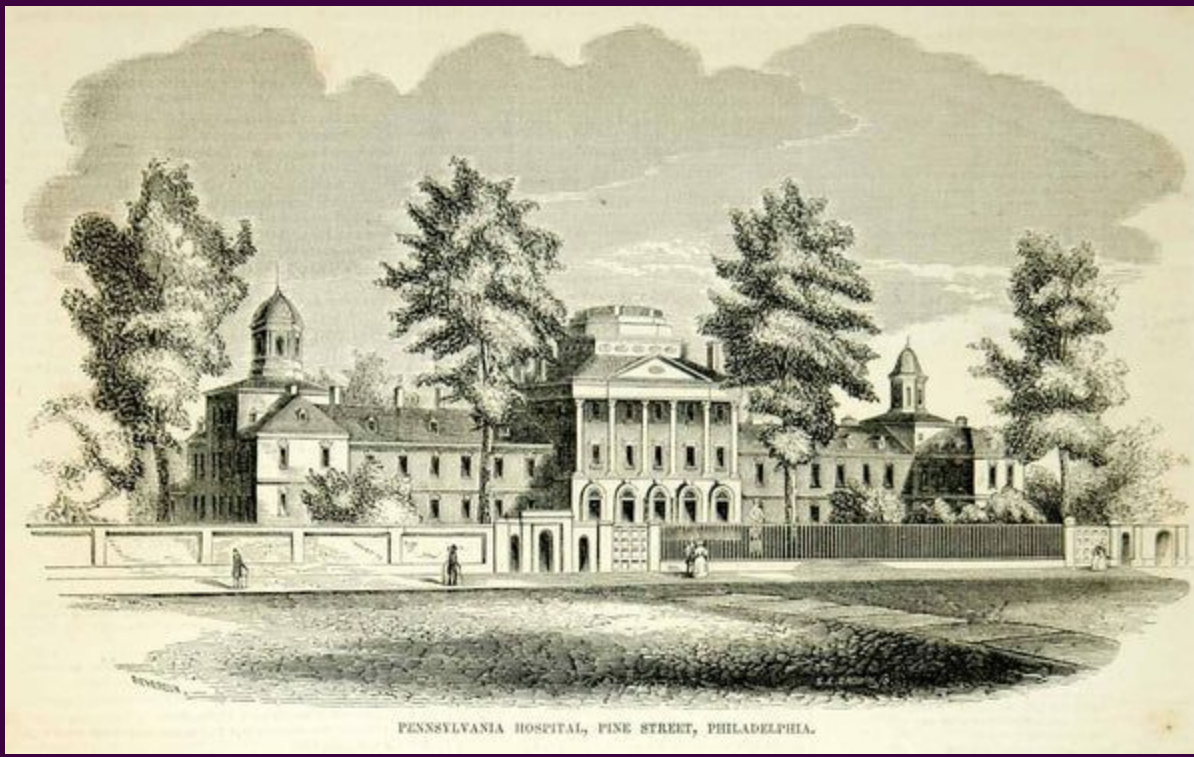
Sites of Health Activism: Reading Grassroots Design & Spatial Strategies

- Students select a grassroots health project and create a dossier documenting and analyzing its spatial practices, including:
 - 5 annotated primary sources: three visual and two written
 - 5-page analytical essay that argues how the group used space to enact an alternative model of health, care, community or bodily autonomy
 - 2-page speculative writing piece that draws on the case study to imagine a contemporary health space or spatial strategy for the TriCo campus

Sites of Health Activism: Reading Grassroots Design & Spatial Strategies

- Milestones:
 - Weeks 10–12: In-class primary source workshop (student-led),
 - Monday, December 7: Written deliverable due
 - Week 14: Short student presentations

FIELD TRIPS



Pennsylvania Hospital Museum, Philadelphia, PA

Tentative dates:

Tuesday, September 15, 3-4pm (2pm departure, 5pm return)

Thursday, October 8

Friday, October 9



Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians, Philadelphia, PA
Tentative date: Friday, November 6



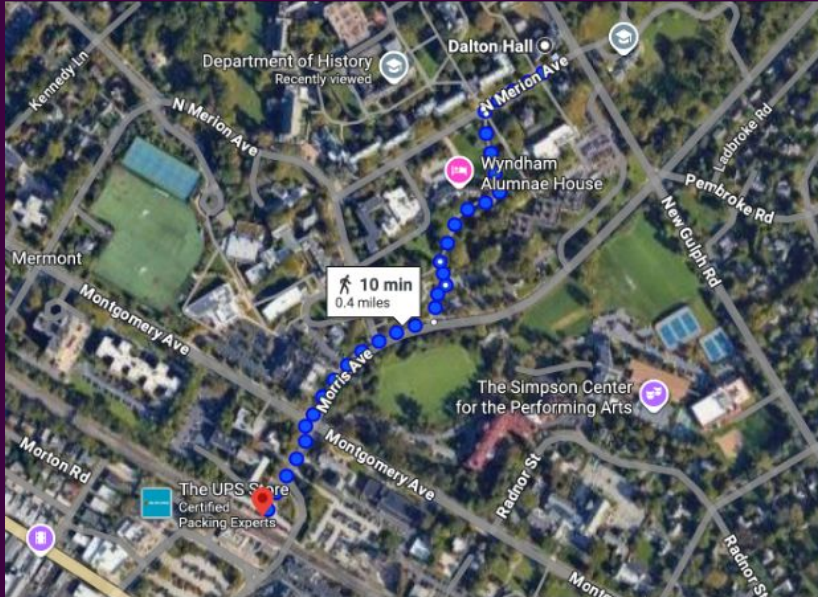
Getting to Philly

SEPTA

- Bryn Mawr students: Pick up your SEPTA Upass from the Residential and Engagement Office (Campus Center, 2nd floor): Monday, 1-2pm, Tuesday 10am-noon, Friday 10am-noon
- Haverford students: Free SEPTA Independence Pass (1-day only)

Vans

- Likely need one more student to become van certified (8 people per van)





Field trip reminders

- Wear comfortable shoes (not a time to break in a new pair of shoes!)
- Wear comfortable clothing, bring layers, and any accessories (sunglasses, hats) that might make being outdoors more comfortable
- Bring water & snacks
- Bring a notebook or notetaking device! Please do not record our guides
- Be considerate and engaged with tour guides and stakeholders. Ask questions! And remember, these folks are just providing one perspective on a particular history. We can expand on those perspectives in class together.



CLASS VALUES

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Access Services. **Students can email accessservices@brynmawr.edu to make an appointment with the Access Services office to begin this confidential process.** Once registered, **students should schedule an appointment with me, the instructor, as early in the semester as possible to share the verification form and make appropriate arrangements.** Please note that accommodations for disabilities are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

Any student who has a disability-related need to tape record this class must first speak with the Access Services office and to me, the instructor. Because of laws within the State of Pennsylvania, class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website.

Rooted in feminist disability studies, this course not only asks how built environments have produced accessibility barriers for people with diverse ways of moving, sensing, thinking, and communicating, but also how disabled and neurodivergent communities offer other ways of knowing and other approaches to designing sensuous and affirmative environments. To this end, we will think of our classroom itself as a design project, and work iteratively to reconfigure and interact with the space in ways that reflect the values of students and our collective class.



Finnegan Shannon, *Do you want us here or not* (2018–present)

OTHER LOGISTICS

Student Drop-in Hours:

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1-2pm, Old Library 220
Or by appointment (via Zoom)

Contact information:

moverholt@byynmawr.edu
(865) 414-7445

*Phone number is for contacting me on field trips, otherwise, my preferred method of communication is in person or via email.



Cyrée Jarelle Johnson (he/they)

- “Autistic Heaven,” published in SLINGSHOT (2019)
- “SLINGSHOT begins with the author ensconced in the menacing isolation of the pastoral, but once the work migrates to the City, monstrum grows form and fangs. In these messy, horny, desperate poems spun from dream logic, Cyrée Jarelle Johnson considers the consequences of black sexual and gender deviance, as well as the emotional burden of being forced to the rim of society, then punished for what keeps you alive.”
- *Content warning: non-graphic references to violence and death*

Autistic Heaven has a room for every autistic and rooms for many autistics to ramble, wander wonder aloud at a musing that would bore those left on their earth, those who sent us through the gaps in creation. A bowl of earplugs by each door, reliable headphones that don't pinch the cartilage. There shouldn't be so many children here, but when the rest arrive, we sit on the floor until they're cried out, and the bruises they arrived with dry up. They take a deep breath and learn to play the inside of a washing machine, xylophone reinvented like voila! because what would you do without us? Anyways, the new thing we send down sounds like a bell and a drum dinging in circles in the hands of the savant band. You're welcome. Here we go, pushing it through the veil in the brain of a recycled soul. Another little one stacks boxes in boxes on boxes and make her own tower, we have a buttered spaghetti party in the tower. I tell her no one can ever kill her again. She is the genius the world requires to continue. It was their loss.

Cyrée Jarelle Johnson
“Autistic Heaven,” 2019