



[Reclaiming Land Pt. II: Exquisite Properties](#): Learning From the Game

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The event *Reclaiming Land Pt. II: Exquisite Properties*, presented on the 24th of September 2020, was a workshop led by Architecture Division faculty Janette Kim. The seminar centered on several questions about property in general: how does it function in different scenarios? How do properties shape our thinking about society? The workshop invited scholars and practitioners to interact with students through a game. The title "Exquisite Properties" referred to the game "The Exquisite Corpse," a Surrealist parlor game wherein participants would attempt to collage sequences of words or images into a whole. The participants in "Exquisite Properties" collaborated to create artworks, much like the Surrealists before them.

The rules for this "exquisite" parlor game gave participants one of two kinds of roles: strategists and designers. The strategists were mainly faculty members and guest speakers, while students worked as the designers, following the strategists' lead. The strategists began by selecting two themes from a diagram in the game's playbook. The playbook's themes covered a diverse range of topics, such as economy, equity, sociability, and risk. These themes were also associated with the three categories: the Collective vs. the Individual, Temporality, and Resources and Labor.

Our group's strategists were Adam Marcus, CCA Architecture faculty, and Eric W. Rogers, a Ph.D. student from Cambridge University. They chose the themes space and environment. We discussed the many forms of crisis present due to the ongoing pandemic and how that led to a significant increase in abandoned office spaces because people are working from home. These conditions presented an opportunity to turn the vacant office spaces into temporary housing for people who have lost their

homes or people who want to continue living in or move into an urban area. However, when living in the heart of a city, people have a hard time connecting with the wilderness—something many are continuing to yearn for as the pandemic endures. The urban green space that we proposed would create a collective social space that encourages everyone in the city to enjoy it, not just some of a certain economic class. Everyone has the right to access a public facility, which is why we proposed to introduce nature into the city by connecting each building to an urban green space.

As a designer in the workshop, I partnered with two other students—Geetika from CCA and Brenton from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Once we received the strategists' directions, we consolidated our ideas to create digital 3D models to present our connection between abandoned urban office spaces and green space. The process was quite fun because there were no limitations to the design parameters, meaning we chose to make complete renderings in three minutes.

Even several months later, during the winter break, I have been thinking about how collectivity and individuality enter our daily lives. While the two seem entirely opposed, there are at times blurry zones that combine the two. Because of Covid-19, we navigate space trying to separate ourselves from others to limit Covid-19's spread, but maybe it is hard because you might live with family or friends. Coming to terms with the idea of property through games helps people understand that property is often bound in questions of access and social justice. Property ownership shapes the spatial qualities of the collective and individual through its very design. This workshop reshaped my idea of what properties are and could influence my own future practice as an architect or a designer. Under limited rules, we can design our space in creative ways.

Reclaiming Land Pt. II: Exquisite Properties was organized by the CCA Architecture Division and part of the Architecture Lecture Series for Fall 2020, and presented by CCA's Urban Works Agency research lab.

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