

*“The sacredness and power
of the washroom is that
it is a privileged site of bodily cleanliness,
and conversely, it is necessarily
a site of dirt and the unclean body.”*

Helen Molesworth

SHIT ARCHITECTURE

As some of the most common and least considered spaces, lavatories present fertile ground for both architectural analysis and development. While we all visit daily, in nearly every case, the restroom is experienced as a detour, not a destination. Our sanitation systems are foundational to healthy, livable urban environments. But, as a rule, the bathroom architectures and objects which comprise these infrastructures are forgotten - out of sight and out of mind.

Public restrooms are infrastructure as much as architecture, and, as architecture, they're often mundane, shaped by the realities of inherited spaces, limited budgets, standardized designs, and ingrained cultural conventions. As the cliché goes, bathrooms are frequently drawn up by those lowest on the design food chain, and resultant spaces can seem like afterthoughts, wholly determined by plumbing, building, and legal codes' dicta. Generic templates, slotted into place, engender familiar choreographies of ritual abjection and ablution.¹ These spaces manifest as standardized continuations of the plumbing systems they enable. However, at the same time, the toilet is often the only place in a building designed to be directly touched, intimately occupied by the user, hooking them up to hidden systems of the clean and the obscene.

Simultaneously “emblems of civility and containers of social threat,” in contemporary society, public restrooms are more regulated than almost any other typology. These places uphold and enforce society's “cherished classifications;”² they are spaces of discipline, not only through segregation, surveillance, and policing, but equally through the systems of social discipline which users have internalized.³ Far from being standardized pieces of technology, bathrooms are culturally and historically specific, reflecting the normative politics of their contexts. From the colonial period to today, the idea that certain groups of people are dirty or “excrementally uncontrolled” has been used to denigrate and exclude.⁴ Gender, race, class, religion, and ability all factor in. From the introduction of gendered restrooms, to the elimination of racially segregated bathrooms to the Americans with Disabilities Act to the ongoing campaign for gender-inclusive lavatories, public restrooms have long been at the head of civil rights movements. The bathroom's issues are society's issues.

Cavanagh, 21 1
Douglas 2
Penner, 27 3
Ingليس, 208-9 4

From segregated value signaling to intimate ergonomics to the sometimes violent enforcement of racial, sexual, and gender policing, both the environments and behaviors of bathrooms carry heavy symbolic loads, reflecting ideas of purity and pollution, sacred and profane.

*“The spread of public conveniences
in the 19th century solidified
the codes of gender segregation
which govern our behavior today.”*

Paul Preciado

INTRO

This study will seek to interrogate both the systems of flowing resources (energy, water, people, power) and the lived realities of individual experiences shaped by public toilets. Due to the nature of interactions with the typology, interiors are of primary interest, but exterior forms will be noted, particularly for how they signal values and norms, direct behaviors, and (dis)allow various forms of access and use. In many ways, toilet architecture is a quintessential architecture: it facilitates the fulfillment of basic human needs; it is often mundane, systematized, or simply poorly executed; and yet it is, occasionally, sublime.

Public restrooms tend to reveal the realities that other architectures hide. In these spaces, budget shortfalls reveal themselves, lapses in maintenance and care are most conspicuous, and, more than in any other public space, we are faced immediately with the organic realities of ourselves and others. Indeed, bathrooms and shit dissolve the delusive boundaries between pure and impure, subject and object, inside and outside.⁵ Within architecture, the traditionally assumed and still overwhelmingly present divisions of public/private and inside/outside are often shored up by masculine/feminine and nature/culture binaries.⁶ In the bathroom, we see that all of these dualities are suspect, and ripe for, perhaps not dissolution, but reinterpretation. In contrast to (or maybe more accurately: in reaction to) both the fluidity of the actions they conceal and the ranging realities of sex and gender embodiments are the rigid, architecturally imposed gender divisions common to lavatories. As public toilets are the primary architectural means through which gender is disciplined, they are also ideal sites for deconstructing these divides and fostering cultural change.

“For those who don’t fit, the bathroom represents a limit to their ability to inhabit the public sphere.”

Jack Halberstam

METHODS

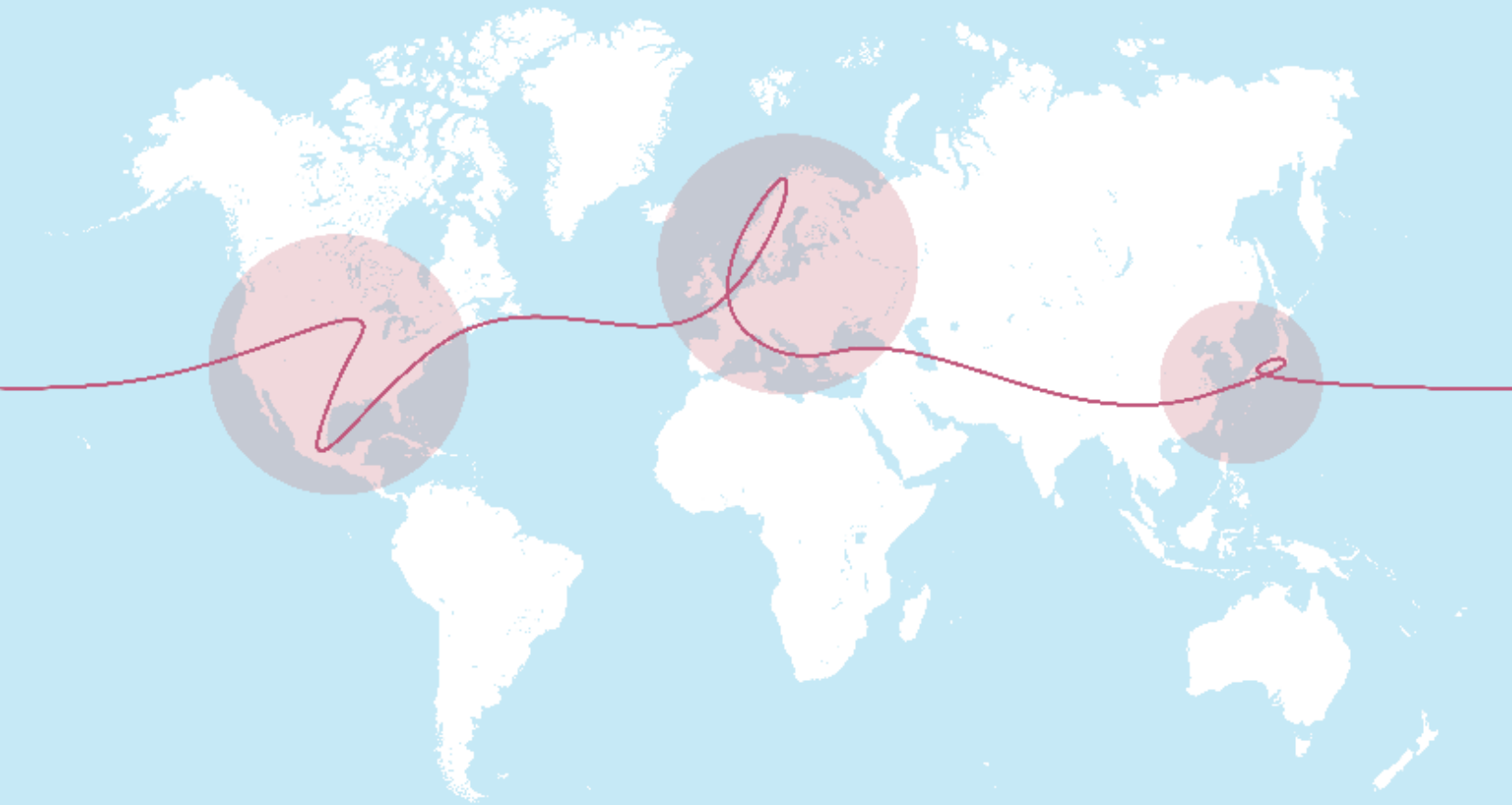
LOCATE My experience has rendered me primarily familiar with the gender-segregated designs typical of the US restroom. This project grants the opportunity to expand horizons, discovering and learning from the various forms and practices typical of other regions and cultures. While a number of significant sites have been outlined in advance, it will also be important to locate, explore, and document unanticipated lavatory locations. In many ways, studies of conventional public and pseudo-public restrooms are likely to reveal much more than similar looks at their painstakingly designed architectural counterparts.

APPROACH Anticipating questions and concerns about any unusual occupation of sensitive public spaces, I will prepare “courtesy cards” briefly explaining my status, project, and actions in both English and the native languages of all locations to be visited. Photographs, audio recordings, and dimensioned sketches will form a foundation for analysis and comparison, and these observations will have to be made with deference and respect to occupants. If I perceive that I’m causing significant discomfort or preventing people from using facilities, I’ll make myself scarce and return at a later time.

OBSERVE	CONTEXT	location, orientation, surroundings, grain and scale
	MOVEMENT	connectivity, circulation, traffic flows, queues
	FORM	curves, horizontality, verticality, symmetry
	SOUND	record a standard tone, ambient noise, and fixture volumes
	SMELL	ventilation, fresh air
	TOUCH	material hardness, reflectivity, temperature, transparency
	SIGHT	brightness, qualities of light, signage
	PRIVACY	division, gaps, partitions, separation from public, thresholds
	MAINTENANCE	provision of hygiene products, cleanliness, wear, perceptible decay, age, graffiti
	OCCUPATION	program, activities, occupancy, demographics
	ACCESS	cost, ambulatory capacities, body sizes and forms, physical appearance, gender, sight, hearing

QUESTION What forces shape the form and use of each lavatory space?
What is the culture of space in each location?
How are these places used as cultural identifiers?
How are different categories and flows organized and negotiated?
Where are the thresholds, boundaries, and barriers?
How do the restrooms engage with and define public and private spheres?
What are the roles of architecture, landscape, urban design, and planning at each location?

RECOMPOSE Decompose scenes into elements to escape the aesthetics of the bathroom. Analyze, weigh, and compare the forces that generate forms and behaviors. Identify effective features, and combine these to create new conditions. Develop a flexible system of equitable, pleasurable public restroom design.



ROUTE

Completeness is an unrealistic goal for this investigation. As such, I will focus on “western” water-driven sanitation systems and their many restroom inlets. Both a benefit and a challenge to this study is the prevalence of public facilities in global cities and developed regions - there’s plenty to study, but it’s difficult to determine which locations are worthy of inquiry. I propose that any facility under regular use fits the criteria, and the more people who use it, the better. So I’ll focus primarily on popular travel locations with many public facilities, though notably restroom provisions are not always included among these.

The aim of the methods implemented will be to catalog and analyze a diversity of both major and minor restroom architecture. In many cities in the US and Europe, there’s been much publicity regarding the lack of truly public toilet facilities, while other areas (notably Norway’s highways and Japan’s urban centers) have made significant investments into landmark restroom pavilions which themselves become attractions.

The route begins in the US, and travels next to England and France, where modern public bathroom was developed beginning around the mid-nineteenth century. Between London and Paris, a road trip to many of Norway’s architect-designed scenic rest stops will provide a counterpoint to those more historical and urban investigations. And, after stopping in Italy for visits to several ancient facilities, the route continues East to Istanbul, then Shanghai and Japan, where the public conveniences in city parks will be a focus. While a number of sites are specified, I will also document other lavatorial spaces encountered along journeys between these places. By experiencing, documenting, and considering a variety of spaces within the typology, both broad and specific understandings of the forces shaping restrooms can be developed. Because social and cultural forces are so significant here, an understanding of variations in these will need to be integrated into any comprehensive analysis.

NORTH AMERICA



San Francisco, CA

Minneapolis, MN

New York, NY

Austin, TX

Mexico City, MX

SAN FRANCISCO

- Smithgroup Toilets
- Pit Stop Toilets
- Comstock Saloon

MINNEAPOLIS

- MSP Airport Restrooms
- Varsity Theater
- St. Anthony Park Elementary

AUSTIN

- Portland Loos
- Trail Restroom
- Ladybird Loo

MEXICO CITY

- Ecatepec de Morelos Kiosks
- Public Restrooms

NEW YORK

- Beit Simchat Torah
- Columbia University
- Automatic Public Toilets
- Bryant Park



SMITHGROUP TOILETS



PIT STOP



COMSTOCK SALOON



ST. ANTHONY PARK



VARSITY THEATER



MSP AIRPORT



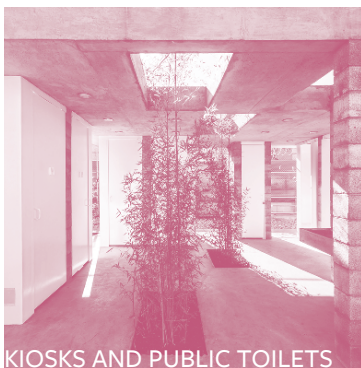
PORTLAND LOO



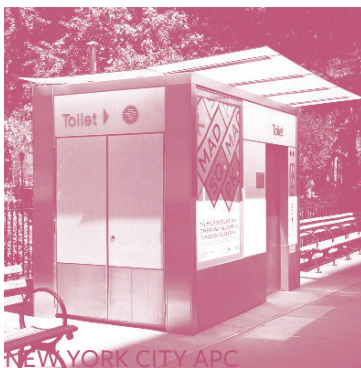
TRAIL RESTROOM



LADYBIRD LOO



KIOSKS AND PUBLIC TOILETS



NEW YORK CITY APC



BEIT SIMCHAT TORAH

EUROPE



Tromsø, NO
 Bergen, NO
 Oslo, NO
 London, UK
 Amsterdam, NL
 Bergen op Zoom, NL
 Bruges, BD
 Paris, FR
 Rome, IT
 Istanbul, TR

LONDON

- Cambridge Circus Pop Up Toilet
- Westbourne Grove Toilets
- Roca London Gallery
- Llyods of London Pods
- Barbican Centre Toilets
- South End Greene
- Wembley Public WC
- Cleve Park School
- Kent, Gravesend Public Toilet

NORWAY

- Steinsdalsfosse, Gulldassen
- Skjervsfossen, Mefjordvær
- Hereiane, Refsnesstranda
- Borestranda Hellåga
- Flotane, Jektvik fergekai
- Oscarshaug, Ureddplassen
- Flydalsjuvet, Akkarvikodden
- Linge Ferjekai, Eggum
- Gudbrandsjuvet, Torvdalshalsen
- Farstadstranda, Bukkekjerka
- Allmannajuvet, Tungeneset
- Ostasteidn, Gaularfjellet Utsikten

AMSTERDAM

- Curved Public Urinals
- Pop-up Toilet
- Kiosk Ravelijn
- Safety Pavilion

PARIS

- Pompidou Center
- APCs
- Maison de Verre
- Villa Savoye

ROME

- Senate Toilets
- Public Toilets
- Ostia Antica

ISTANBUL

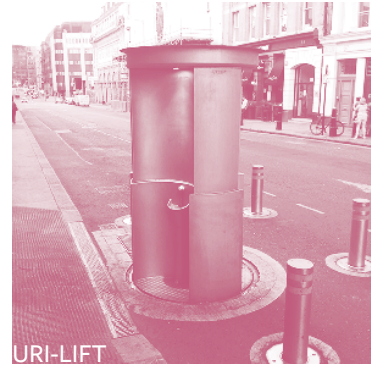
- Kadikoy Park
- Public Toilets



SOUTH END GREEN



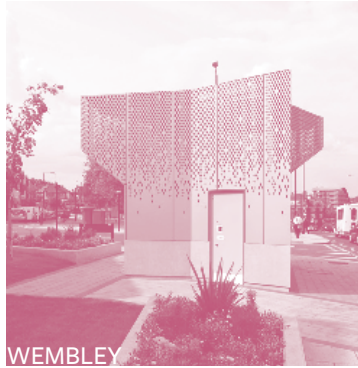
BARBICAN THEATER



URI-LIFT



WESTBOURNE GROVE



WEMBLEY



ROCA GALLERY



GRAVESEND



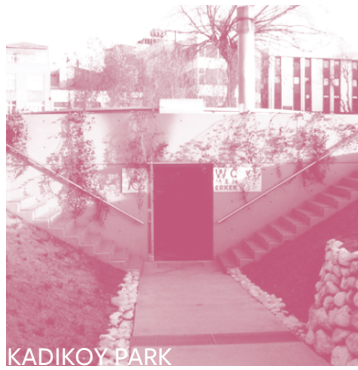
VILLA SAVOYE



MAISON DE VERRE



THE CURVE



KADIKOY PARK



OSTIA ANTICA



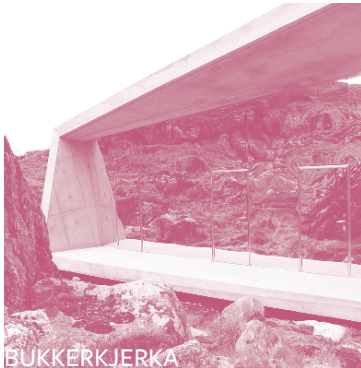
EGGUM



FARSTADSANDEN



FLYDALSJUVET



BUKKERKJERKA



OSTASTEIDN



OSCARSHAUG



TUNGANESSET



AKKARVIKODDEN



SKJERVSFOSSEN



JEKTVIK FERGEKAI



GULDASSEN



UREDPLASSEN

ASIA



SHANGHAI

- Gender Neutral Park Toilet
- Biggest Toilet on Wusheng Rd
- “Intelligent” Restroom
- Dong Shan Sanchakou Toilet

TOKYO

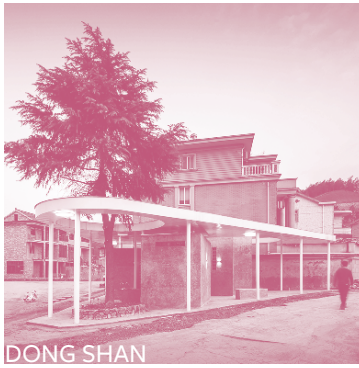
- Narita Airport Toto Gallery Restroom
- Jingu Dori Park Restroom
- Ebisu Park Restroom
- East Ebisu Park Restroom
- Origata Restroom
- Yoyogi Fukamachi Mini Park Restroom
- Nishihara Park Restroom
- Tokinokura Lavatories Shimodate
- Ichihara Train Station Restroom
- Isemachi Inverted S Toilet

HIROSHIMA

- Hiroshima Park Restrooms
- Ibukijima House of Toilet
- Hut with Arc Wall



GENDER NEUTRAL PARK WC



DONG SHAN



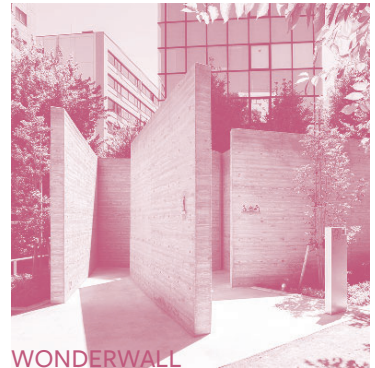
NARITA AIRPORT



TRANSPARENT TOILET



EBISU PARK



WONDERWALL



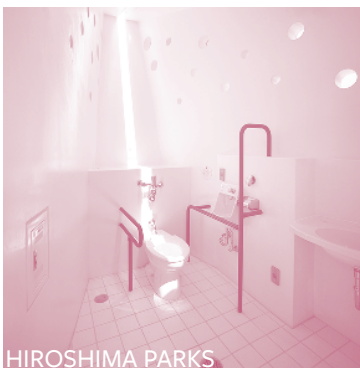
ORIGATA TOILET



SHIMODATE



ICHIHARA



HIROSHIMA PARKS

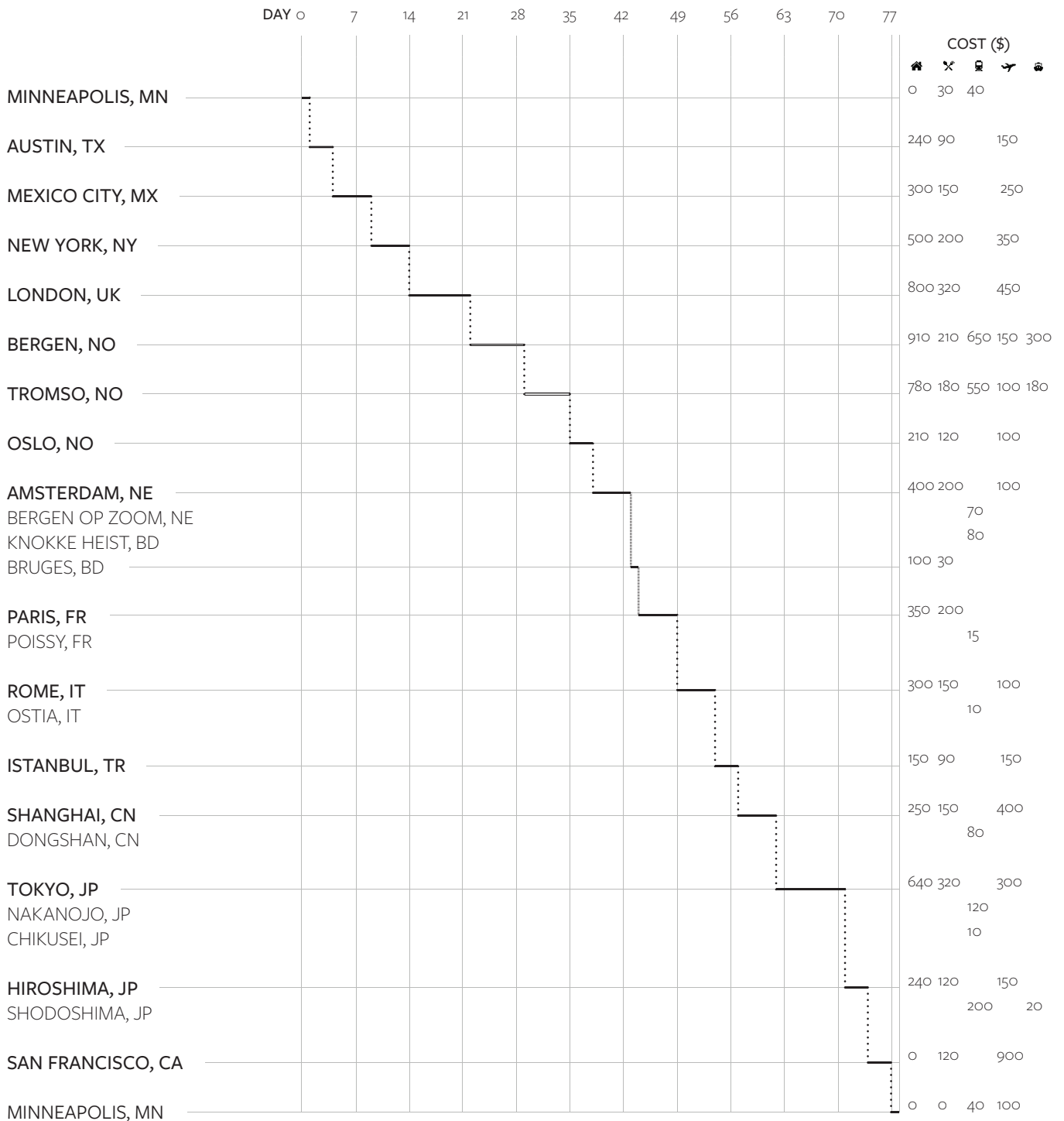


HIROSHIMA PARKS



HOUSE OF TOILET

SCHEDULE + BUDGET



TOTAL \$14,965

This schedule is designed to be flexible, and can shift to accommodate global circumstances as well as relevant installations and exhibitions which could feed the investigation. If the above trip runs under budget, there may be an opportunity to integrate a subsequent visit to Australia and New Zealand - this is presently omitted due to cost constraints but could be scheduled for Winter.

*“Uniting the most basic of human needs -
the need to urinate and defecate -
with the most elevated of our faculties -
the ability to appreciate beauty”*

Barbara Penner

PRODUCTS

ANALYSIS

Global precedents provide both specific and generalizable insights key to understanding and developing this typology. These spaces are rarely well-documented, so it will be vital to spend sufficient time experiencing, observing, and recording their features. There are not always obvious explanations as to why lavatories look and operate in the ways they do. Identifying the forces shaping their production and dissemination is fundamental.

I'll catalog observations of each facility visited, placing these within historical context and classifying their characteristics. Rather than attributing success or failure to sites, value judgments will be reserved for particular aspects of each space through an evolving system of comparative metrics. Travel time between sites will be dedicated in part to analyzing, collating, and assessing observations made on site. On a basic level, the questions “How?” and “Why?” will be applied rigorously to both individual locations and observed trends and categories. More pointed questions of relevance include:

“How successful is architecture at developing spaces for specific users? What subjects are considered to be too complex for architectural design and are therefore rejected as excessive or unnecessary to its aims?”⁷

“What different modalities of the human come to light if we do not take “the liberal humanist figure of man as the master-subject but focus on how humanity has been imagined and lived by those excluded from this domain?”⁸

“How are designs founded in cisheteronormative fantasies of home?”⁹

“How could gendered architectures prompt people to think about gender, sexed embodiment, desire, and our relationships to others in new and ethical ways?”¹⁰

Documentation and analysis of places visited will be posted to a dedicated project Instagram account. While some updates will be shared contemporaneously with visits, other images, provocations, and responses will be updated later in the journey and upon return.

FRAMEWORK

The natural outcome of the methodology proposed here will be to apply the lessons learned from firsthand experience to exploring, rethinking, and challenging the assumptions and incarnations of the typology. It will be important to consider what other options have been missed or have yet to exist in terms of configuration, function, and aesthetics of these spaces. After the trip, I'll assess the failures and successes of each individual restroom as architecture and infrastructure, collating and combining observations into a concise guide that proposes not one universal best practice but rather systems for developing solutions. This will frame approaches, experiences, and outcomes for a variety of users and settings with the goal of guiding the development of equitable, accessible, and enjoyable restroom spaces.

CRITIQUE

In addition to the above-described documentation and guidebook, I'll draw on experience gained to compose a critique of the public bathroom's lasting cultural significance, emphasizing the impacts of the 'normal' and standardized amid the complex realities of cultural and psychological milieus. I anticipate that this will be composed of two overlapping parts: a live or recorded presentation of travel findings and an essay with written and visual components. As in other aspects of this project, it will be vital here to address and connect the micro scale of individual occurrences and experiences with systems thinking and cross-disciplinary context.

Rawes, 77	7
Weheliye, 8	8
Cavanagh, 45	9
Cavanagh, 5	10

“We can consider the sanitized space as a comfort zone ... Comfort is very hard to notice when one experiences it.”

Sarah Ahmed

REFERENCES

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UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

Fall 2019

ARCH 200A	Introduction to Architecture Studio 1	5.0	S
ARCH 200C	Representational Practice in Architectural Design	3.0	A+
ARCH 207A	Architecture Lectures Colloquium	1.0	S
ARCH 242	Sustainability Colloquium	1.0	S
ARCH 270	History of Modern Architecture	3.0	A+
LDARCH 253	Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning Colloquium	1.0	S

Spring 2020

ARCH 200B	Introduction to Architecture Studio 2	5.0	A
ARCH 209	Special Topics in Architectural Design	2.0	A
ARCH 230	Advanced Architectural Design Theory and Criticism	3.0	A
ARCH 259	Special Topics in Building Structures	3.0	A
ARCH 279	Special Topics in the History of Architecture	3.0	A

Summer 2020

Summer 2020 Graduate Remote Instruction Innovation Fellows Program

Fall 2020

ARCH 201	Architecture & Urbanism Design Studio	5.0	B+
ARCH 207B	Architecture Research Colloquium	1.0	S
ARCH 260	Introduction to Construction, Graduate Level	3.0	A
ARCH 298	Special Group Study	1.0	A
LDARCH 375	Methods of Teaching in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning	2.0	S
ARCH 200C	Representational Practice in Architectural Design	GSI	

Spring 2021

ARCH 201	Architecture & Urbanism Design Studio	5.0	
ARCH 207D	Culture of Practice	3.0	
ARCH 240	Advanced Study of Energy and Environment	3.0	
LDARCH 277	Resilient Urban Development	3.0	
ARCH 209/200D	Representational Practice in Architectural Design II	GSI	

GPA: 3.89