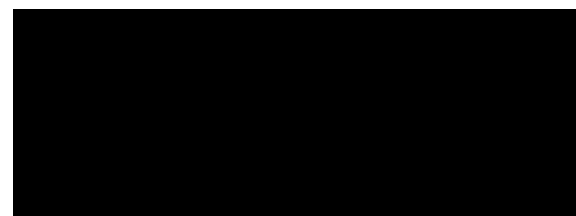
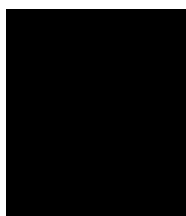
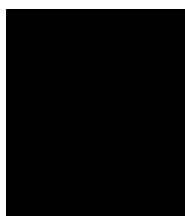




Synchronize

By Bianca Weeko Martin

YYZ Artists' Outlet



Ella Gonzales uses Computer Aided Drawing (CAD) to compose the views in her work, a prismatic meeting of openings and egress. Expanding on CAD, which succeeds in high precision, we might explore the framework of Building Information Modeling (BIM): a holistic approach to architecture that includes real-time visualization and collaboration across teams.

My one stint with BIM software was during an internship in New York City, when I worked for the architect Robert A.M. Stern and had to learn Autodesk Revit. I was twenty-two and living in Bushwick with three roommates (all artists, one or two mongrel-like), taking the L Train every morning to cross the East River via the darkness of the underground—surfacing in a partially enclosed cubicle overlooking Park Avenue. We designed university campuses, residences, and libraries in the neoclassical style, whose ornament and excess I soon came to understand as symbolic of America's Tacky-Elite.

What I remember most about Revit is clicking the button that said *Synchronize*. The internet definition: "the process of exchanging data between local copies of a project file to ensure that all users have access to the most recent changes." It is essentially a feature that lets multiple architects, on multiple computers, work on a single project with minimal discrepancy. Synchronization allows for the mistranslations to be resolved, for the migrating wall to be set back in alignment with a pre-defined center.

—As if each collaborator was looking into the same architecture through a window of their own.

A tangent: Synchronicity. As opposed (but somewhat related) to synchronization, Synchronicity is a term used by Carl Jung to describe coincidences that are related by meaningfulness rather than cause and effect.¹ It's something that helped me during a particular period of deep sadness a few years back, when my friend Samra, MD recommended the book *The Power of Coincidence*. It was then that I began to harness Synchronicity as a tool of discernment: allowing meaningful coincidence, dreams and inner images to reveal pathways; not based on "maxims but on the maximum series of messages that point to a particular path."² The author writes:

"In Synchronicity, the link is forged by meaningfulness, not by linear reaction of cause to effect. Since the Self—the larger life in us and in the universe that transcends ego and separateness—is not bound by linear time, it can use another model for succession."³

I ask: What are the conditions for a coincidence to take form?

—Ella's images of archetypal space, painted in memory-rich colour, might offer potential for synchronization and synchronicity across a broader spectrum of spaces.

—Unlike the neoclassical particularities espoused at my New York City internship, they possess a quality that allows the rooms to be inherited by more than just a small few.

She tells me that the pleated, expansive painting in *A Room's Proportion* is a reference to curtain wall covers within the Saudi Arabian basements that her mother and father once danced in. (Karaoke was not permitted.) She shows me archival photographs of family parties, talent shows, stoic Filipino

accountants in rows of chairs. (Her dad is an accountant, a baker, a toastmaster, etc.)

Of basements, architectural historian Alberto Pérez-Gómez muses: "chthonic footings kindred with shadows, can bestow the vertical intimacy of dwelling through their dark nature."⁴ I think of the unfinished basements of my teenage years in Scarborough, the exposed pink batt insulation with no cover or gypsum, looking on at uncouth sleepovers and endless rounds of Super Mario Smash Brothers Brawl. The curtains in Ella's family photographs, however, do not conceal, as much as they imbue familiarity, a tender touch, continuity across disparate spaces that hold to the same narrative arc.

—There is Synchronicity in our young friendship. This is confirmed during a studio visit as I recount the unlikely mutual friends between us that I encountered at a recent basement party over the holidays and remember that we are both *cancers with leo fathers*. (My dad has ordered and picked up home baked Sans rival cake⁵ from his house in Pickering.)

But there is also synchronization, I think, when I see how we move through our work: upward, with drive and autonomously, but through different streams. Periodically, we hit *Synchronize*, our paths seem to meet. Perhaps part of this is due to having first met when we did—later in life, more spiritually developed—we have the space to look back. To when our lives weren't directly enmeshed. Our friendship might never be inherently unconditional, but what binds it together feels uncanny, quasi-mythical. Ella is a peer, a confidante, and a source of love.

Over lunch in the winter, we reflect on our shared experience of growing up in the suburbs east of Toronto. Any time I am back in Scarborough, I say, I am overcome with a feeling of stasis, as if this place would tolerate me regardless of what I am doing or have become. Is unconditional love real? I think there are always some conditions, Ella says, I agree. We talk about the vague distance that grows between us and the people where we're "from." How we see no paths other than the ones we are on, in, knee-deep, no creaking Victorian house to rest in after an opening on the West End, as if motivation came in the shape of survival (though its context might seem unlikely to some.) Time moves differently there; sleep takes a deeper hold. There is a feeling of deadness in the suburbs, too.

At her Bloordale studio, Ella shows me the fabric panels ("*piña-ish*"⁶) she is painting a week before the exhibition opening. It's my first time seeing her work at this scale in person, and I'm made more viscerally aware of the ways that Ella's marks interact with the natural properties of material. There's an element of chance in these interactions. This particular variation presents a hachure of ghost-like thumbprints, which belies a layer of paper holding traces of guides and swatches beneath. The paper, which you will not see at the final exhibition⁷, exudes a diligence and careful rhythm of mark-making I find very on brand; Ella is On Point.

Ella reads me a definition she found to explain Compression: "pushing against resistance." There is an Optimism here, where many others might see reduction, smallness, someone retreating into themselves. Just as one might see emptiness in a vast space of potential. To fold is to move

with resourcefulness, to make a thing compact and fit and, therefore, able to move. (To fold is art; Ella worked retail for many years at malls in Scarborough and Pickering, where retail associates can be said to be specially trained knowledge-bearers of the craft of folding.) Just as projective drawing "need not be a reductive device, a tool of prosaic substitution,"⁸ as Alberto Perez-Gomez writes, but rather representing architectural space as the time of an event:

"The changing relationships between the intentions of architectural drawings and the built objects they describe hold important lessons for architects who wish to exercise ethically the personal imagination and construe a better, richer place for human dwelling."⁹

(On the horizon of this change, I can't help but think of the *asynchronicity* that lies equally inevitable, dormant. As architectural designer Jeffrey So writes. in working towards synchronicity, we should remind ourselves to remain flexible, give ourselves more time and grace to act with intention, and communicate openly with others instead of relying on technological filters to do the same.¹⁰)

In its final place at the gallery, the curtain hangs on the rear wall, resolute; it's a roughly 2:1 scale when considering the full width in relation to its folded counterpart. Sewn together, it's a film strip of rooms, colour swatches in time. On opening night, I am excited to find Ella with her work in the gallery space. The emptiness of the wooden floors is a humble and assertive gesture that gives way to the tender embraces of friends and strangers. I imagine the small celebrations and solitary meditations that will form the curtain's future foreground. The things that will dress its proportionality, scaffolding coincidence. Can one ever truly "read" a "plan" at scale? It's an honour to be able to bear witness to Synchronicity's unfolding.

ENDNOTES

1 Richo, David. *The Power of Coincidence: How Life Shows Us What We Need to Know*. (Boulder: Shambhala, 2007) 7.

2 Richo, 86.

3 Richo, 10.

4 Pérez-Gómez, Alberto. *An Alliterative Lexicon of Architectural Memories Volume 1*. (Montreal: Rightangle International, 2024) 40.

5 Sans rival is a Filipino cake made with layers of meringue, buttercream, and chopped nuts, quite hilariously named after the French word for "unrivaled."

6 Piña fabric is a traditional Philippine textile made from the fibers extracted from the leaves of the pineapple plant.

7 There is Opacity here, a concept developed by Édouard Glissant as a call for respecting difference and complexity without seeking to fully define or assimilate others. Am I let in to see the work at this stage due to shared community, prerequisite knowledge, or chance?

8 Pérez-Gómez, Alberto and Louise Pelletier. *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000) 6.

9 Pérez-Gómez, 8.

10 So, Jeffrey. *The social contract of asynchronicity: through Revit*. (Sent to me by email, 2024.)

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