The Jarvis Hotel & Apartments
“The more and more I learn about design the more and more I realize the presence of copy and paste, or how countless designers emulate someone else’s aesthetic rather than creating their own. I don’t want this to be confused as criticism, just a simple critique of the industry and a desire to avoid it.”
Abstract.

I plan to adaptively reuse the dilapidated and abandoned 16th Street Train Station in the soon to be gentrified Central Station area of West Oakland. The former train station will be a totally renovated into a hotel and apartment concept designed to engage a dialogue between travelers and the surrounding community. The Central Station area is one of Oakland’s oldest neighborhoods and historically one of its most diverse. By the early 20th century, it was home to Chinese, Portuguese, Italian, Irish, and Mexican immigrants, most of whom arrived by train, disembarking at the 16th Street Station. With my thesis work I would like to explore the idea of engaging this diverse community with bay area travelers in attempts to reinvent and authenticate the American travel experience.

I chose a project of this nature because of my fascination for how different the concept of travel is depending on where you are in the world. My experience outside the States has been one of welcoming micro communities, and fly by the seat of your pants experiences, and I think it all boils down to how different cultures view space. I’ve found that American culture tends to characterize space according to boundaries, usually with the attitude that the more square footage and distance from one another, the better. Some of the most memorable hours of my life spent in close quarters would tend to disagree about this.

Most of my travel memories within the States involve stuffy hotels with strict codes of etiquette, and quiet elevator rides to the thirty-something floor where a long hallway led to a room that looked like everyone else’s. I grew up in a neighborhood built around a giant, world famous five start hotel, and although I spent countless hours inside its magical interiors and walking around its breathtaking property, to this day it still feels stuffy and uninviting. For a long time the world of hospitality fell into the comfortable arms of uniformity, but with the boom of boutique hotels and more innovative hospitality strategies, I think it’s the perfect time to reinvent the American hospitality industry and open up the line of communication and interaction between the local and nonnative. I plan to do this by creating permanent residence apartments alongside hotel rooms in a mixed use development that will also include a marketplace, retail, restaurant and bar spaces.

I would like the overall design strategy to harness the sense of vibrancy and energy felt at the many hotels, neighborhoods, and markets I’ve visited throughout the world. I would ultimately like the design to evoke a sense of whimsy and humor through the continual use of carefully thought out graphic elements in order to elicit visual excitement and at times even perplexity; I should hope the entire experience would challenge our perception of design and space, but more importantly how they come together. I also plan to approach the project and my design work with an emphasis on local. I would like to incorporate sustainability first and foremost with the idea of people in the front of my mind. Whether it be local businesses, a local staff, local chefs, local artists...the list goes on, the people and their craft will be at the core of everything.
Perception is defined as the process of attaining awareness or understanding of the environment by organizing and interpreting sensory information.
“I know all of you would like to think of yourselves as artists. That’s why you’re here, no? For my sake I’d like you to forget everything you know. Art is about recognizing a piece of yourself in something else and finding a way to capture it. I suppose it will be my job to teach you a new way of seeing.”  

-Jacapo Santini, Italian photographer

In my own words, perception is the mind’s version of using the senses to reach a point of cognition. Perception is how our individual minds understand the world, meaning mine is different from yours which is different from the person sitting next to you and on and on. What is most interesting to me is that I’ve chosen a career path that is so utterly dependent on visual splendor, and its success so closely tied to the idea of perception.

Due to my background heavily rooted in the synergy of modern philosophies and digital arts, for my thesis I would like to play with and explore the concept of perception by testing the boundaries of form, function and intention. I would like to teeter on the edge of unexpected to create a built environment that challenges the average user’s idea of how something should look, feel, sound, smell, and taste. In other words I would like to challenge their sense of perception. I’m not talking about Alice in Wonderland or Willy Wonka, but a modern approach to design that utilizes bold, ironic, and playful graphics to excite the five sensory palettes and to relate back to the colorful and diverse neighborhood in which the project is set.
Precedent Study.
In 1840, a neoclassical railway station opened in central Milan’s Corso Como district. Porta Nuova operated the Milan-Monza route, the second-oldest railway in Italy, and was one of the city’s most beautiful buildings of the time. Building the station and its route was a crucial transportation advancement and one of the city’s first steps toward modern industrialism. Due to the steep increase of railway travel and the city’s need for a station that could accommodate much higher volumes of travelers, they launched a design competition in 1906 that later saw the construction of modern Milan’s grand Stazione Centrale. The station largely replaced Porta Nova at the time and eventually became obsolete.

After sitting virtually untouched for twenty years, hotelier Stefano Uglioni purchased it with a dream to build Italy’s first fashion hotel exclusively done by the in-house designers of a big name Italian fashion label. The project shares little in common with other fashion hotels. This venture is the first where the interiors are entirely conceived by the the label’s creative staff. Today, the exterior façade of Viale Monte Grappa 12 is a reminder of the station’s original grandeur. But inside, where once handkerchiefs were waved at lovers disappearing in the distance, a new world has been brought to life. True to the essence of the Moschino brand, the designers reinterpreted the building, adding 65 contemporary hotel rooms and junior suites inspired by a visionary and contemporary theme. Spread out across four floors, the rooms are sensuous visions of surreal diversity. Entering the Maison Moschino is like entering a new and fantastical world.

Maison Moschino is located in a vibrant and constantly evolving district near Corso Como and Corso Garibaldi in the heart of Milan, the Italian capital of fashion and business. Historically a manufacturing city, Milan is currently trying to transform itself into a global city defined by finance, fashion, and furniture. It attracts business travelers and leisure visitors alike who indulge in shopping, enjoy the city’s cultural and artistic heritage, attend sporting events, and visit the nearby lake district.

This project is an example of how a historic building, and a train station specifically, has been successfully renovated into a large scale hotel project. Users splendor in the idea of stepping inside a piece of history.
Precedent Study.
Adaptive Reuse:
Boutique Hotelier Turns London’s Bethnal Green Town Hall into Successful Hotel & Apartment Venture

It was the turn of the century and London was the world’s capital. The city’s Bethnal Green in the East End was a bustling and essential part of the great metropolis. Council members decided it was time to build a glorious new town hall for a well deserving, working-class Borough; one which symbolized its great aspirations. It was the ultimate statement of both pride and ambition for a neighborhood looking for betterment.

The finished building was opened in 1910 by Mayor Charles Fox. Inside, the Hall was sumptuously decorated, no expense spared. It continued as the Borough’s head-quarters until 1965, when changes in political structure forced most members to relocate to other parts of the city. By the 1980s only the finance and chief executive’s offices were housed there and in 1993 all executive powers moved to Mulberry Place.

There followed a period where the Town Hall was used mainly as a film location, but as the splendid public rooms were no longer in daily use, they gradually fell into disrepair. No organizations appeared to be interested in development plans that would maintain its original space and grandeur until 2007 when entrepreneur and hotelier Peng Loh saw the building and fell in love with it. He was determined to find a way of both restoring the building’s original glories and ensuring it a long-term, viable future. Town Hall Hotel & Apartments was born and the long journey of restoration and renewal begun.

Only fifteen minutes walk to London’s financial district and well-connected to the city and the West end by tube, train and road, Bethnal Green has long been a driving force of London’s less glamorous economic canons, much like Oakland is to San Francisco. One cannot exist without the other, yet the blue collar town always seems to receive less recognition for its contributions. Bethnal Green and Oakland mirror each other in being vibrant areas where the working-class rub shoulders with waves of new immigrants, where successful entrepreneurs open offices next to artists’ studios and fine-dining restaurants stand alongside traditional pubs. These things give the areas a special character and energy which make it one of the most exciting places to develop and adaptively reuse spaces.

Although the idea of incorporating permanent residence apartments inside a hotel may not be traditional, it has proven to be a wildly successful Venter for oLh and his investors.
Any historian would argue that West Oakland is historically one of northern California’s most important areas concerning American heritage and diversity. Due to its proximity to the waterfront located directly across from San Francisco, the area has always been an important intersection point of people, goods and ideas. The population initially began to grow after 1863 when the San Francisco-Oakland railroad connected central Oakland to the San Francisco bay ferries. In 1869, a wooden structure was built and West Oakland became the terminus of the transcontinental railroad, meaning it was the farthest point West the country’s major railroad lines would stop. Travelers disembarked here for one reason and it was to begin a new life.

The train station that stands today was designed by architect Jarvis Hunt who was a preeminent train station architect at that time and it opened in 1912. For many decades, thousands of travelers and immigrants stepped off trains and into West Oakland via the 16th Street Station. The area steadily grew because of it and a large number of shops and the small and medium-sized houses that were built to accommodate the large number of European Americans, African Americans, Portuguese, Irish, Mexicans, Japanese, and Chinese immigrants who settled in West Oakland.

World War I brought new job opportunities in the shipyards and with it an influx of workers and business growth. By 1930, West Oakland was a thriving, ethnically diverse neighborhood of about 280,000 residents and 7th Street was lined with jazz and blues clubs giving the area a notable and undeniable personality. West Oakland soon experienced a decline in the Depression in the late 1930s, and some residential areas became dilapidated. In the 1940s and 1950s, dozens of blocks were bulldozed and replaced with public housing projects that still stand today. The public housing projects inevitably brought in thousands of low income and struggling families over the next thirty years and eventually led to major rises in poverty and crime since its heyday. Despite the hardships the area has faced, West Oakland has always maintained its ethnic and cultural diversity over the years.

After the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989, the Cypress Freeway collapsed and West Oakland residents successfully resisted efforts to rebuild the freeway in the same location which had previously cut the neighborhood off from the rest of Oakland. With the area no longer partitioned off from the rest of the city, it started to undergo major changes. City planners and private developers have spent the last three years mapping out a plan to gentrify the area without losing the integrity of the community and it’s rich history.

It’s now beginning to be lined with condominiums and established businesses, and several of the surrounding warehouses now serve as artist studios. The former 7 acres of facilities for American Steel are now Big Art Studios, a unique facility for large-scale artists. Brown Sugar Kitchen, a local soul-food restaurant has drawn national acclaim. Mandela Transit Village, a mixed retail and residential development at the end of Mandela, surrounds the West Oakland BART station. The old Victorian houses are being refurbished, and new construction is springing up everywhere. In five years, the face of West Oakland will be changed for the better as we know it.

Most notable in relation to my thesis work, the new Central Station project has broken ground and will bring new condominiums to the area on either side of the 16th Street Station. Between now and 2013, Central Station will bring between 1,200 to 1,500 new homes, condos, townhomes, and apartments to a 29-acre area that had been in decline since the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Parks, community services, and shops will once again enliven this culturally rich neighborhood.
“It was the entry port into a new world, to a new beginning. In 1903 we came to Oakland, and we came through that magnificent station at 16th and wood.”

-Gwendolyn Black, Oakland resident
Preliminary Site Plan.
A market analysis done by WCV Commercial Properties, a real estate investment management firm based in the East Bay, suggests that the overwhelming residential and commercial growth and expansion of West Oakland is in large part a response to the exponential rise in cost of real estate in San Francisco proper, despite a mass economic recession. Businesses small and large are moving their offices and families out of San Francisco and into the East Bay simply because it has become too expensive to live in the city.

Demographic information detailed in my user profile in the following section points to the fact that West Oakland is reaping the benefits of the recession with desirable residents pouring in to save some cash on living expenses in a down economy. The area is up and coming, and just waiting to explode.

Growing up in a family involved in real estate development, I know that gentrification is much more complicated than ritzy people moving in and setting up a couple of Starbucks. Above all else developers look at density, and the potential for more and more people to pour in and help grow a new micro economy. Modern building strategies tend to use new mixed use developments to attract advantageous markets of educated and employed persons.

What is usually missing from the mix is an awareness of the existing community and its roots. The long time residents and their cultures are usually run over and thrown out when the people with money roll in. What is so modern and exciting about the soon to be developments in West Oakland is their respect for the history and heritage of the area, and their desire to maintain as much of it as possible.

It is important to note the prime location of West Oakland on the waterfront with major highway, Bay Bridge and BART access within a one mile radius of my site. West Oakland is centrally located and is the hub of a vibrant shopping and entertainment corridor that stretches from Gilman Street in Berkeley to Jack London Square on the Oakland waterfront. Art galleries and jazz clubs, boutiques and shopping centers, movies and symphony are all within easy reach.

The Jarvis Hotel & Apartments would act as an anchor for the community. The intent of the project is to be a central gathering place where locals and travelers alike go to shop, eat, drink, and play. I want the project to focus on the idea of local meaning that the restaurant will not be a big box company but set up by a local chef, and the art contracted for spaces will be done by the up and coming West Oakland artist community etc.
The 16th Street Station is one of three original train stations that served Oakland at the start of the 20th century. The building was designed by architect Jarvis Hunt, a big name in railroad depot architecture at that time, and it opened its doors in 1912. For many decades, the 16th Street Station was the major West Coast station of the Southern Pacific railroad as well as local commuter services such as the East Bay Electric Lines via elevated platforms. It was a companion for the Oakland Terminal, which was located two miles away on the Oakland Pier. The Terminal, also known as the "Mole", was demolished in 1960, leaving the 16th Street Station as the major Oakland rail hub.

The station is located in West Oakland at 16th and Wood Streets, the station buildings still largely intact, including the switchman’s tower and ironwork elevated platforms which, before the completion of the San Francisco – Oakland Bay Bridge, were utilized by commuter trains of Southern Pacific’s East Bay Electric Lines.

I selected this site not only for its exterior beauty and architectural integrity, but also because I fell in love with its story. The Sixteenth Street Station is an integral part of the areas immigrant population as it was the first place they saw when they stepped off the train in arrival of the new life they were to create. It stands today partitioned off from visitors by barbed wire fence, pigeons haunting its every corridor. It would be an honor and a major contribution to the neighborhood to bring it back to the life it once saw, a constant ebb and flow of people and ideas from around the world, much like the intent of Jarvis Hotel & Apartments.
Program.

The Jarvis Hotel & Apartments is an innovative and collaborative adaptive reuse of the abandoned train station at 16th and Wood Streets in West Oakland. The project’s overall goal is to create an environment where locals and travelers come together in an exciting and upscale yet unpretentious atmosphere. The benefit of having permanent residences inside a modern hospitality concept that includes a vast marketplace of vendors is that locals living and working in the Bay Area can be exposed to a diverse set of travelers from around the world, and the travelers are privy to seeing and experiencing a vernacular lifestyle a traditional hotel will never be able to offer. This new living concept is designed to open up a dialogue between two demographics of people that have often been purposely separated from one another in the past. The Jarvis is where innovative lifestyle meets comfortable refinement.

The Jarvis Hotel & Apartments will offer three different styles of apartment units and two different sizes of hotel rooms. The three different apartment units will include four executive suites, seven one bedrooms, and ten studios, ensuring the units appeal to a broad range of people within our target demographic. The two hotel room sizes will both offer the same amount of comfort and luxury, just differ in a few hundred square feet of space. I have forecasted approximately 14,000 square feet allocated for the twenty-one apartment units and approximately 10,500 square feet for the twenty-three hotel rooms. The total 24,500 square feet of living spaces will be proposed additional architecture as two additional floors on top of the main building (20,000 square feet), and one additional floor on top of the eastern baggage wing (4,500 square feet), or a new structure located to the southwest (parallel to) of the Main Hall. This is to be done with the consultation and advisement of an architect during a directed study.

The existing 20,138 square feet of existing space and additional 5,035 square feet of an outdoor track structure will be used for a central lobby space that serves as a gathering place and bar, two restaurant concepts, one fine dining and one more casual, an additional and different bar concept, a coffee bar and bakery, four small retail spaces, a limited amount of business conference rooms, a market co-op space for local farmers and vendors, and an open air garden that will provide much of the restaurants produce built on the existing outdoor track structure. The garden will be designed as an adaptable event space as well.
## Breakdown.

### Total Sq. Ft. of Existing Space

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Square Feet</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sq. Ft. of Existing Space (Building)</td>
<td>20,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sq. Ft. of Open Air Track Structure</td>
<td>5,035</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lobby + Lounge/Bar</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Bar</td>
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<td>Upscale Restaurant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casual Restaurant</td>
<td>2,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee Bar + Bakery</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference space</td>
<td>1,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Retail Spaces</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Co-Op Market</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20,138</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Garden + Outdoor Event Space</td>
<td>5,035</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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### Total Sq. Ft. of Proposed Add’l Arch.

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<td>Sq. Ft. of Perm. Residence Apartments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sq. Ft. of Hotel Rooms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive Suites - 4 units (1,000)</td>
<td>4,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>One Bedrooms - 7 units (714)</td>
<td>5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Studios - 10 units (500)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deluxe Hotel - 8 units (526)</td>
<td>4,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard Hotel - 15 units (400)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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### Total Sq. Footage of Designed Space

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(E) Floor Plans.

Baggage Wing

Main Hall

South Wing

88’-o”

55’-o”

(53’ x 11’)

116’-o”

88’-o”

72’-o”

24’-o”
Market Co-op
Lg. Restaurant
Conf. Space
Coffee + Bakery
Sm. Restaurant
Lobby + Bar
2nd Bar
Retail
Garden + Event
Proposal A.

24,500 sq. ft. of add’l architecture - 2 Fl. x 10,000 + 1 Fl. 4,500
new structure parallel to main hall (20,000)
2nd Fl. added to baggage wing (4,500)

southern elevation
Proposal B.

24,500 sq. ft. of add’l architecture - 2 Fl. x 10,000 + 1 Fl. 4,500
2nd + 3rd Fl. added to main hall (20,000)
2nd Fl. added to baggage wing (4,500)

southern elevation
According to the US Census Bureau, the average household income of West Oakland reigns in at $51,000 a year, $18,000 more than its neighboring central Oakland. Since 2000, West Oakland has seen a relative 21% rise in income, exactly the kind of economic demographic real estate developers dream about. The average age is 32 with a household of 2 persons or less, and West Oakland’s workforce has a 5:1 ratio of a white collar to blue collar workforce, which is drastically different from twenty years ago.

The information tells us that the area currently attracts a demographic of mostly singles and couples, ages 25-39, who make significantly more than the majority of Oakland residents. It’s been my experience that these residents don’t look at living in Oakland as a lesser option to San Francisco, but as an opportunity to explore a different side of the Bay Area at a more affordable price. This demographic of Oakland residents are hip and “keep up with the Jones’” so to speak. They’re constantly on the look out for new social experiences and tend to spend their disposable income after housing on restaurants, bars, concerts, and apparel. I would feel comfortable saying that young Oaklanders are to San Francisco what young Booklynites are to Manhattan, and I will treat the design for the project accordingly.

I would like to design the Sixteenth Street Hotel & Apartments to appeal to the existing market and age bracket, as the limited amount of square footage of my building doesn’t allow for large spaces to accommodate the needs of a family. Studios, one and two bedrooms, a handful of executive suites will appeal to this group of young(ish) urban professionals. I envision the hotel and its amenities attracting a similar demographic of travelers.

On a more psychological level, I envision the owners and guests of the The Jarvis to be what the Roger’s Model calls “innovators” and “early adopters.” These are the brave people that are the first to try something and are attracted to new experiences. These are the small groups of people that partake in social experiments and set trends for others to follow. Although the hotel and apartment concept is untraditional, innovators and early adopters will be excited at the prospect of being a part of a community that is constantly in transition and growth.
I find inspiration in all kinds of people, places, and things, but I find myself most awakened to new ideas when I’m stranded in a foreign place in an environment unfamiliar to me. I love to see how people on different corners of the globe go about daily life. The food they eat, the structures they inhabit, and the art they create is all a testament to the unique community they have carved out in the world. I absolutely believe traveling is the best way to be exposed to new ways of thinking and new ways of designing. I also believe being taken out of an environment familiar to you is a healthy and essential to growth as human being.
Chi, Tony Chi.

Some would describe Tony Chi as nothing short of a budding creative. He honed his talents at the High School of Art & Design, and later attended the Fashion Institute of Technology. Interior Design Magazine raves, “Finally, a designer with a sense of cool, understated glamour and an entrepreneur with no fear of taking risks.” In my own mind he is the visual mastermind in today’s hospitality industry. Chi believes in what he calls “invisible design,” the notion that much like good service, a hospitality space should elicit a positive response without necessarily making you aware of why. His ability to use powerful graphics and textures with just enough restraint as to not overwhelm the viewer continues to fascinate me, and peak the interest of major hotel chains and restauranteurs alike. More than any other designer, Tony Chi continues to put out successful designs that reflect popular culture and remind me of why design is so exciting.
A poet as much as he is a creative of every genre, French designer Philippe Starck may be the most famous and prolific designer on the market today. Known for his pursuit of the New Design style, he has his hand in every pot of the market. Whether it be architecture and interiors, furniture design, or mass consumer goods, Starck has put his recognizable stamp on every aspect of the market. DesignBoom.com says, “His desire for transgression and challenge, of aesthetic and cultural provocation made him change our lamps, door handles, kettles, vases, clocks, scooters, desks, toothbrushes, toilets... in short, he has changed our entire lives.” Inspired by his father who worked as an aircraft designer, Starck spent his childhood under his father’s drawing boards garnering the visionary ability to rethink shape, scale, color, texture, and form. For me, Philippe Starck defines the word designer in the fact that anything he touches improves ten fold, and in a way that is innovative and fresh to the industry.
Sources.


Interview, Conducted By Me


Interview, Conducted By Me
Zielinski, Jordan. Telephone interview. 28 June 2011. Interview with Dominium Development & Acquisitions associate Jordan Zielinski about real estate development and key market trends with mixed-use development.
Sustainable Design + Built Environment.

The New School of Munnar

Sustainability can be approached from many angles, but this course taught by green architect Craig Henritzy teaches the designer to first pull from the ancient and indigenous cultures of the environment in which you are planning. The semester project of our choice is built from the ground up in order to fully understand how green building systems are built and how they will interact with the environment. I chose to design and build a secondary school in India’s progressive state of Kerala in the hilltop town of Munnar. The design was inspired not only from India’s oldest tradition, Hinduism, but also from the lotus flower that is highly symbolic within the religion. The enormous reclaimed corrugated steel roof systems used for water catchment are designed with biomimicrous principles. The lotus leaf is infamously efficient in trapping water and repelling it away from the leaf with stagnant dirt particles in order to stay pristinely clean. The space plan is meant to get the students outside and in fresh air as much as possible, and the interiors are a modern interpretation influenced by the colorful spirit of India’s people, particularly the colors of the Hindu Holy Festival. The ultimate goal for this project was to achieve balance; a balance between the grassroots and modern world of sustainability, a balance between a traditional and innovative school setting, and a balance between the natural environment and the built environment.
the new school of munnar

Munnar | Kerala

- Elevation: 6,900 ft
- Size: 30 Sq Km
- Climate: Tropical
- Vegetation: Monsoon
- Average rainfall: 27”
- Temperature: 65°F
- Population: 80,000

the face of kerala

ECOF SYSTEMS

The white lotus is highly associated with Saraswati, goddess of learning and art.

PalmMama and the Lotus Effect

This project is a response to the BP’s palm oil operations in the region. The proposal seeks to adapt the form and structure of the lotus leaf and to explore the idea of a new material narrative.

material: reclaimed corrugated steel
La gente ha la stessa sensazione di essere in un luogo intimo, ma ha visto trasformazioni da bambini a doma, anche se soltanto attraverso uno schermo.

Walter Olenik
Spatial Design.

Cupcakes Couture

[Haute Couture; French for “high sewing” or “high dressmaking,” refers to the creation of exclusive, custom-fitting clothing. Haute couture is made to order for a specific customer, and is always made from high-quality, expensive material and sewn with extreme attention to detail, finished by the most experienced and capable seamstresses, often using time-consuming, hand-executed techniques.] Designer cupcakes have never been more popular, and much like haute couture, they are individually made by master craftsmen using only the best ingredients. A real life business venture by two young ladies, one a graduate of the Culinary Institute and an aspiring chef, the other a graduate of FIDM with a love for high fashion, this cupcake shop concept views these delicatete sweets in the same regard as high art. The owners of Cupcakes Couture decided to set up shop in Los Angeles’ posh Beverly Hills, and our task was to create a concept and design a cupcake shop that would be the perfect synergy of both worlds. I knew it wouldn’t be as obvious as it seemed, and the art of restraint would be the ultimate hurdle in front of a successful product. Using an image of a hand sewn dress I found in a Vogue archive as the inspiration for the entire project, sketching the dress over and over again to understand its shapes was the most crucial part of the design process. By using traditionally elegant and sophisticated French finishes contrasting against the modern dress inspired light fixture and glowing plastic dress forms, the end result was uniquely fresh and forward. Designed to look like the inside of a French-inspired couture house dressing room, the simplicity of the color palette allow the custom light fixture to take the stage. To this date, I am most proud of this project.
Cupcakes Couture

[ interior perspectives - dining space ]
Cupcakes Couture
[ materials ]
To re-invent Ella’s is to transport diners to another place. When we sit down to think of the best meals we’ve ever eaten, the one’s that’ve left us utterly euphoric, we think of the meals that make us feel like we’re participating in something wholly authentic. For me, a handful of these transcendent dining experiences happened while spending time in Provencial towns throughout the south of France. I saw and tasted an unparalleled attention to all things hand-crafted, food served out of small, family run kitchens off of chipped china and mismatched glassware acquired over a lifetime. Provence is known for its charming brasseries that serve dinner al fresco during the warm months. One dines outside in the breeze under a sky of lights hanging from ancient poplar trees. The ambiance is truly magical. Places like these don’t emulate character, they simply and seamlessly embody it. Creating depth and texture by allowing imperfections to take over, eleanor 500 will take a back to basics approach to design. It’s more about authenticity and a feeling of coming home to someone’s kitchen than glitz and glamour. We are attempting to create a place where pretentions are left at the door, and one enters a humble community you might find in any Provencial town. Guests will leave with happy stomachs, a little bit of whimsy in toe.

Materials Use.

Eleanor 500
space plan, eleanor 500

1/4" = 1'
[dining room/event space + bakery/fromagerie]
eleanor 500