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On a table sits a crystal mirror, wet with honey and papaya seeds, aglow with the blue light of an idle screen. The light trickles onto a hand, a face, a body softly swaying. The body dwells at the margins of a swarm. It moves, winding its way through the mass. Reaching the core, it merges with a tight enclave pulsing in resonance with a sonic bass. A finger smears honey onto lips. The honey is newly harvested from a colony of bees who, a few miles away, tend to their hive.

Party: that familiar form, practiced across lifespans, cultures, communities. The party eludes neat historical tracing. Surfacing in the ancient Roman festival of abundance, Saturnalia, the Victorian-era children's birthday party, the illegal raves of the 90's Detroit techno scene, the contemporary South African "after tears" party,¹ party presents not so much as a tradition but a human behavior that percolates wherever we do.

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The birthday party, the rave, the funeral gathering—each of them employs material, sensual, spatial, and temporal frameworks for social unfolding. In the party, materiality and mood are in constant conversation and flux, giving rise to living networks of socio-emotional feedback and resonance. In a 2013 zine on rave ethics, the authors urge all partygoers: "Take responsibility for the energy you bring in-to the space."² The life of a party begins with inhabitation. Guests must arrive and absorb the party's nascent atmosphere; once situated, they can begin to feed the space with their own inputs—weaving energetic topographies, shaping and reshaping its emotional enclaves. The party is a living, pulsing thing that can be tuned but not compelled—a seduction rooted in reciprocity. For although its host may influence the party's unfolding, the party is made buoyant and alive by its collective psyche.

sensual physics

The party is performative—intentional in the forms it seeks to create. With the guests as collaborators, the host can facilitate spaces of

1 T.H.S. Setsibia, "Mourning rituals and practices in contemporary South African townships: a phenomenological study," (PhD diss., University of Zululand, 2012).

2 Ian Good, Catherine Hilgers, Benjamin Inch, *Rave Ethics* (2013), 10.

distinctive mood: mournfulness, joy, liberation, togetherness. Things happen in a party. Parties *do* things. Revelations are reached, daily life is transcended, love is consecrated. In a recent essay, DJ Zhao of Berlin writes of the politically transformative capacities of participatory dance, which is often sited within the space of party: “Because it brings people together voluntarily, and creates ecstatic group consciousness via collective trance states, communal dancing reveals divisions, categories, inequalities, and laws to be arbitrary and meaningless, and is a convivial activity inherently corrosive of top-down authority.”³

In this essay, we make a case for party as an architectural endeavor; a potent medium for the cultivation and circulation of collective meaning-making, mediated through materiality and space. As with a work of architecture, a party intimately relates form and program. Landscape architecture, which understands time as an irreducible design element, is especially analogous to the time-based tectonics of party.

hourly silks

185 Every party begins with a materio-spatial growth medium specifically designed to suggest appropriate tone, behavioral manners, and emotional arc. In the American Catholic wedding, rows of chairs on either side of the aisle and the backdrop of a church inform the formality and polite restraint of guests. The banquet tables and dance floor of the subsequent reception introduce a new set of social rules and dynamics: guests are invited to flow freely throughout the space, dine, socialize and—within the bounds of the dance floor—celebrate with exuberance. In contrast, the spatial context typical of rave—warehouse, forest, power plant, etc.—is characterized by its vastness and marginality to mainstream society. These spaces are precisely what imbues the rave atmosphere with its lawlessness, fluidity of movement, and reverence for the marginal and strange.

The recognition of party as a design medium enables the architect to intentionally exercise its potency and create impact on a timescale that is ordinarily out of reach—to give birth to a moment of hyperlocal saturation, wherein the full lifespan of a project unravels in four-hour’s time.

3 DJ Zhao, “Dance Dance Revolution,” *Scapegoat* 10 (2017), 83-84.

Larissa Belcic
& Michelle Shofet,
intuiting on behalf of
Dr. Dark Freak

Party: Ecological architecture
for intimate relations

The party's tectonics contain unusual properties, as the form of the party emerges largely in psyche-space. This enables the architect to immediately access and massage the realm of affect and emotion.

The work of Dr. Dark Freak is ecological

In her text *The Aquarian Dictionary of Festivals*, scholar of spirituality and mysticism Jean C. Cooper observes that in festivals across human history and geography, there has always been a common underlying idea “of being in tune with the workings of nature and co-operating with them.”⁴ Myriad cases demonstrate that the festival has undoubtedly been a mechanism through which humans relate to nonhuman systems and beings, communicating with and celebrating those within; and alongside whom humans lives with. Examples include the ancient Egyptian festival of Min, a harvest celebration following the flooding of the Nile, and Imbolc, a Celtic festival celebrating the return of springtime life and light.⁵ In all of them, the presence of nonhuman others is explicit and central.

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Similarly, in his examination of the contemporary rave, French theologian Jean-Yves LeLoup identifies a celebration of a mysterious other. This time, there is no explicit prayer to the harvest; the identity of the other is murky:

We don't come to a rave to attend some sort of show...For if we lose ourselves in that sparse and percussive music...It's obvious that something is being celebrated here, something that's still hard to name.⁶

In the time since ancient harvest festivals to LeLoup's rave, human relationships to the nonhuman have shifted dramatically, particularly within colonialist cultures. We have lurched our way through industrialization and realized extractive and metabolic processes at scales so immense we have altered the planet's climatic composition and triggered mass extinction. We have left *terra firma* and gazed down at our home from

4 Jean C. Cooper, *The Aquarian Dictionary of Festivals* (Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1990), 8.

5 Cooper, *The Aquarian Dictionary of Festivals*, 17, 124, 149-150.

6 Jean-Yves LeLoup, *Digital Magma* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2010), 11.

our moon, the view of our planet spawning an awakening of humankind's vital intimacy with our fellow planetary inhabitants.

technic prayer sessions

The blooming of technological forms radically impacted the Earth, giving rise to a new ecological awareness of the interconnectedness of all things on a planetary scale, of the human's startling capacity to pull the strings of the planet's living mesh, and of the strange intertwining of the technological and synthetic with the biosphere. Today's human is birthed into "a landscape saturated with man's technological endeavors."⁷

With new ecological awareness and reality comes the need for new modes of environmentally-based party. How do we enter into communion with the rhythms and power of plastic geology, cyborg honeybees, time crystals, 3D printed organs? How do we celebrate alongside and within the planet's life forms and systems while carrying with us knowledge of the immense and often destructive human presence?

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This cultural moment calls for a revisiting of the practice of festival, of experiences organized by humans expressly to commune with other forces—be they material, spiritual or otherwise.

In coming to such questions, the architect has the ability to weave new material realities that embrace the intertwining of synthetic and biological forms. Flagship projects like SCAPE's Living Breakwaters promote infrastructures that mediate ecological conflict—in this case between coastal human settlement and encroaching seas—by hybridizing human construction and marine ecosystems. Bio-architectures like R&Sie(n)'s *I'm lost in Paris* create intimacy with the nonhuman; in this case, a laboratory clad in a hydroponic assemblage of blown glass, ferns and nutrient and bacteria-rich water becomes a lively facade, sited within a neighborhood the designers imagine "is both attracted by the green aspect and repulsed by the brewage and the process to produce it."⁸

7 Antoine Picon, "Anxious Landscapes: From Ruin to Rust," *Grey Room* 1 (2000), 66.

8 "I'mlostinparis," New-Territories, accessed 29 August, 2017, <http://www.new-territories.com/lostinparis.htm>.

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musk buffet

Party: Ecological architecture
for intimate relations

But there is also the ability to guide the psychological transformations implicated in the art of living with ecological awareness. Indeed, new social rites are blooming within the domains of ecological art, scholarship and activism, grounded in theory on the role of the psyche in cultivating healthy human-nonhuman relationships. Scholar and activist Joanna Macy's *Work that Reconnects* sets forth rituals for environmental healing and forms the basis of a global community of creators, thinkers, healers. Ecosexuality is blossoming as a sexual identity and set of social practices: the collaborating artists Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkles craft group weddings to soil, coal, rocks; art collective Pony Express' *Ecosexual Bathhouse* offers visitors an array of experiences that couple human sensuality with intra-substance and -species relations.

Harmonious cohabitation with the nonhuman may not simply be a matter of engineering the right systems, but an act that draws on the whole human self. This thought is well articulated by philosopher Arne Naess in his *Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to the World*, where he writes of the need for “community therapy” in “healing our relations to the widest community—that of all living beings.”⁹ The basis of this therapy is joyful interaction with the nonhuman—a joy that springs from the realization of an “intimate relation” to something that is other than ourselves.

The party can intentionally bring people into intimate encounters with foreign others—be they other people, different creatures, ideas, memories—and grow those encounters into mutual experiences of beauty and joy. The act of invitation is an intentional establishment of community that catalyzes who and what will be brought into relation. Through the creation of material, spatial, and temporal frameworks, latent scripts are embedded within the party that emerge to provoke and guide interaction. In parties where dance is a fundamental element, the guiding presence of music creates an open network in which bodies are brought into constant perception and reaction to one another, continually encountering the foreign body and together finding ephemeral modes of resonance and unity.

9 Arne Naess, “Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World,” in *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. George Sessions (Shambhala: Boston, 1995), 236.

photonic embraces

Employing party as a tool for growing intimate relations amongst all types of creatures and forms is not so much a novel application as it is a continuation of an ancient practice. The party lies before us as a design medium uniquely suited to engaging the human experience of a world of knotted interdependencies. As an architectural endeavor, this means crafting spaces and experiences tuned precisely to bring participants to a place of intimacy and resonance with the rhythms and creatures of the contemporary nonhuman; experiences that take place in particular spaces, times, communities, atmospheres.

Participating in a party can be ecological understanding made crystalline—condensed, immersive, and parsable as a distinct experience. The party is the living choreography of psyche and substance, massaged into being through a promiscuous web of co-conspirators and friends of all kinds, its only lasting impression the psychic reverberations and social imprints that echo long after it has ended.