

Ian Besler

www.ianbesler.com

Professional Portfolio

Ian Besler is a media artist and educator (they/them).

Their award-winning interdisciplinary practice applies strategies of interaction design, graphic design, and journalism to blur the boundaries between viewers, creators, and platforms. They make websites, identities, design objects, publications, and social advocacy.

Based in Lenapehoking / New Jersey.

Ian is Co-Founder and Creative Director of Besler & Sons and Besler & Daughter design studios, multidisciplinary creative offices founded in 2014 and 2023 with their partner Erin Besler. They work to expand the definition of design through active participation with amateur creators, fabrication trades, and software tools. They seek to create new audiences and opportunities for social engagement.

Ian was an Artist-in-Residence at the Headlands Center for the Arts in San Francisco in 2023. They were named a United States Artists Fellow in Architecture & Design in 2019.

Alongside their creative practice, they pursue design research through teaching and writing. A book of their writing and

images, titled *Best Practices*, was published by Applied Research and Design Publishing in September, 2021. Their writings have been published in the journals *e-Flux*, *Log*, *Perspecta*, *San Rocco*, *Pidgin*, and others.

Ian has taught and coordinated courses in graphic design, interaction design, and user experience design at Pratt Institute, the University of Southern California, ArtCenter College of Design, and Santa Monica College. Ian holds a Master of Fine Arts from the Media Design Practices program at ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, where they were awarded the Milken Family Foundation Design Fellowship, as well as a Bachelor of Science in Journalism from the College of Media at the University of Illinois.

Trained as a journalist and media designer, Ian's multidisciplinary creative practice applies tools of writing, reporting, and visual communication, including interviews, site visits, and collaborative workshops, to interrogate and reimagine the role of digital tools and interfaces in how we create and experience the physical and digital spaces across which we increasingly live.

Besler & Daughter design studio has been profiled and featured in *The New York Times*, *T Magazine*, *Dezeen*, *Wallpaper**, *Architect Magazine*, and *Domino Magazine*. They have participated in more than fifty public installations and exhibitions internationally.

02 [About](#)
Professional Practice //////////////////////////////////////
04 [Best Practices Book](#)
06 [Props](#)
08 [Books, Websites, & Identity](#)
10 [Museum Store Pop-Up at MOCA](#)
12 [Mini City at Flatiron Plaza](#)
Research Projects //////////////////////////////////////
14 [Abstract Interfaces](#)
16 [Enjoy Your Deck :-\)](#) at Chicago Biennial
18 [Color Swatches](#)
20 [StudFindr App at Chicago Biennial](#)
22 [Roof Deck at MoMA PS1](#)

Best Practices

2021

book design

photography

writing

publication design



In visually cataloging the endearing and enigmatic ways in which the built environment takes form, we try to boost the resolution of streetscapes, signage, and the commons.

Drawing on the history of architecture, media theory, cultural anthropology, and urban studies, 'Best Practices' pairs photographic documentation with extensive captions and citations to define a territory within the margins between the sanctioned and unsanctioned, the regulated and unregulated, the tasteful and tacky, the novel and the nonsense.

While not necessarily in opposition of those mechanisms, 'Best Practices' asserts that interest, knowledge, and meaning are more often generated on the lines that divide such categories.

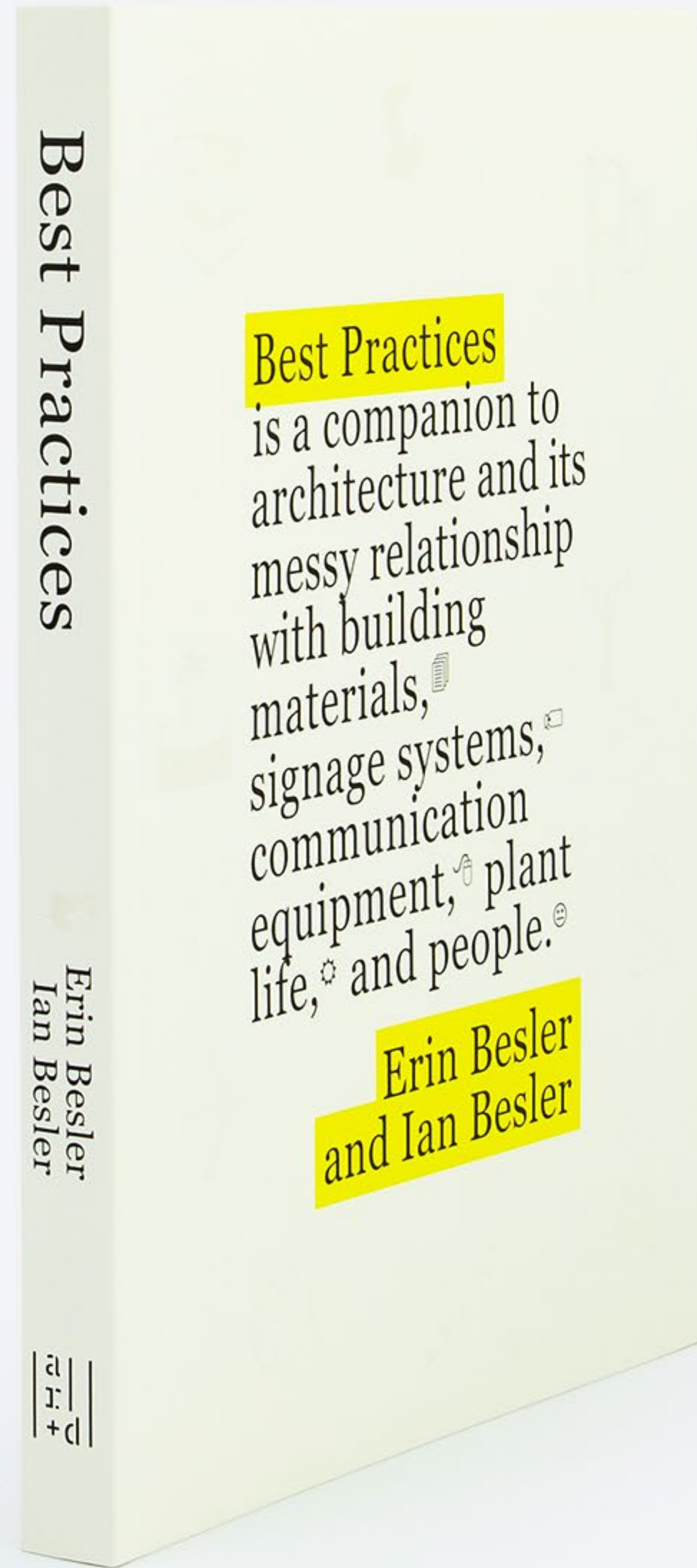
This book advocates for a more thorough consideration of the unauthorized remodels, slap-dash handiwork, haphazard paint jobs,

half-hearted do-it-yourself projects, cracked facades, contradictions, compromises, and coincidences.

Applied Research + Design
Publishing / ORO Editions

[Best Practices](#), 2021
Applied Research + Design
Publishing / ORO Editions

photographs, writing,
and book design by
Besler & Sons
(Erin Besler, Ian Besler)



Props

2016 - ongoing

fabrication object design retail

material research hand-made



Initiated through a material research inquiry into the anonymity and ubiquity of prosaic objects, Props are a series of handmade terrazzo accessories.

Each Prop is passive and designed to be used in multiple ways. Featuring a custom blend of colored glass and marble chips which are added to a cement mixture and cast in one of six distinct molds: The Classic Wedge, The Personal Pan Pizza, The Soupcan, The Snubnose Wedge, The Parking Chock, and The Half Moon.

After curing overnight, the hardened terrazzo is ground by hand to expose a smooth polished layer of colorful glass, marble, and cement.

Terrazzo is a durable composite material that has been used in buildings for thousands of years. Because of its strength and coloration terrazzo is typically used as flooring and cast as a thin layer. These forms take an updated view on the process to create a series of monolithic objects for the home or office. In classic white or strawberry red cementitious matrix with black, white and red aggregate.

Props are stocked at numerous museum stores and design boutiques

across Los Angeles, including The Museum of Contemporary Art, The Marciano Art Foundation, and The Hammer Museum.

Props have been featured in *The New York Times T Magazine*, *Dezeen*, *Log*, and *Design Milk*, and at INTRO/NY, the San Francisco Art Book Fair, and the LA Design Festival.

[Props](#), 2016 - ongoing
left: terrazzo (white portland cement,
recycled glass, marble)
approximately 8" x 8" x 8"
bottom-right: foamcore, glossy photo paper, tape, glue
approximately 36" x 36" x 36"

designed and hand-fabricated by
Besler & Sons (Erin Besler, Ian Besler)



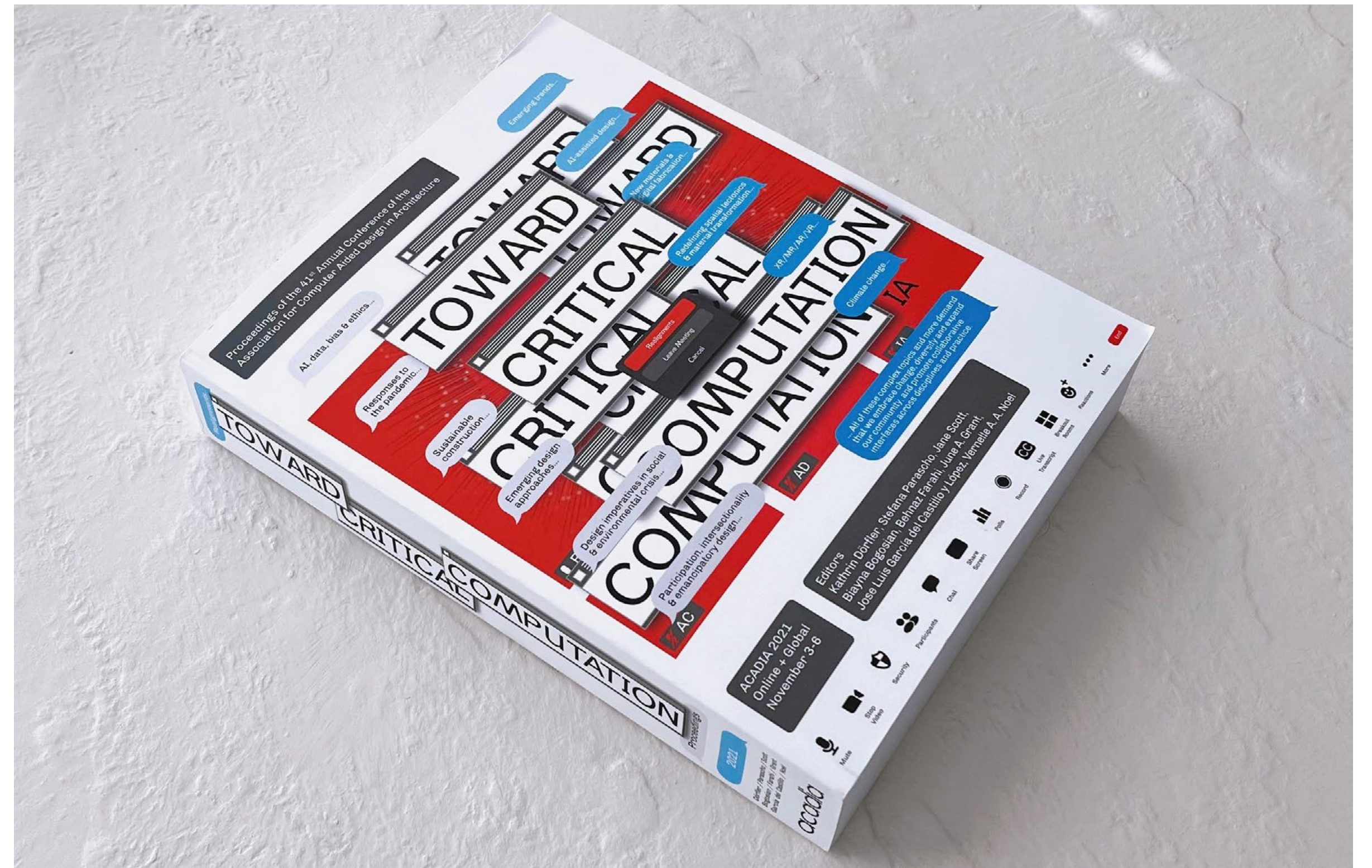
Books, Websites, & Identity

2015 - ongoing

book design graphic design

identity system interaction design

social media campaign web design



Ian's graphic design work, both experimental and applied, is characterized as digitally handmade, cheerily exhaustive, formally challenging, and delightfully tedious.

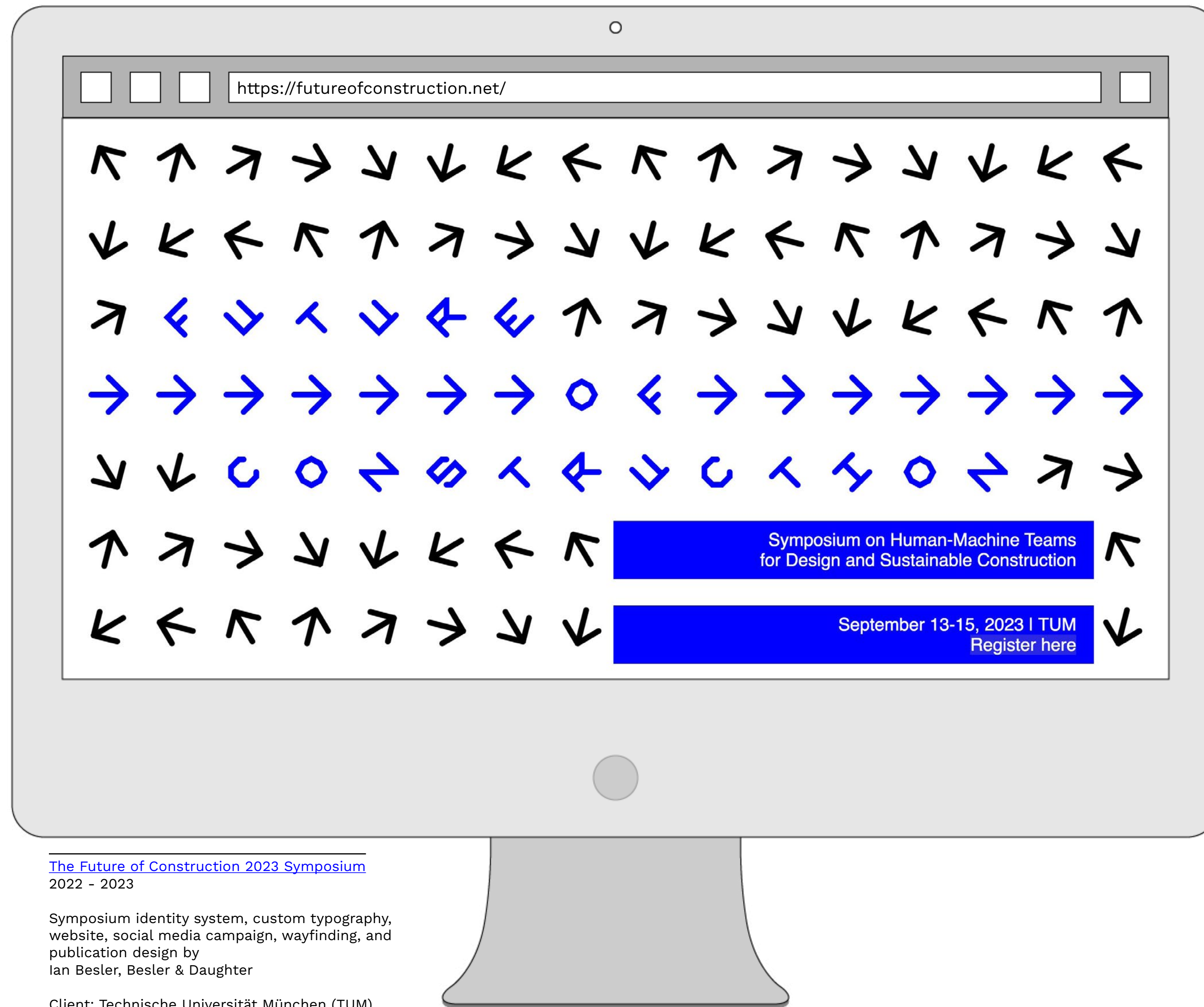
Ian creates interfaces that can be broken, remade, customized, and reused by the visitor.

Their design research is obsessed with the role of consumer technol-

ogy and online sharing platforms in emerging vernaculars, everyday experiences, rituals, and routines around cultural production, media literacy, attention, alienation, privacy, visibility, and identity.

Ian aspires to see more handmade, formally unique, and conceptually challenging experiences and objects in our shared visual culture.





Pop-Up at MOCA

2018

fabrication retail display

spatial design digital fabrication

cnc modular system



A pop-up retail shelving system that can wander around the store, and the city, with the help of ratchet straps.

Pop-Up at MOCA is inspired by Polly Pocket or Micro Machines playsets — a container as a generator of interest. Custom CNC milled and fabricated plywood paneling

system, commissioned by THIS X THAT for a pop-up store at the MOCA Grand Avenue Museum Store in Little Tokyo, Downtown Los Angeles.



[Museum Store Pop-Up at MOCA, 2018](#)
custom CNC-milled plywood, heavy-duty ratchet straps, casters
approx. 8' x 16' x 4'

designed and hand-fabricated by
Besler & Sons (Erin Besler, Ian Besler)

Client: THIS X THAT, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
Photographs by Injinash Unshin

Mini City Souvenir Plaza

2019

digital fabrication

spatial design

competition entry

public space

cnc

recycled material



Runner-up for the [2019 Flatiron Public Plaza Holiday Design Competition](#), Mini City Souvenir Plaza asks the question: “What if we threw a party and invited a bunch of buildings?”

The result transforms the iconic site at the base of the Flatiron Building in Manhattan into a partyscape of iconic building forms and sensory experiences, populating the plaza with engaging, large-scale facades of nearby architecture.

Reproduced in charming and hypnotic detail, The Flatiron, the Met Life Building, the Western Union Telegraph Building, and other friendly, recognizable faces from the neighborhood cluster together in a convivial and inviting atmosphere, encouraging visitors to explore the limits of recognition and the recursive visual quality of reproduction — almost like standing inside of a feedback loop.

Doorways and window bays in the pavilion serve as frames, perfectly sized for smartphone cameras, to view and photograph the plaza anew, activating the surrounding cityscape as a sort of second layer, providing unexpected viewpoints and new perspectives — the plaza itself becomes a spectacle through its recreation. At sunset, as the city begins to glow with storefront signs, streetlamps, and headlights, the pavilion turns into a set of complementary illuminated lanterns, casting speckles and rays of light across the plaza from the hundreds of window frames and doorways.

Mini City Souvenir Plaza rescales our everyday surroundings, in ef-

fect, making the Flatiron neighborhood more comprehensible and charming, offering a lense to revisit and reimagine the spaces that we experience everyday.

While we often conceive of architectural space in extremely binary terms (inside or outside, public or private, big or small), Mini City Souvenir Plaza presents a new way of thinking about these distinctions, offering instead, a smallness that feels impressively large, in a space that feels warm and familiar, yet open and accessible.



[Mini City Souvenir Plaza](#) (digital rendering), 2019
post-consumer HDPE plastic sheets, CNC-milled
dimensions variable

designed by
Besler & Sons
(Erin Besler, Ian Besler)

Abstract Interfaces

2023 - ongoing

interaction design

critical coding

book-making

book-binding

sewing



A generative web-based algorithm for interactive formal compositions, “Abstract Interfaces” critically interrogate the complacency and contradictions embedded in the UI/UX conventions of everyday digital experiences.

Using deliberately accessible and open-source coding methodologies, this time-based series of visual studies seeks to radically slow-down attention and resituate the role of the liminal moment in digital experiences.

The project leverages to the prosaic formal qualities of ubiquitous digi-

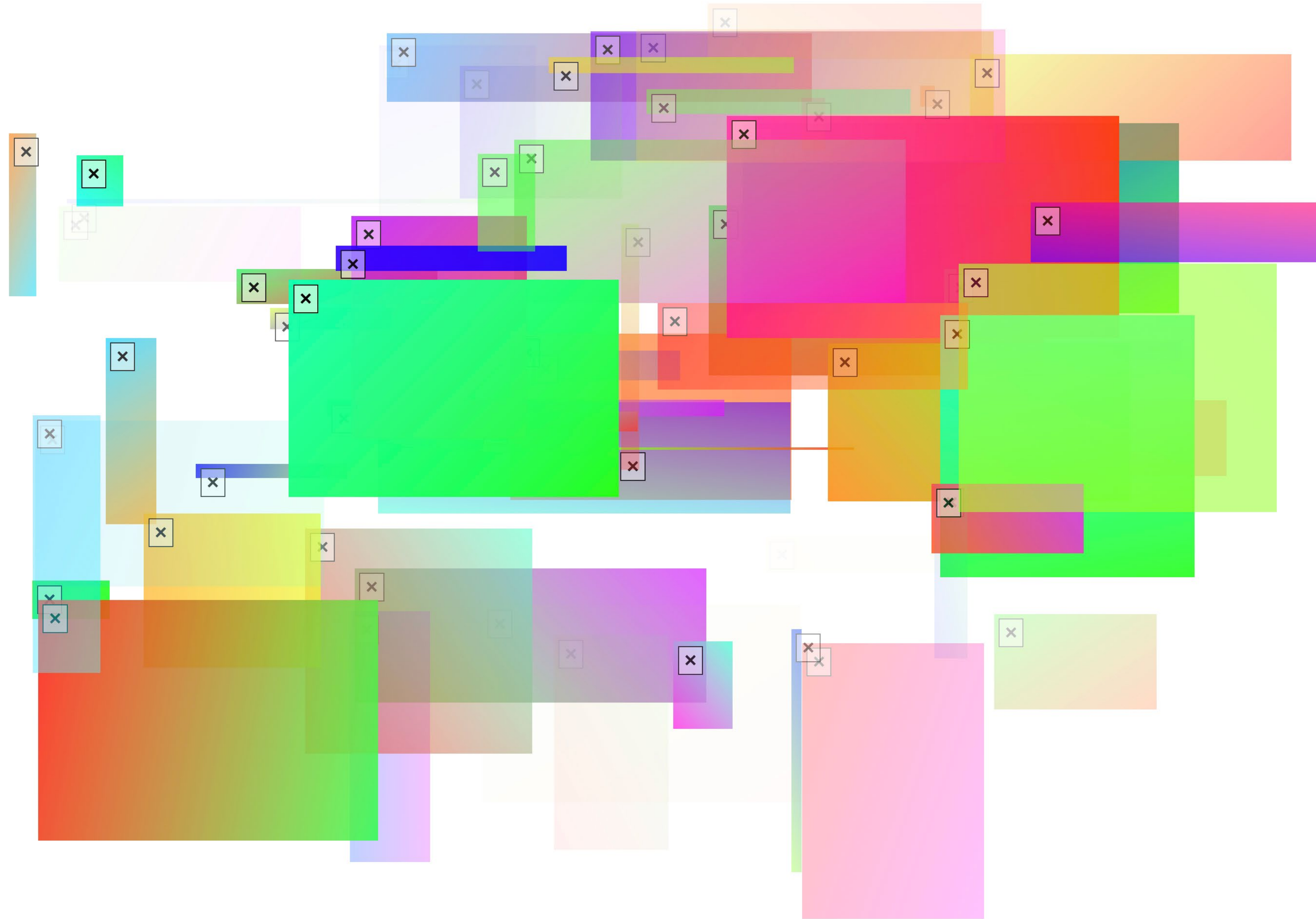
tal products, as a critical response to the commodification of isolation, alienation, extremism, attention, influence, and interest online.

“Abstract Interfaces” expresses a formal opposition to the increasing sense of dehumanization and apathy in consumer digital products; and argument against the opting-out of

agency, and terms-of-service concession to market pressures and demands. By decontextualizing the metaphor of the prosaic “desktop workspace,” the project seeks to offer a more formally rich, experientially diverse, and graphically intense alternative to contemporary “extremely online” lifestyles.

[Abstract Interfaces](#), 2023
(digital still)
HTML, CSS, JavaScript

designed and coded by
Ian Besler, Besler & Daughter



Enjoy Your Deck :-)

2017 - ongoing

fabrication public exhibition

book design web design



A collection of do-it-yourself paper models of the ubiquitous online ‘how-to’ home improvement video. Enjoy Your Deck :-) reframes online video sharing platforms as a category of media that circulates architectural imagery, while simultaneously generating an attendant set of language, media, data, and associations.

Such as through comment sections, viewcount statistics, recommendations for related viewing, popup advertisements for local lumber yards, closed captions, and various options for sharing with friends and across social media.

Inscribed with a uniquely domestic focus, these videos activate the residential backyard as a space of public and private display, where aspiration, leisure, and performance are

engaged through simultaneously productive and recreative tasks, such as chores, projects, pastimes, and parties. Requiring little more than basic building materials, some power tools, and a weekend, the construction of a backyard deck exemplifies the genre of online ‘how-to’ videos. The decks in these videos are surprisingly versatile forms. Their complexity, size, and architectural style are made to fit the site: they often stick to a simple plan.

Enjoy Your Deck :-) debuted at the Chicago Architecture Biennial in 2017 as part of the exhibition Horizontal City – Room of Plinths at the Chicago Cultural Center.

The project has been published in *Offramp* journal and *Pidgin Magazine*, and installed as part of the group exhibition *Fulfilled* at The Ohio State University in February, 2020.

ENJOY YOUR DECK :-)

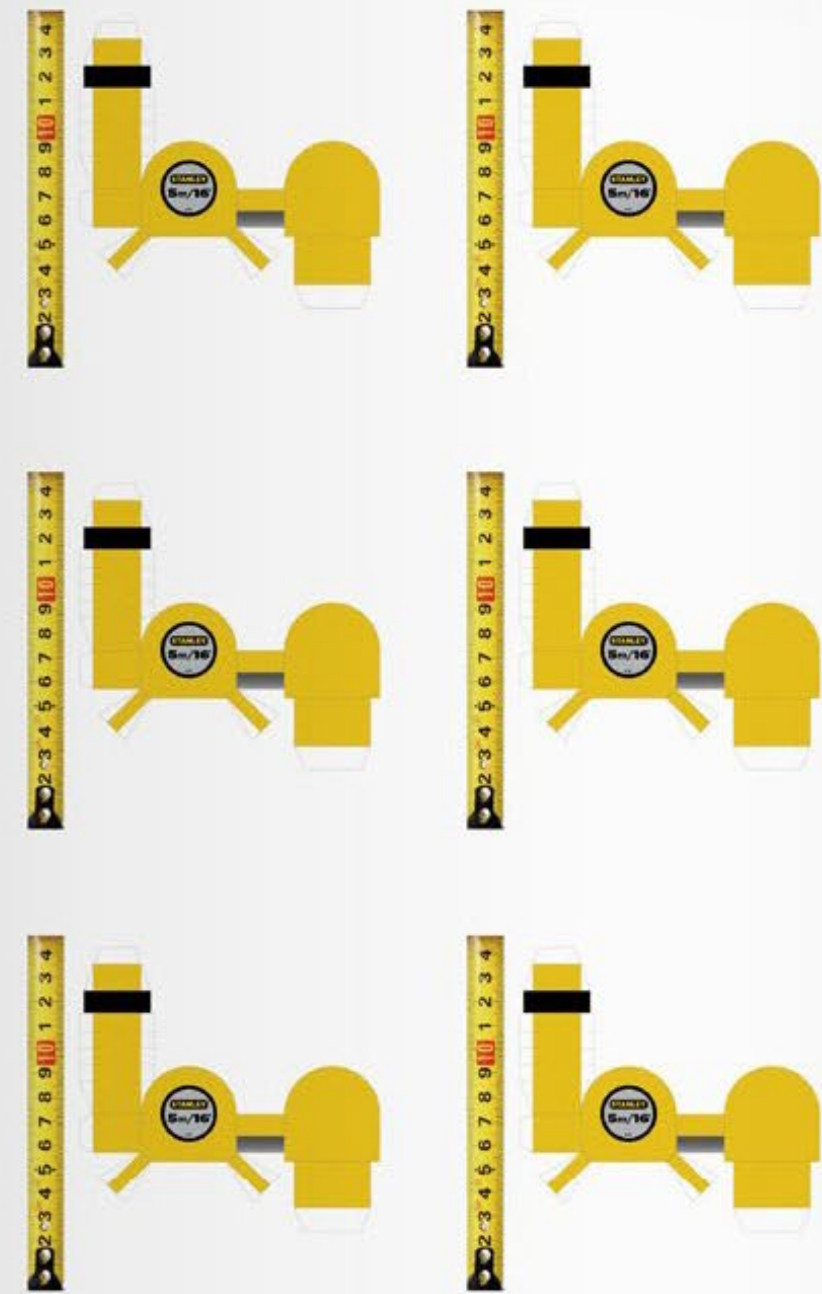
FRIDAY

STANLEY
5m/16 ft. x 3/4 in.
Tape Rule Metric and SAE
Model # 30-496



This tape measure's case is made from quality high impact ABS. The blades durability is a result of a polymer coating. Stud markings are visible at 16 in. and 19.2 in.

- Polymer-coated blade withstands abrasion
- High-impact ABS case for durability
- 16 in. and 19.2 in. stud center
- markings simplify framing jobs
- Corrosion-resistant Tru-zero end hook for accurate measurements



Color Swatches

2015 - 2018

fieldwork

critical coding

reporting

writing

speculative design

journalism



A reported essay “[June Gloom Gray and the Colorspace of L.A.](#)” and an accompanying [online color swatch library](#) exploring the visually restorative efforts of the Department of Beautification for the city of Los Angeles.

The scale of the effort is staggering, and the complexity of it made trickier by the fact that the work aspires for invisibility. If any garish color of paint or any graceless method of removal would do, it might be a simpler task.

But community beautification, done as a concerted effort, demands a level of scrutiny with the built environment that few of us will ever experience.

The struggle between graffiti and beautification results in a visible interface between the general public and the formal and material qualities of our built environment. Through the successive layering of paint, a complex set of interactions, bureaucratic responses, and design outcomes are exposed. And the vast expanses of painted surfaces that we’re left with speak to our expectations and our collective sense of agency in how urban spaces and the

cities around us materialize, mature, decay, and eventually disappear.

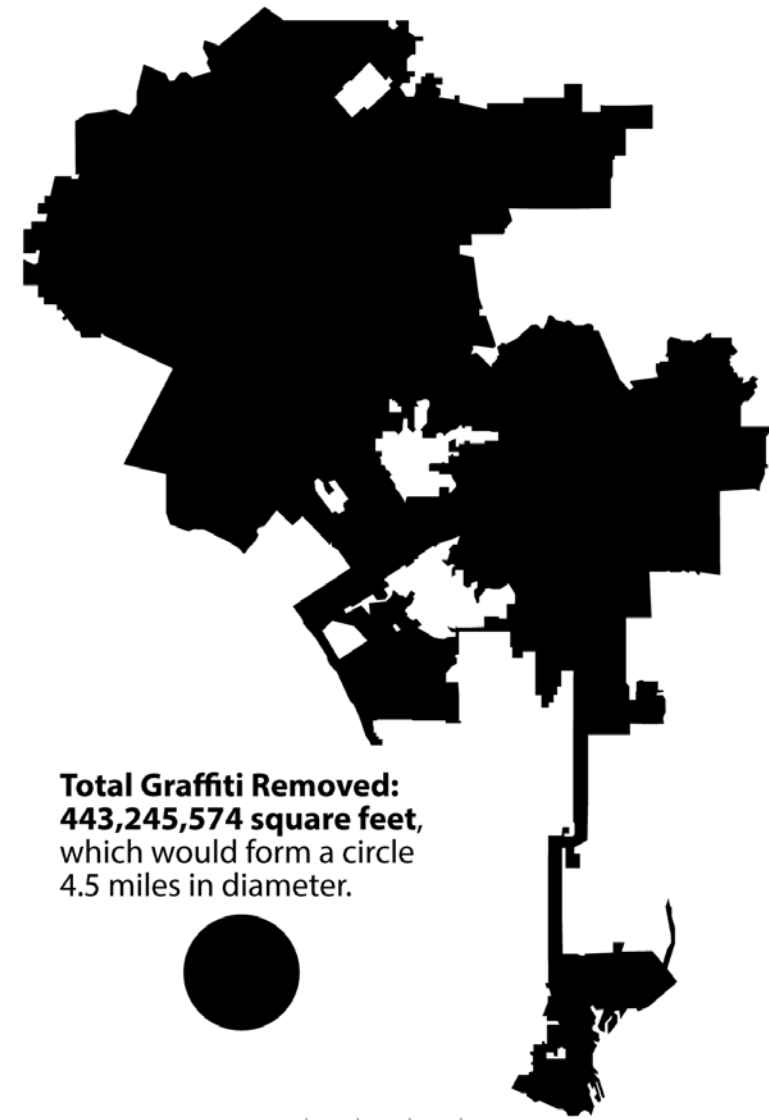
The interactive component of this ongoing research project includes a swatch set used by city contractors, with such color values as “L.A. Bridge Brown,” “Lampost Gray,” and “Hydrant Yellow.”

Graffiti Removal at Urban Scale

The Office of Community Beautification removed **about 32.5 million square feet (a little more than one square mile)** of graffiti from building facades and sidewalks around Los Angeles last year. Here, each fiscal year's graffiti abatement figure is depicted, with the city for scale.

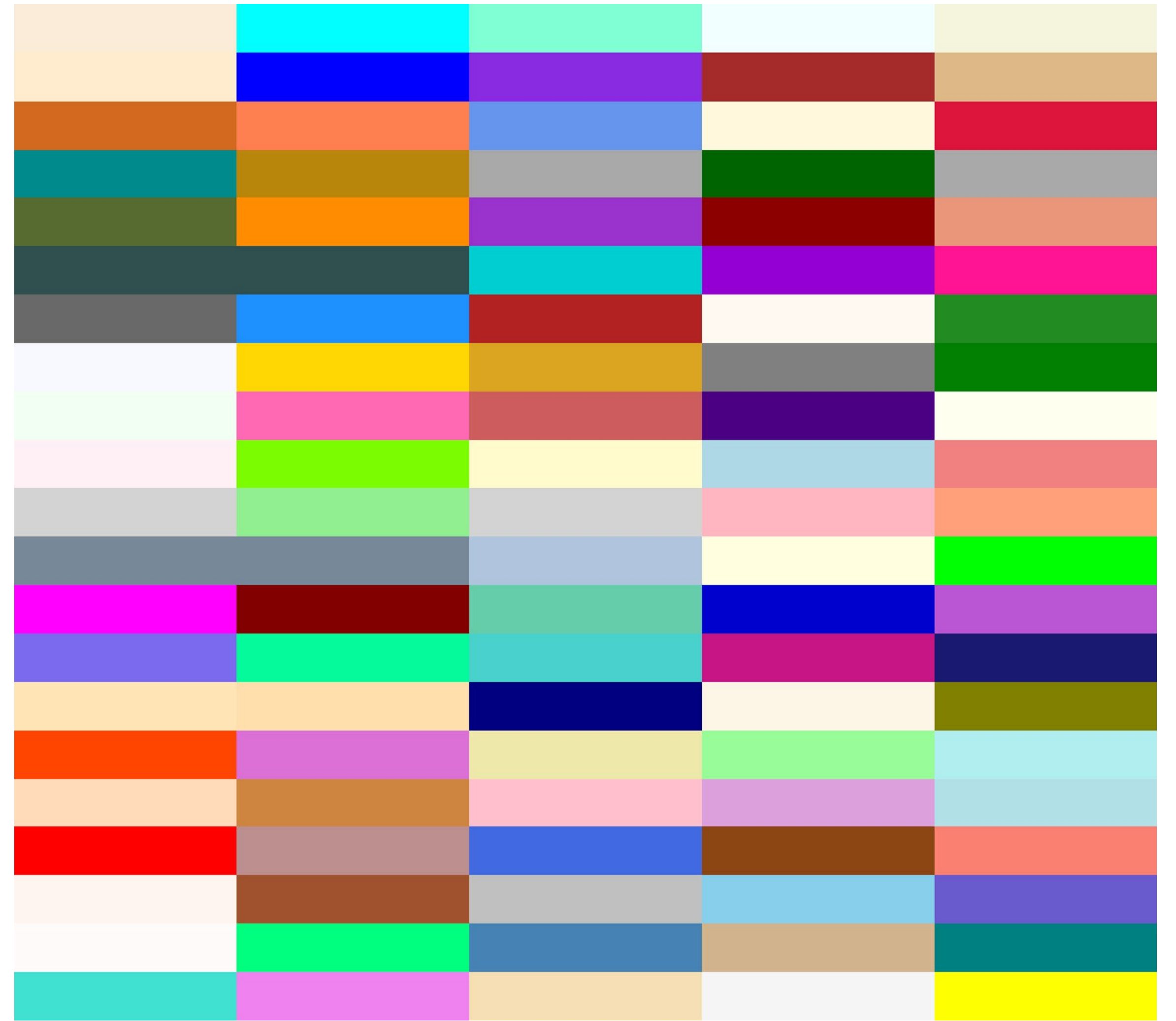


Fiscal Year.....	Sq Ft Removed
1999.....	17,796,936
2000.....	21,877,124
2001.....	25,083,347
2002.....	30,926,446
2003.....	29,375,306
2004.....	22,906,522
2005.....	21,440,991
2006.....	25,974,661
2007.....	30,503,980
2008.....	31,748,959
2009.....	28,294,174
2010.....	32,770,693
2011.....	35,696,406
2012.....	30,094,345
2013.....	26,117,252
2014.....	32,638,432



Total Graffiti Removed:
443,245,574 square feet,
 which would form a circle
 4.5 miles in diameter.

Source: Office of Community Beautification
 Board of Public Works, City of Los Angeles



Graffiti Removal at Urban Scale infographic, 2015
 "June Gloom Gray and the Colorspace of L.A."
 Medium re:form, edited by Sarah Rich

reporting, research, infographic design, and writing by
 Ian Besler

StudFindr App

2015 - 2016

exhibition

critical coding

app design



A web-based interactive design application that engages with issues of design, collectivism and customization, encouraging the participation of amateurs, kids, construction workers, architects, and the general public.

Borrowing the conventions and affordances of consumer oriented creative apps and social media platforms, StudFindr subverts typical assumptions around privilege, functionality, and specialization in design and creative contexts. The app, and its accompanying installation and documentation, argues for a broader definition of authority and access in the way that public space and the built environment is conceived and formalized.

StudFindr has been exhibited internationally and is available for use online at studfindr.org. StudFindr was designed, developed, and produced in collaboration with Erin Besler, my co-founder of the Los Angeles based practice Besler & Sons, LLC. The coding was done by Satoru Sugihara/ATLV.

StudFindr debuted at the Chicago Architecture Biennial in 2015 as part of the installation The Entire

Situation at the Chicago Cultural Center. The project has been featured in *ArchDaily*, *Architect*, *Chicago Tonight*, *Design Indaba*, and *The Architect's Newspaper*.



[StudFinder](#), 2015
app-generated building plan footprint
printer paper
approx. 10' x 10'
app designed by
Besler & Sons (Erin Besler, Ian Besler)
app coding by
Satoru Sugihara/ATLV

Roof Deck at MoMA PS1

2014 - 2015

fabrication spatial design public space



The roof occupies a fundamental position, creating inhabitable space both below and above. This is underscored by block party vernacular; we commonly hear admonitions to “raise the roof” or “tear the roof off,” and, even more hyperbolically, that the “roof is on fire.” Through these expressions, revelry is compounded with acts of architectural revision.

Roof Deck repositions MoMA PS1’s existing roof and refits it into the courtyard, where it is activated as a social space across a spectrum of programs and experiences — from celebrity yoga to ecstatic celebration, from the collection of construction materials to exhibition through social media. Along with the summertime impulse to flaunt and reveal comes the struggle to be

fit and get in shape. Paralleling this, the roof is made fit and is also the site of performance and physical fitness programming on the roof deck.

The construction of the roof and deck exploit the tendency to accumulate waste that building practices typically produce. Rather than discard material remnants off-site, excess is cut and refit into the project

for use. The roof’s gutter system re-directs water that would otherwise go to waste into a collection and retention system, turning an otherwise mundane aspect of exterior architectural drainage into a feature that provides water fit for use. Borrowing from the language of the architectural building site, the always in-progress roof is made more fit as uses change and tempos shift.

[Roof Deck at MoMA PS1](#), 2015
summer pavilion proposal scale model
approx. 48" x 36" x 24"

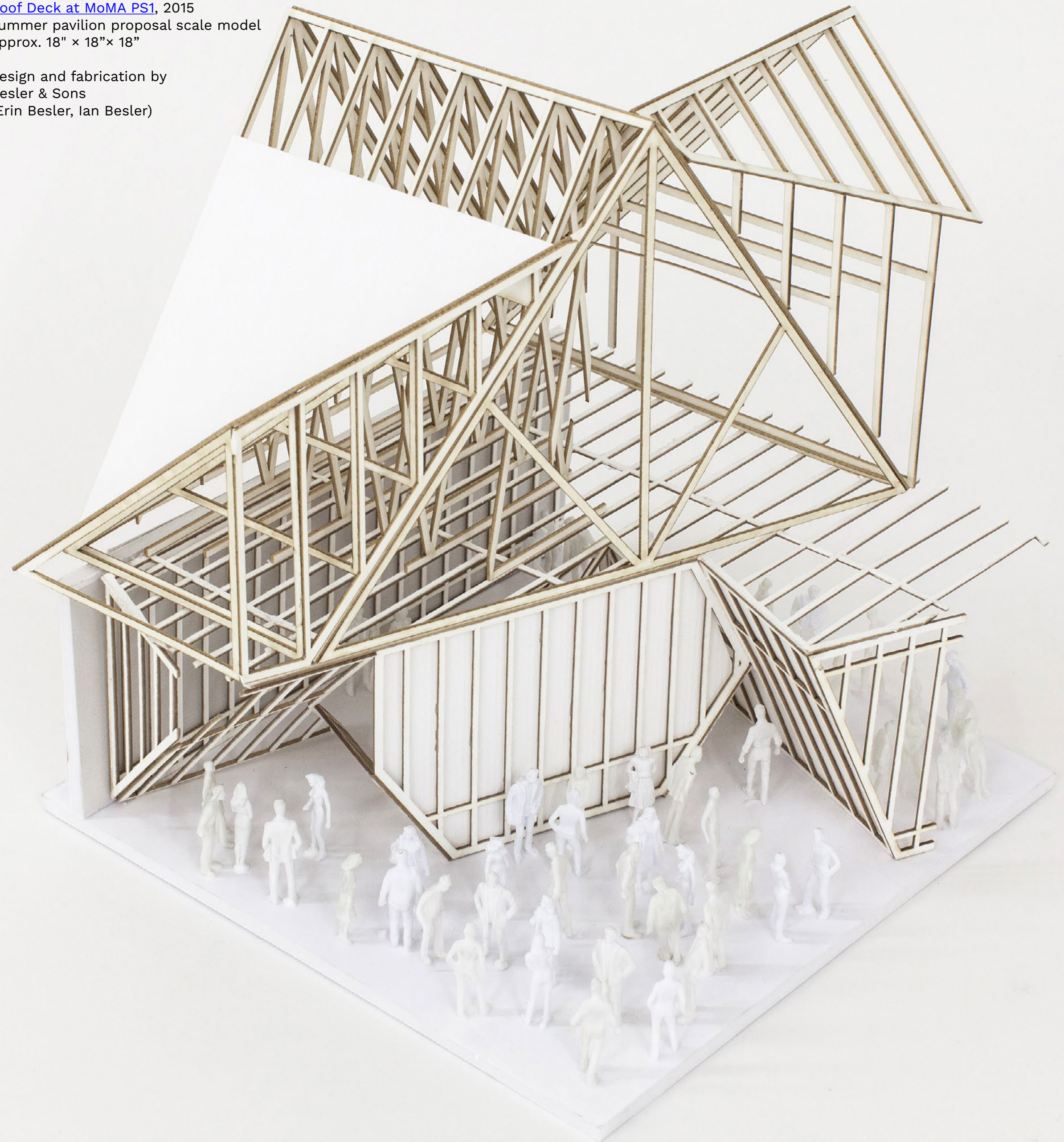
design and fabrication by
Besler & Sons
(Erin Besler, Ian Besler)

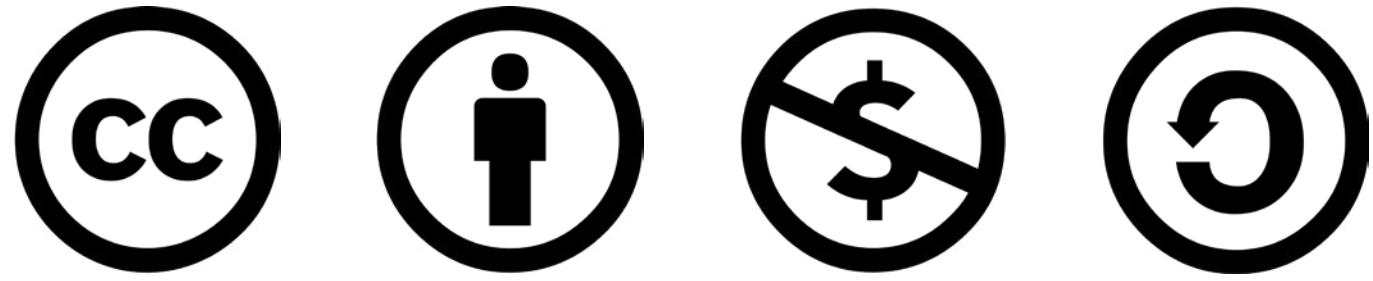




[Roof Deck at MoMA PS1](#), 2015
summer pavilion proposal scale model
approx. 18" x 18" x 18"

design and fabrication by
Besler & Sons
(Erin Besler, Ian Besler)





All work 2015 - 2023 by Ian Besler, with Besler & Sons / Besler & Daughter / Erin Besler

(except where otherwise noted)

[Props](#)

Besler & Sons, LLC
2016 - ongoing
Project Team: Erin Besler, Ian Besler, Jamie Barron
Retail Representation: THIS X THAT
Special Thanks: Cameron Crone, Charles (Chachi) Mathis, Nick Rodrigues

[Color Swatches](#)

Ian Besler
2015 - 2018
Special Thanks: Christina Agapakis, Andrew Atwood, Erin Besler, Salylna Cun, Aaron Fooshée, Ben Hooker, David Leonard, Gary Leonard, Mario Martinez, Todd Newman, Sarah Rich, Jenny Rodenhouse, Mimi Zeiger

[Mini City Souvenir Plaza](#)

Besler & Sons, LLC
2019
Project Team: Erin Besler, Ian Besler, Georgia Pogas, Carly Richman
Produced for the 2019 Flatiron Public Plaza Holiday Design Competition
Special Thanks: Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership Business Improvement District, Ren Reese, Van Alen Institute

[Studfindr App](#)

Besler & Sons, LLC + ATLV/Satoru Sugihara
2015 - 2016
Project Team: Jamie Barron, Erin Besler, Ian Besler, Brian Harms, Shawn Jackson, Jenny Rodenhouse, Satoru Sugihara, Evellyn Tan
Produced for the 2015 Chicago Architecture Biennial - The State of the Art of Architecture
Curated by Sarah Herda and Joseph Grima

[Resolution Frontiers](#)

Besler & Sons, LLC
2014 - 2016
Project Team: Erin Besler, Ian Besler
This work originated as part of a graduate thesis project at the Media Design Practices program at ArtCenter College of Design.
Lead Advisors: Tim Durfee, Ben Hooker
Writing Advisors: Jane McFadden, Mimi Zeiger
Adjunct Advisors: Garnet Hertz, David Leonard
Program Director: Kevin Wingate
Program Chair: Anne Burdick

[Roof Deck at MoMA PS1](#)

Besler & Sons, LLC
2014 - 2015
Project Team: Jamie Barron, Erin Besler, Ian Besler, Kyle Branchesi, Ryan Conroy, Chris Gassaway, Devin Koba, Ingrid Lao, Bernhard Lu-

thringhausen, Tori McKenna, Dami Olufowoshe, Tom Pompeani, Sai Rojanapirom, Shane Reiner-Roth, Evi Temmel, Tessa Watson
Engineering Team: Walter P. Moore, Los Angeles Office - Kais Al-Rawi, Steve Lewis, Bo Ying Liu, Greg Otto, Frank Reppi, Sanjeev Tankha, Viswanath Urala
Produced for the 2015 MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program

[How To](#)

Besler & Sons, LLC
2017 - ongoing
Project Team: Erin Besler, Ian Besler
Special Thanks: AJ Artemel, Nick Axel, Violette de la Selle, Russell LeSturgeon