



wearable architecture:: bodies becoming buildings

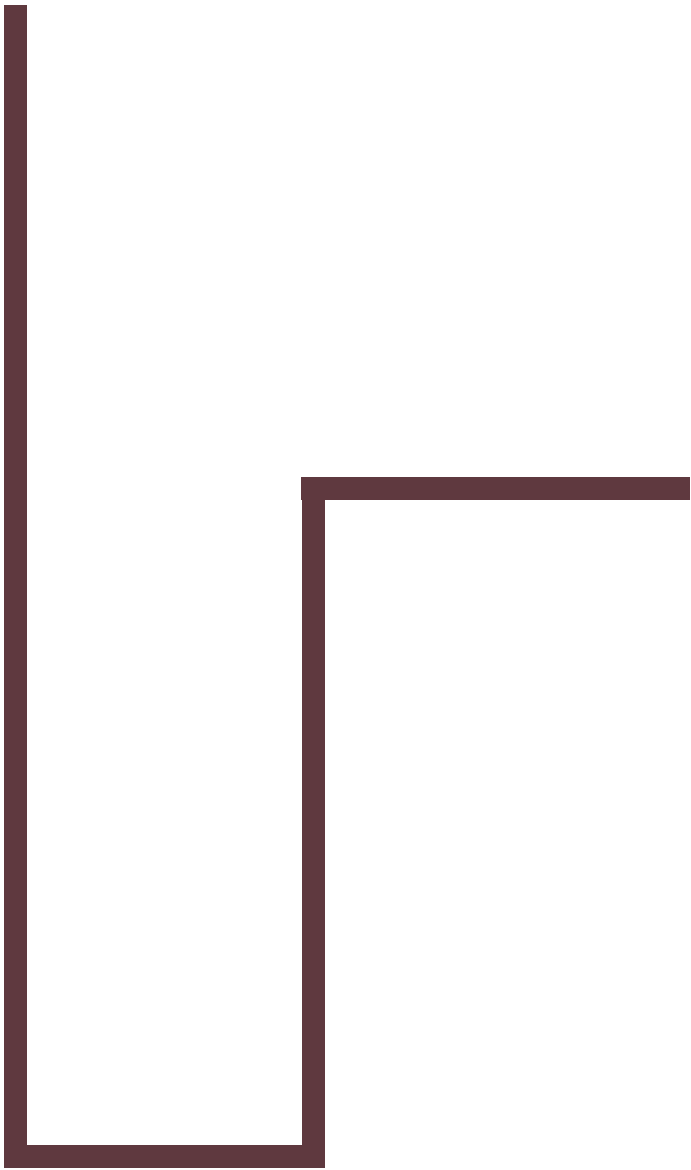
canterbury school of architecture & design

rob nice



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wearable architecture:: bodies becoming buildings

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sfhea pgcert ma ba(hons)

Stage One Convener - BA(Hons) Architecture (ARB/RIBA Part 1)
Design Studio Lead / Storyteller / Curator / Archivist



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acknowledgements

Numerous staff have contributed to the delivery of a 'version' of this project over the years.

A big shout goes out to... Julian Seagars, Chloe Young, Kristina Tafa, Haval Abdulkareem, Tom Bonner, Daniel Tollady, Louisa Clifford, Jon Shmulevitch, Sarah Akigbogun, Ava Aghakouchak, Sophie Mitchell, Lizzie McElhinney, Afra van't Land, Jay Morton, Demian Erbar, Holger Mattes, Tamsin Landells, Helen Leask, Tim O'Callaghan, Ruth Cuenca, Tessa Baird, Zoe Fudge, Lucy Jones, Vasiles Polydorou, Allan Atlee, Gabor Stark, Lara Rettondini and Toby Gray.

Rob Nice 2023





Learning: An event, social encounter; a collaboration; a process that adds to, alters, brings into question, what we may already believe or understand, both individually and collectively, as well as, autonomously.

From being dependent, to independent, to interdependent. So that prior knowledge can be considered, reconsidered, deconstructed, and reconstructed.

Learning should be, and is messy. To learn is to unlearn, relearn, disrupt, subvert; to liberate.





origins +++

The idea of producing a catalogue of our Level 4 students Wearable Architecture project has been sitting on the backburner for a long long long time. The original brief was initiated by Gabor Stark, titled Urban Portrait. Inspired by the 'infra-ordinary', a term coined by the French writer Georges Perec, students were guided to detect and examine those everyday things we often take for granted, but that nevertheless inform our perception and therefore our experiences of the city.

Working in small groups, students started the project with a Dérive, immersing themselves within Canterbury City Centre. The Dérive was mapped, with students recording the 'infra-ordinary' themes and patterns encountered along its trajectory. Following this exercise, students focused on a single theme observing and recording its qualities and exploring ways of facilitating and amplifying the perception of those qualities. Based on these investigations, they designed, built, and tested wearable devices.

This project has evolved over 15+ years, even during COVID we were able to rewrite the brief to enable the students to go off on and map their walks, through the construction of a series of worn drawing devices. Constructed through the hacking of everyday objects and utensils to be found around the home. I believe the projects longevity can be attributed to its capacity to evolve.

The first draft of this catalogue celebrates the more recent explorations over the last three academic years,





2021 to 2023, and has been produced for the Canterbury School of Architecture and Design's research exhibition. It is still very much a work in progress, with the longer-term aim is to catalogue the previous years' work too.





introduction

My own pedagogic research stems from an ongoing interest in the progressive theories of John Dewey (1916) Colin Ward (1973), Ivan Illich (2011), Paulo Freire (2000) Paul Goodman (1966), Bell Hooks (1986) and Everett Reimer (1971), and a compulsion to utilise the city as a test bed for learning and experimentation. An education beyond the relative safety of the classroom, or in our case the design studio. I would like to think that this results in work that is at least a little disruptive, mischievous and/or possibly subversive.

This is exemplified through a long-standing design studio project, Wearable Architecture (or versions of). A project that over the years has been informed by the experimental constructions of Emily Speed, Tracey Featherstone, Ingrid Hora, and Allan Wexler, that blurs the boundaries between disciplines. Resulting in constructions that might be considered, part collage, part object, part model, part furniture, part interior, part architecture and even part garment. In its simplest form, the project results in students dressing up. Rekindling the free spirit of their younger days. Haven't we all dressed up at some point? Halloween, fancy dress parties, club nights? An activity where social and cultural capital provide little advantage. An activity we can all relate too.

The project takes place in the first ten/twelve weeks of Level 4 (First Year), providing the students with an opportunity to create work that is ambitious, progressive, and in some instances, provocative, even absurd. The aim being to broaden and deepen their disciplinary knowledge and nurture alternative ways





of thinking critically about their relationship with the built environment. Educated beyond the demands of the commercial realm students are given the freedom and confidence to speculate; to play, to imagine, to take detours, engaging with design as agents of social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological change. They move from being dependent, to independent and then as they progress, interdependent learners. Empowering them to question the sometimes-outdated disciplinary limitations, and to write their own futures. Enabling them to become; ambitious, confident, versatile, innovative, resilient, and entrepreneurial graduates.





the performative / temporal / absurd / disruptive

Wearable Architecture exploits the rich heritage assets that can be found in Canterbury's City Centre, momentarily drifting off further a field pre-COVID. It celebrates the performative, the temporal, and at moments the absurd, even the disruptive. But possibly and more importantly, the project is a playful introduction to the profession. It does not require students to solve a 'problem', as unsettling as this might be. However, what it will highlight are the challenges/problems/encounters, rational or otherwise, when you navigate through the city, 'dressed' differently.

During the project students engage with the performative aspect of being a spatial designer. Like a choreographer they explore the movement of the body in space, enabling them to establish a dialogue with(in) the City. A social encounter, of body, space, and city. An unsanctioned carnival of sorts. As a result, the students become active citizens within their host community, working beyond the limits of the institution. Momentarily, relocating the school of architecture into the heart of the city, creating a civic experience/encounter, expanding our students understanding/definition of what practicing as an architect/spatial designer might be, and at the same time encouraging those using/exploring the city to engage in conversations about the built environment. Responding to the physical conditions, constraints, and opportunities of site. Reassessing the ways in which our bodies interact with spaces and are used to construct our built environment. Enhancing an awareness/understanding of place. Familiar or otherwise. Encouraging them to question the way they/we occupy our built and natural environment.





You have to admire the student's openness to engage in such a project. After the initial, 'what have I signed up for!' which on the face of it appears to be a simple project requires a great deal of thinking and most importantly at the start of their studies, doing. And when you catch up with students post Part 2, they say one of two things, 'I'm still not sure why we did that', or, 'now I think I understand'. Regardless, it is a project that sticks in their minds.



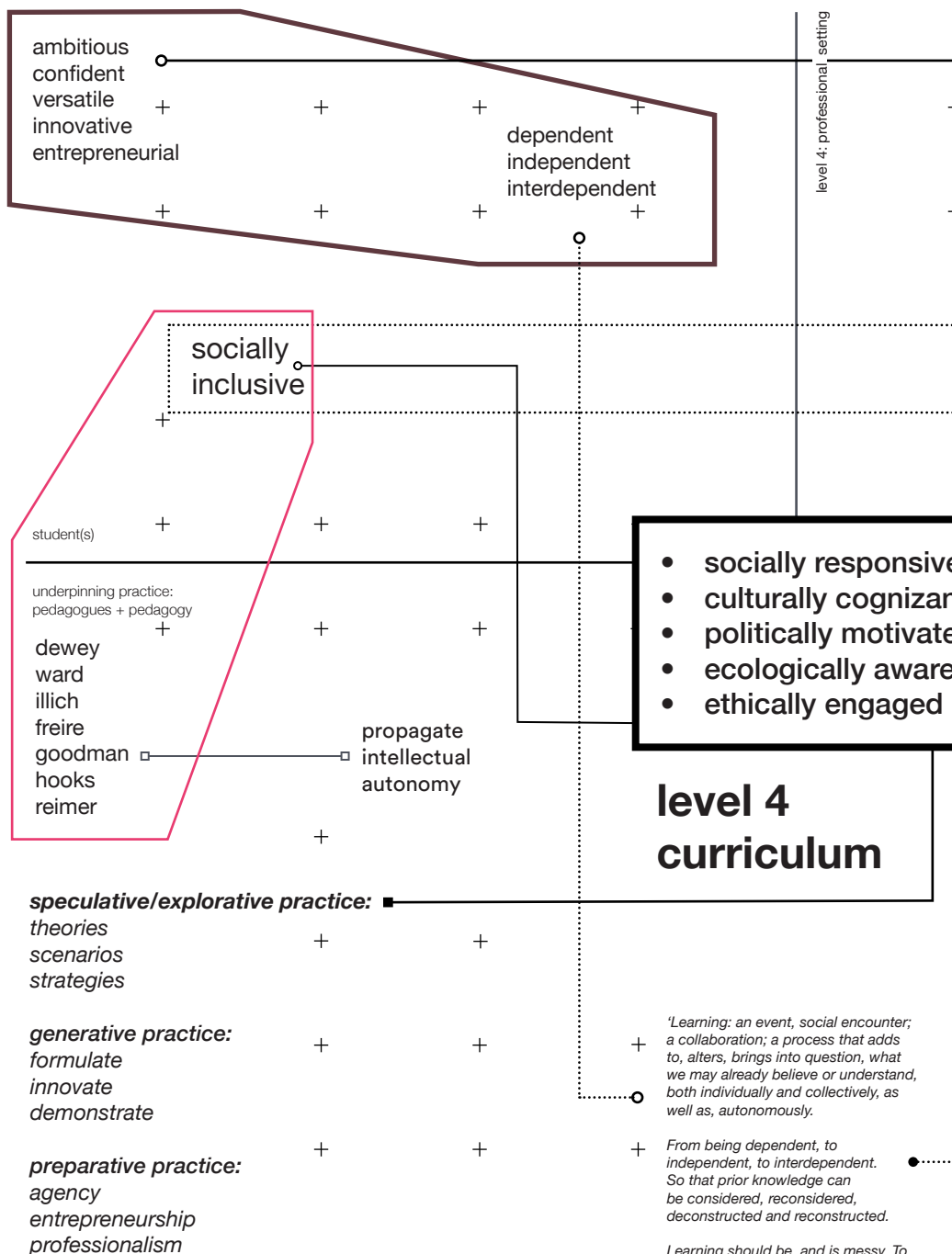


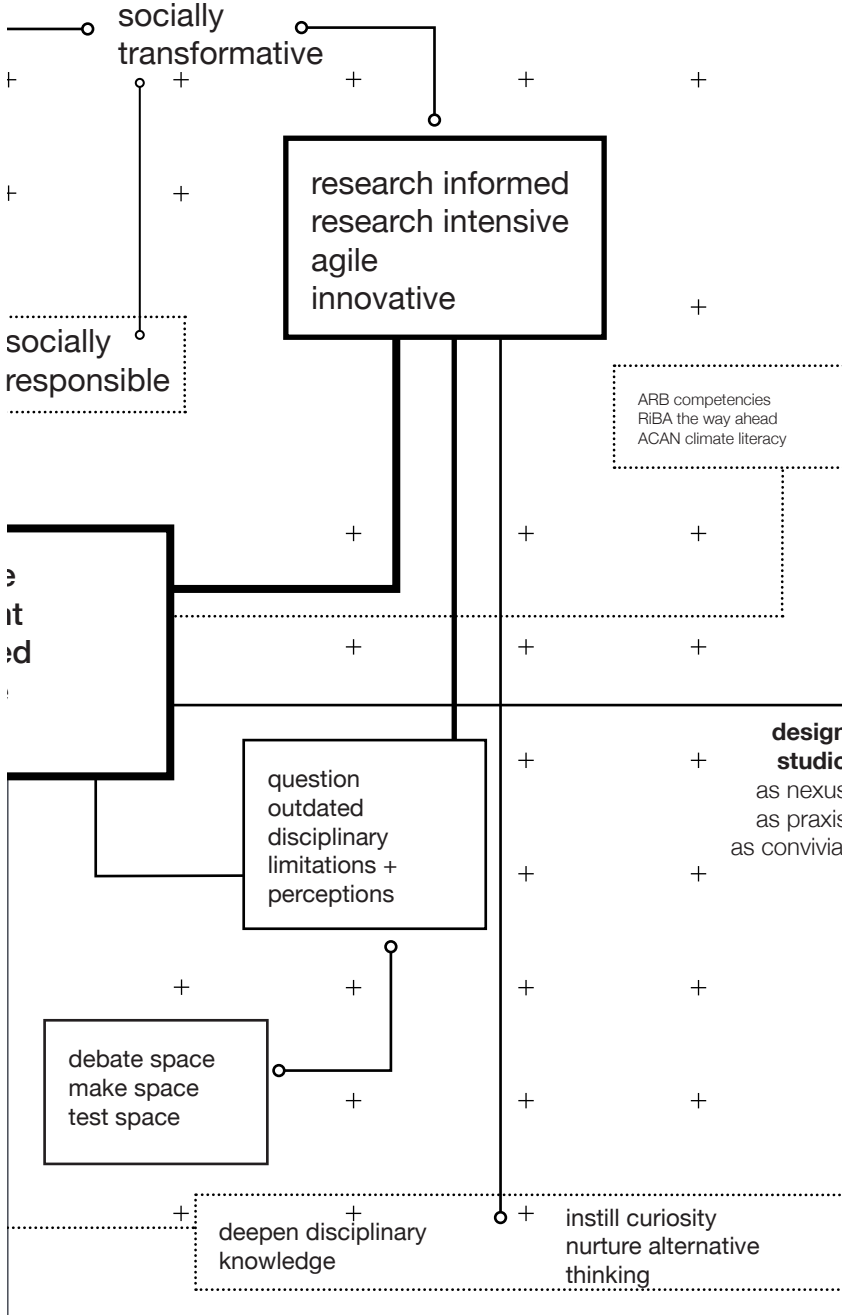
from real to real or live/live(d)

I'm unsure what is meant when academics/practitioners query education's relationship to the 'real world' or use the term 'live'. It is a conscious decision to avoid pitching the project as a 'real world' and or 'live', as it's not dissimilar to the pub that advertises live deejays. You wouldn't advertise a dead one, would you? (Is education dead? That's one for another day.)

So, does education sit outside 'real world' problems and scenarios? Are staff and our respective cohorts comprised of avatars, with no 'real world', 'lived' and/or 'live' emotions, experiences, traits and or desires. Surely if you accept that this is the case, then our education system is full to the brim of individuals that are part of the 'real world', and in time, will form the 'future world', bringing their beliefs, principles, obsessions, dreams, rituals and let's hope optimism, and as a result, their respective emotional, social, political, cultural, and ideological baggage with them. So, while this project may not be considered 'live' in a conventional sense, it is lived.







pedagogical approach::
underpinning practice







2023
24





Naki Alnaki - Vlad Ciobanu - Jean Louis Critien - Diego Rodrigues





Abdul Amao - Maame Konadu Baffoe - Emily Dentu - Ella Childs - Oliver Ly





Jude Bartlett - Rachel Beazley - Remi Brazzi - Leya Cahill - Jen Day





Anthia Afxentiou - Raneem Al Bukai - Olive Dada - Herry Anilbhai Rangani





Sibel Djemal - Didem Ekmekcioglu - Carter Foxwell - Issac Daynes Politi





Ariona Doko - Anna Dovha - Sam Farrington - Divya Grewal





Ben Dua - Libasse Fall - Malo Guedon-Powers - Nora Grimstad - Prudence Harvey





Sultan Handoom - Zhiliang Liu - Daniella Lopez - Lana Ness





Bethany Kneller - Khan - Madi Jeffrey - Ellisse Nasry - Wiktoria Stachowiak





Viktoria Hristova - Julia Krol - Saffie Mallinder



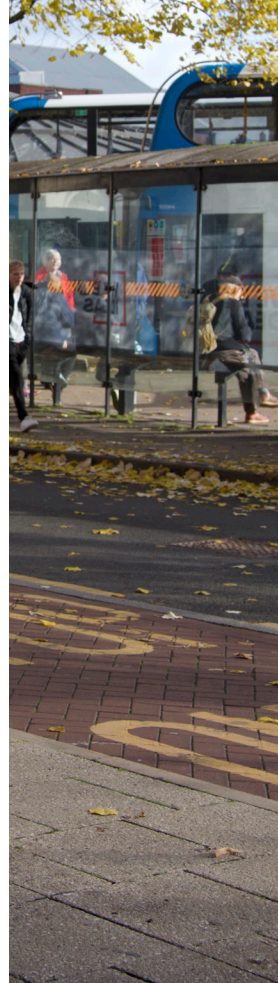
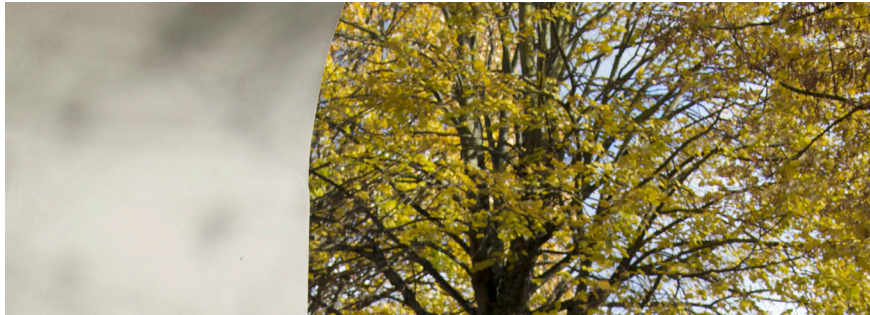


Miru Jung - Shalom Lejarde - Finn McIntyre





Maria Oliinyk - Torsha Rezoan - Niamh Talbot





Tianna Osho - Caetana Ramos De Magalhaes Nazareth De Oliveira





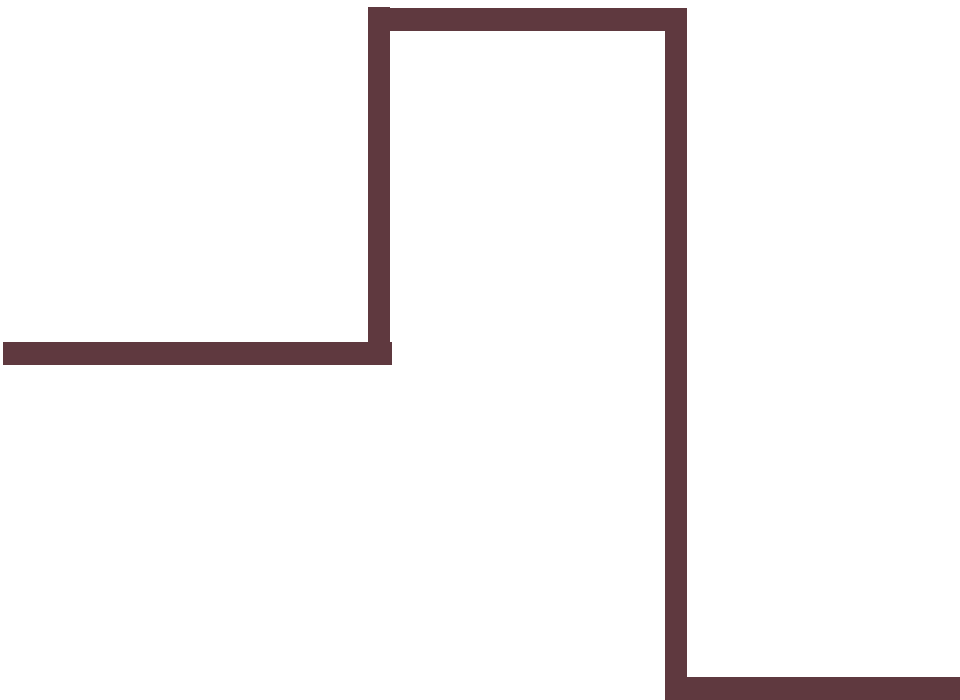
Cruso Phillips - Sharkira Ryan - Nomena Rakotoarisoa - Seher Yorulmaz





Dimitris Papapetrou - O Pitsillides - P Pitsillides - Ollie Rickwood









2022
23





Lilly Andrews - Max Bonacorsi - Kitty Davison





Kete Djan - Lizzie Grinter - Mia Meaney Johnson





Paige Andrews - Osam Bekit - Anita Bushati





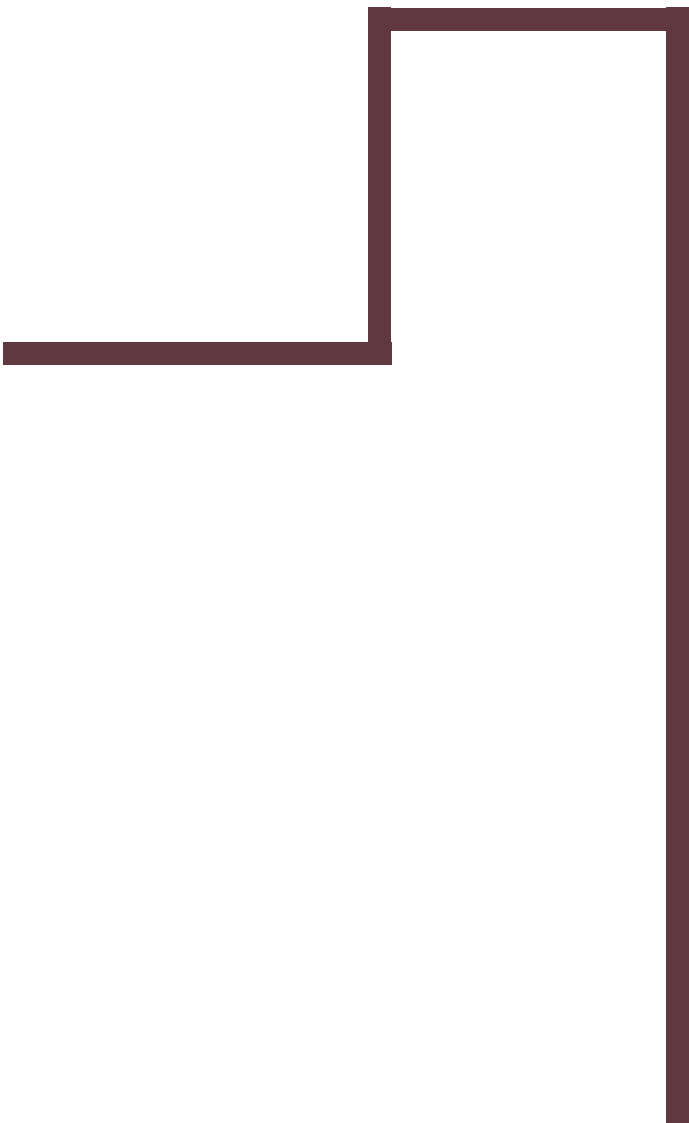
Alex Lingley - Bruno Lo Giudice - Poppy Martin - Harvey Permaul





Andres Ruiz-Macua - Patryk Szejnik - Harvey Tolman









2021
22





Harvey Amos - Osam Bekit - Lewis Burch - Charlie Cukic





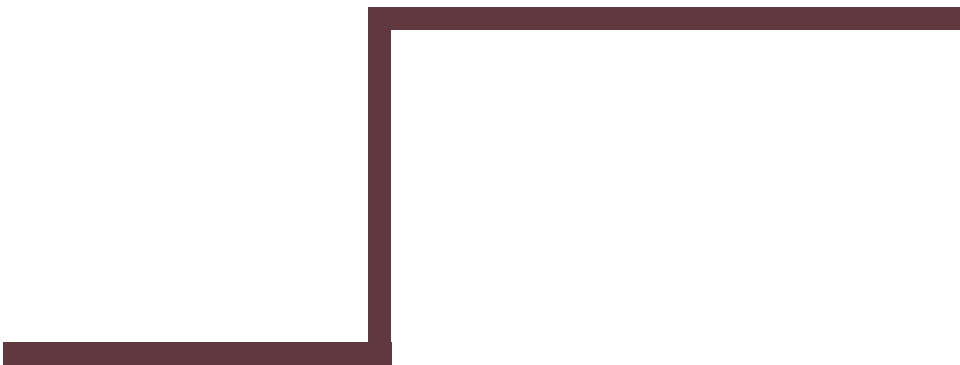
Necati Aykol - Aurora Tzouma - Gemma Collins - Muhannad Darwish





Mollie Ellis - Cecily Foster - Casey Gutsell - Faith Gorham









2020 21?



