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Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World

Lindsay Garcia

*College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences*

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Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World

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ABSTRACT

*Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World* explores vacant commercial buildings as the failure of capitalist enterprise to create separation between the human and the nonhuman. Emphasizing a posthumanist perspective, I utilize art to create a trans-species logic that will help break down ideological barriers based in traditional humanist frameworks. I start by looking at Williamsburg’s history, present day, and the city’s relationship to global capitalism. Williamsburg’s economic status has been fraught with challenges since its founding in 1623 as a British colony. The paper continues through an investigation into the vibrancy of the city or lack thereof and how capitalist impulses hide the vitality of the city’s architectural matter. Employing the lens of Sarah Ahmed’s “Affective Economies” and Jane Bennett’s new materialism, I will explore the waste produced by the city as a counterpoint to its vibrancy. Next, these theories are applied to an art exhibition I curated in March 2015, which included work by other artists as well as my own. My contribution is a project titled *Spaces of Williamsburg* that documents vacant buildings and points to how visualizing the agency and affect of matter can be positively transformative. Lastly, I imagine a solution to Williamsburg’s lack of vibrancy by producing images and fostering spaces that encourage a more equitable, trans-species urban condition that Jennifer Wolch calls *zoopolis*. As artistic models for this project of spatial and ecological reimagination, I refer to works such as Doug Aitken’s *migrations* series and Matt Bua’s *bhome*, which envision the standpoints of nonhuman animals and ecosystems in the construction of new structures and the re-development of existing structures. In the new “zoopolitan” Williamsburg, less waste will be created, fewer species will die off, nonhuman bodies will become subjects instead of objects, and less of a deadening affect will pervade the human population of the city.
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This Masters is dedicated to my dog Winslow who continues to show me how relationships between humans and nonhumans can enrich human and nonhuman life...
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PREFACE

On April 25, 2015, I moved from a highly corporatized medium-rise apartment complex behind a movie theatre in Williamsburg, Virginia, built just before the financial panic of 2008, into a small old-ish one-level house on the other side of town (Figures 1 & 2). This house in particular spoke to me because of its direct connection to the history of Williamsburg, American architecture, and American capitalism. The house was built in the 1930s when its owners were asked to sell their original home on Duke of Gloucester Street in order to make way for the restoration of Williamsburg's Colonial Capital with Rockefeller money, which turned the historic area into a tourist site.\footnote{This information comes from a casual conversation that I had with my landlord, Dale Picken.} The house itself is in decent repair, but what has become especially apparent to me through this transition from brand new structure to eighty-year-old structure is that immediately upon the erection of a building intended for human habitation or labor, other species attempt to get in: bugs through any miniature hole, plants through any crack in the foundation, mice through still more holes in the foundation, bacteria from the soil that my dog carries in with him; the list goes on.

In general, human relationships with nonhuman animals are tenuous at best, especially in cities and larger towns. As Jennifer Wolch declares in her article "Zoopolis,"

In the west, many of us interact with or experience animals only by keeping captives of a restricted variety or eating ‘food’ animals sliced into steak, chop and roast. We get a sense of wild animals only by watching \textit{Wild Kingdom} re-runs or going to Sea World to see the latest in a long string of short-lived ‘Shamus.’ In our apparent mastery of urban nature, we
are seemingly protected from all nature’s dangers but chance losing any sense of wonder and awe for the non-human world.²

She continues: “The distanciation of wild animals has simultaneously stimulated the elaboration of a romanticized wildness used as a means to peddle consumer goods, sell real estate, and sustain the capital accumulation process — reinforcing urban expansion and environmental degradation.”³ In other words, as capitalism expands and architectural technologies develop, it appears as if humans become better at keeping “nature”⁴ out of our quotidian lives by creating a visual and physical separation between ourselves and nonhuman animals by erecting walls. However, this separation also elides the fact that we are actually living in a posthumanist world, constructed of buildings that cannot keep the other species out, that are always already enmeshed in a multiplicity of species, flows of ideas, objects⁵, architectures, information, economies, and time. Pramod Nayar in his 2014 book Posthumanism defines critical posthumanism as “the radical decentering of the traditional sovereign, coherent and autonomous human in order to demonstrate how the human is always already evolving with, constituted by and constitutive of multiple forms of life and machines.”⁶ Capitalist buildings, or, those built predominately to house commercial ventures, are

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³ Wolch, “Zoopolis,” 34.
⁴ I am choosing to use “nature” to speak about anything that comes from the allegedly untouched by human natural world. By placing quotations around it, I am admitting its failure to be without human impact as I state it.
⁵ Throughout this paper, I refer to “objects.” My definition for object is matter which is not a human, nonhuman animal, bug, bacteria, plant, or any other living being that can be scientifically classified as a species (aka not something that comes from “nature”). This definition under posthumanist analysis is already hypocritical considering I am arguing that none of these objects are completely devoid of other species and instead, eraareassemblages of matter, nonliving and living.
actually perfect examples of critical posthumanism trumping the capitalist impulse to hide interactions among species, objects, and technologies and treat all that is nonhuman as “other.” As I argue in this thesis, capitalist architecture fails to create this discreet separation between humans and nonhumans, revealing capitalism’s foundering as purely humanist endeavor.
INTRODUCTION: CAPITALIST ARCHITECTURE IN A POSTHUMANIST WORLD

All architectural spaces are primarily intended for human visualization and habitation (instead of, say, for nonhuman animals or objects). They are also deeply interconnected with flows of capital. As Peggy Deamer writes in her edited volume *Architecture and Capitalism*, “Because a building costs so much money, construction—and within it, architecture—necessarily works for and within the monetary system.” Capital, in fact, touches every aspect of a human-built structure. She goes on: “Money has implications for those who own the property, who develop the property, who design the building, who actually build the building, who experience the architecture visually, who occupy the building, and who controls its dissemination through the media.” Not only is capital at stake in every construction project, but the tenets of capitalism create a world in which capital must constantly move to maintain itself. David Harvey posits, “[Capitalism] constructs a distinctive geographical landscape, a produced space of transport and communications, of infrastructures and territorial organizations, that facilitates capital accumulation during one phase of its history, only to have to be torn down and reconfigured to make way for further accumulation at a later stage.” In Williamsburg, this leads to frequent vacant buildings—both newly constructed and older and harder to lease—as the inevitable result of obsolescence in this capitalist spatial economy. What are the implications of so

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8 Ibid, 2.
much emptiness and the constant buildup of debris from new construction and dilapidated older buildings? What happens to these structures when they are vacant for long periods of time? What agency do they have? What affect do they create in local human populations? What nonhuman populations do they house, foster, and/or displace?

In today’s United States of America, along with many other capitalist countries, humans take many actions to manage other species, some of which we designate as pests to be exterminated or otherwise controlled. We plug holes, swat with a piece of plastic, insert chemicals into housewares, tear down a building, or construct a new one, all in order to improve our economic condition and, in so doing, prove our dominion over “nature” by separating ourselves from nonhumans. One might argue that one of capitalism’s main effects is to create this distance between humans and everything else. Wolch argues that “alienation from animals results from specific political-economic structures, social relations, and institutions operative at several spatial scales.”\footnote{Wolch, “Zoopolis,” 30.} This distance, or alienation, happens on multiple human sensory planes, but I will focus on the visual sphere. I argue that in the city of Williamsburg the quantity of empty buildings pokes a hole in this distance and actually begins to image a more posthumanist world, made up of relationships between humans and all that is nonhuman.\footnote{Using the word “empty” here is problematic, because, as I mentioned before, buildings are always “inhabited” even if no humans live, work, or pass through the building, but I will use empty and vacant interchangeably throughout the paper.}

The title of this paper, \textit{Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World}, refers to the commercial architectural spaces (think: box store, strip mall, 

\footnote{10 Wolch, “Zoopolis,” 30. \footnote{11 Using the word “empty” here is problematic, because, as I mentioned before, buildings are always “inhabited” even if no humans live, work, or pass through the building, but I will use empty and vacant interchangeable throughout the paper.}
Learning from Las Vegas’s duck and decorated shed,¹² and all its ancestors) in Williamsburg, Virginia, as they are touched by both capitalism and posthumanism upon their vacancy. Housed within the paper is a look at some of the problems and opportunities created by this capitalist system (a.k.a. the economic growth=success model) in its ceaseless generation and obsolescence of architecture. Building upon my personal story in the Preface about individual homes, I use a posthumanist perspective to examine this city’s vacant commercial buildings, treating them as mini laboratories for investigating capitalism’s failure to cover up existing trans-species relations along with its tendency to create poor conditions for humans, nonhumans, objects, and environments alike.

This Thesis is broken into two sections, each with two parts. Section One begins by looking at Williamsburg’s history, present day, and the city’s relationship to global capitalism. Williamsburg’s economic status has been fraught with challenges since its founding in 1632 as a British colony (then known as Middle Plantation), and this track record does not bode well for the future of the city, especially as it plays out in architectural form. The second part of Section One investigates the vibrancy of the city or lack thereof and how capitalist impulses hide the vitality of the city’s architectural matter. Employing the lens of Sarah Ahmed’s “Affective Economies” and Jane Bennett’s new materialism, I will explore the waste produced by the city as a counterpoint to its

vibrancy. Section Two begins by applying Ahmed’s and Bennett’s theories to an art exhibition I curated in March 2015 also titled *Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World*. The exhibition included work by other artists as well as my own. By focusing here on my contribution, a photographic project titled *Spaces of Williamsburg* that uses a posthumanist perspective to document vacant buildings around the area, I argue that visualizing the agency and affect of matter can be positively transformative. Section Two concludes by imagining a solution to Williamsburg’s lack of vibrancy in the following way: by producing images and fostering spaces that encourage a more equitable, trans-species urban condition that Jennifer Wolch calls *zoöpolis*. As artistic models for this project of spatial and ecological reimagining, I refer to works such as Doug Aitken’s *migrations* series and Matt Bua’s *bhome*, which envision the standpoints of nonhuman animals and ecosystems in the construction of new structures and the re-development of existing structures. In the new “zoöpolitan” Williamsburg, less waste will be created, fewer species will die off, nonhuman bodies will become subjects instead of objects, and less of a deadening affect will pervade the human population of the city.
SECTION ONE

PART I: WILLIAMSBURG DEMOGRAPHICS, HISTORY, AND CAPITALISM

In some ways, the city is sort of falling apart. For example, the leading tourist attraction, Colonial Williamsburg (which is actually two enormous corporations), did not reach its financial goals in 2014 due to a shift in education across the country away from history. However, because Williamsburg contains this renowned spectacle of living history, situated next to the equally historic College of William and Mary, along with many recently constructed shiny chain stores on Monticello Road and around town, there are multiple forces at play to make it appear otherwise. The tourism industry has made the city vastly overbuilt with niche consumer businesses, hotels, motels, chain stores, and outlets in the meandering search for capital.

In the mid-twentieth century as Colonial Williamsburg gained popularity among tourists, “parasitic” businesses began to grow up around the historic area. Richard Handler and Eric Gable in their early 1990s revisionist ethnography of Colonial Williamsburg *The New History in an Old Museum* define parasitic businesses as those which “use their proximity to Colonial Williamsburg to sell products that might tarnish the foundation’s reputation,” such as Williamsburg Pottery and other shops that do not sell the “authentic” historical consumer goods.

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15 Ibid.
made by interpreters at the Museum. In an effort to control commerce in the area, in 1969, Colonial Williamsburg sold a large stretch of land to Anheuser-Busch Corporation for which to build a beer brewing facility, to develop an upscale residential real estate venture called Kingsmill, and to construct the large theme park Busch Gardens. The latter intended to contrast the serious and "authentic" historical discourse at Colonial Williamsburg and elevate the reputation and perceived purity of the Museum. Since the late 1960s, parasitic businesses and those catering to a particular type of middle class white tourist continued to pop up around the city. Because these businesses need to be housed, and because it is often cheaper and more convenient to build something new than to rehab an older building, construction around the city is a constant eyesore. Visually this building activity gives the impression of economic success, which may in some cases be real, but it leaves more structures empty and creates waste and exploitation of nonhumans.

Architect and postmodern theorist Rem Koolhaas calls this type of architectural debris "Junkspace" in his influential 2002 article of the same name. Junkspace is "the residue mankind leaves on the planet" and "what remains after modernism has run its course, or more precisely what coagulates while modernization is in progress, its fallout." While Koolhaas champions this type of development to some extent, Junkspace has serious consequences for humans, nonhumans, objects, and environments and acts as a pre-apocalyptic

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16 Ibid, 41.
theorization for the world under capitalist domination. It is constantly in flux and changing: “Junkspace sheds architectures like a reptile sheds skins, is reborn every Monday morning.”18 Because of Williamsburg’s layers of historic development (as Colonial Capital, debauched farm town, site of restoration/Disneyland-ification/tourism, and the maintenance of the latter), the contemporary Junkspace is illuminated in its contrast to the historic preservation sites, even if the historic spaces are just Junkspace under a different name, or with a different aesthetic, in the continuous search of capital in the present moment.

Colonial Williamsburg is an excellent example of how capitalism attempts to create spaces controlled by humans that are sterile as well as spaces that tell a story intended to be perceived as absolute truth. Even though the Museum allows the horses it husbands to poop in the middle of the street in the name of “authenticity,” as Handler and Gable describe, “it does not include the filth and stench that would have been commonplace in an eighteenth-century colonial town.”19 It also has “no visible signs of exploitation”20 given the “authentic” past included large numbers of African slaves as well as the underlying animal exploitation that is always below the surface and never discussed (except with regards to its Rare Breeds21 program in which historic breeds of horses, sheep, and cows are reproduced to give the viewer another look into the “authentic”

16 Ibid, 178.
19 Handler and Gable, The New History in an Old Museum, 44.
20 Michael Wallace quoted in Ibid, 44.
21 For more information on the Colonial Williamsburg Rare Breeds Program, please see: http://www.history.org/history/teaching/enewsletter/volume2/january04/techtips.cfm.
past). Its quest for authenticity, truth, and only sharing the facts as interpreted through costumed laborers is always false, always a cover. In the early 1990s, there was a guided tour entitled *The Patriot’s Tour* that accidentally devoted itself to underscoring all of the inauthenticity of the modern Museum. The tour pointed out the idiosyncratic fissures between what was “authentic” versus where modern fixtures had to be hidden, where things were reconstructed and renovated, and where the visualization portrayed by the actors around the Museum differed from what one would encounter in realistic eighteenth-century life. Of the tour, Handler and Gable write,

“Because every interpreter spent so much time calling attention to what the foundation was effectively disguising—to anachronisms we might not have noticed on our own—we nicknamed the Patriot’s Tour the ‘invisible landscape tour.’ For us, this attention to the invisible landscape took on the kind of rapid masking, unmasking, remasking juxtaposition of surface and substance...that is associated with the postmodern.”

This tour elucidates the Junkspace quality of Colonial Williamsburg, even though it is meant to be more “authentic” than the other newer structures in Williamsburg’s built landscape. Part of this postmodernism, too, is the battle between attempted authenticity and keeping the visitors comfortable and happy. A small example of this, also pointed out during *The Patriot’s Tour*, is that the trees lining Duke of Gloucester Street would not have been there; however, in order to create shade from the trying Virginia heat, Colonial Williamsburg added them. The middle-class white tourists as well as those who can afford to live in real estate developments such as Kingmill are the predominant consumers in

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Williamsburg and thus need to be catered to for the economic health of the City because at $50.99 per adult and $25.49 per child, a visit to Colonial Williamsburg is not accessible to all humans.

In 2013, to protect Williamsburg’s “authentic” landmarks, *Design Review Guidelines* were written by the City of Williamsburg Planning Department to keep certain areas in the historic district and surrounding areas visually appealing to visitors. According to the second chapter “Aesthetic Objectives,”

The guiding principle behind the *Design Review Guidelines* is to enhance the quality of life for all residents and visitors to the City by preserving the character and desirable aesthetic features of the community. In order to ensure that this character is preserved, it is necessary to protect significant features from destruction and to ensure that new projects in the City do not detract from the identifiable character of the community. New construction projects and substantial renovation projects should respect the scale, materials, massing and setbacks of neighboring buildings and the overall streetscape. New construction should preserve and enhance the natural features present on the project site and along the street. Signs and awnings should be designed to enhance the visual image of the property and to complement the existing conditions along the street.  

Clearly, it is important to the community and local government to have a pleasing-looking town, and there is nothing necessarily wrong with this; however, it still omits the histories of people who are not in the dominant canon of history (namely slaves, free African-Americans, and women even if Colonial Williamsburg does address some of these humans in the Museum’s interpretation of history). Interesting to note in this language, too, is that “construction should preserve and enhance the natural features on the project site”.

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site and along the street.” The intentionality of this does seem to present a case for posthumanist intervention, such that existing plants, animals, and bacteria-rich soil should remain untouched by future construction projects to proliferate a trans-species urbanization program. However, it would be safe to say that the City Council is refers to the “natural” tree lines along the streets, which provide shade to the City’s visitors and were planted by humans, and not to preservation of the already diminishing ecosystems of nonhumans. Of course, nonhuman beings and objects will always exist within any architectural space, but developments often create extensive changes to the habitats that nonhumans evolve to occupy.

In this document, the City Council divides portions of the City into three Architectural Preservation Districts and a Corridor Protection District. The first three correspond to the historic district of Colonial Williamsburg and nearby neighborhoods. The latter represents the entrances to Colonial Williamsburg from local highways including sections of Jamestown Road, Richmond Road, Monticello Road, South Henry Street, Colonial Parkway, Route 199, and a large swath of land beyond the northeast side of Colonial Williamsburg. The introduction to the section on commercial buildings states:

> The purpose of these guidelines is to develop an overriding architectural quality of design for commercial buildings in the commercial corridors. A consistent high quality of architectural design and building maintenance will improve the image of the corridors and contribute to a pleasing appearance along the major entryways in our community.”

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While the words “high quality” and “pleasing appearance” are not clearly defined, these guidelines provide information about what colors buildings can be painted (Benjamin Moore has a Williamsburg line), what style and era of buildings are acceptable (eighteenth century buildings are forbidden, for example), and clarify that “Generic franchise design and buildings designed as Chinese pagodas, Italian villas, Mexican haciendas, New England lobster shacks and the like are not acceptable.”25 Therefore, the buildings must look “authentically” American and more specifically, “authentically” Virginian. These designations quite possibly make the parasitic business problem worse by requiring the non-Colonial Williamsburg approved businesses to look like the “authentic” ones, most of which are modern-day reconstructions anyways. The repetitive nature of form may include bricks, taupe paint, and historic replicas of light fixtures, but it is little more than Junkspace under a non-normative aesthetic quality (just because they do not look like strip malls doesn’t mean they are not strip malls). Areas outside of these four districts, such as New Town (which falls outside of the corporate limits of the City of Williamsburg, even though it maintains a Williamsburg address), do not have to follow these guidelines. Guidelines such as these mask the vacant buildings from view because they look like the other buildings in the area, and it is no surprise that nonhuman animals are not mentioned at all.

Williamsburg’s embodiment of the endless pursuit of capital, as it is visualized in the architecture of the City, makes it the perfect site for the objects

25 Ibid.
produced by contemporary global capitalism working in and through human bodies. Ecofeminist scholar Ariel Salleh argues, “globalization is a colonising [sic] force that literally drives the contradictions of late capitalist patriarchal relations right down to our body cells.”26 For instance, the coffee that we ingest from a local coffee shop, such as Aromas on Prince George Street (in the first Architectural Preservation District and thereby brick and painted white with a subtle black awning), was plucked off of a bush in Honduras by a low-paid field laborer, shipped to Williamsburg on a container ship by way of a major seaport, probably Norfolk, and then roasted locally to provide the consumer with a semi-decent product at a major price mark up and a caffeine buzz.27 As the coffee is ingested, its cells enter the human blood stream and literally become human cells.

Jane Bennett, in her book Vibrant Matter, makes a similar argument about dietary fats, asserting that foods have special agency:

Here we stumble upon a banal instance of what Michel Foucault might have called the ‘productive power’ of food: once ingested, once, that is, food coacts with the hand that places it in one’s mouth, with the metabolic agencies of intestines, pancreas, kidneys, with cultural practices of physical exercise, and so on, food can generate new human tissue.28

This food, which in Williamsburg comes from various fast food chains and local restaurants that source their foods from faraway lands, physically creates fat and

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27 This is not necessarily how Aromas gets its coffee; however, this type of commodity flow is common. More information about coffee shop supply chains can be found in Daniel R. Reichman, The Broken Village: Coffee, Migration, and Globalization in Honduras (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2011) and at http://www.globalization101.org/cup-of-joe-globalization-and-coffee-2/.
28 Bennett, Vibrant Matter, 40.
muscle in human bodies, and these substances have the potential to “weaken the power of human wills, habits, and ideas,” thus changing human physical traits, emotional states, and brain functioning. This could help to account for human blindness in seeing the waste produced by capitalism’s production of new buildings.

Therefore, the body and its senses are the sites by which globalization and capitalism are experienced, even though different bodies experience the effects in different ways depending on geography, socio-political issues, species, climate, and other factors. Because many of these actants are microscopic and invisible to the human eye, their effects on human bodies, such as mental and physical ailments, cannot be pinned easily to particular particulates of global capitalism. As David Harvey argues, “the [human] body is an unfinished project, historically and geographically malleable in certain ways...[it] continues to evolve and change in ways that reflect both an internal transformative dynamics...and the effect of external processes.” The body and global capitalism are always already in relation to each other. The body and global capitalism are also at opposite ends of the spectrum of spatial scales: the body is the smallest unit of measurement, and globalization is too unquantifiably large to be measured as it touches every aspect of daily life for all species, albeit in different ways, as the result of the contradictions of capitalism. An architectural structure and its location within a locality lies somewhere in between.

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29 Ibid 43.
30 Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, 98.
Surely, Williamsburg does not have the urban problems or uneven geographic development of places such as Detroit, Baltimore, Cape Town, or Mumbai. In fact, today it is not even very diverse in terms of race considering African slaves made up half of the City in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 2013, the U.S. Census reported 75.9% of the City was white alone, 15.3% African American, and 16% of mixed race or other minority identifications. There appears to be a wide gap in class status, which was certainly true in the colonial period, when human social standing in Williamsburg ranged from Royal Governor, the highest possible status, to African slave, the lowest. It is important to note that present-day reportage on class and financial matters is a little bit misleading. For example, the City of Williamsburg is only a small subsection of James City County, even though James City County residents and businesses procure Williamsburg addresses. The numbers in census data only encapsulate those that live within the corporate limits.

Additionally, the median household income category excludes both retirement

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32 I recognize that these numbers do not add up to 100%. I'm not sure I'm reading the data completely accurately. The information comes from: United States Census Bureau. “Williamsburg City, va.” http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/51/51830.html (accessed April 19, 2015).
33 This is based on observation of various housing structures in Williamsburg and not on numbers. There are the largest of mansions and the smallest of shacks; there are expensive luxury rental apartment complexes, and people who live week to week in models. I'm not sure how to quantify this information.
34 Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg*, 3.
35 In 2013, the median household income in Williamsburg was $48,616, more than $15,000 less than Virginia's median household income of $63,907. Williamsburg's median household income was almost $4,000 below the United States national median of $52,250, For Williamsburg and Virginia's medians, I used United States Census Bureau. “Williamsburg City, va.” http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/51/51830.html (accessed April 19, 2015). For the national average, I used Amanda Noss “Household Uncome: 2013, American Commnity Survey Briefs,” United States Census Bureau,
income and resources of the students at the College of William and Mary. The percentage of Williamsburg’s population of people over the age of 65 in 2013 was 15.1%\(^{36}\) (which does not reflect that many of the retirement communities and subdivisions that house retired persons are located outside of the corporate limits). Retirement, of course, is a privilege not extended to all populations, and many of the retirement communities in Williamsburg are largely made up of people who specifically move to Williamsburg to retire, an indicator of wealth in itself. CNN’s *Money Magazine* boasts that Williamsburg is one of the top five best places to retire, although, not surprisingly, the last sentence of the blurb on its website states “critics argue that it’s becoming too built up.”\(^{37}\) Also interesting is that Williamsburg’s poverty levels are well above the national average, which was 14.5% in 2012 to Williamsburg’s 19.5% from 2009-2013.\(^{38}\)

This essay is not really about the people of Williamsburg, nor is it about housing them, but those things are pertinent to the commerce and commercial architectural spaces in the town, as the residents (and the tourists) are the consumers, which keep some of these businesses going. So, what creates the polarity of pseudo-ghost town versus new development in this city? Is there a relationship between this massive fissure in class scales and empty architectural spaces? Dead modern structures and a living history museum? Harvey


recommends looking at these issues from multiple spatial scales, from the macro to the micro. As mentioned before about Williamsburg’s coffee supply, does this problem generate from human cellular structures affected by global capitalism (i.e. human brains have been infected to create chaos instead of balance)? Is it a local issue? Or is commercial building emptiness a national, an American problem? Do we need to look at how Williamsburg is affected by globalization and capitalism-at-large to get anywhere towards solving the problem?

At the micro level, Williamsburg acts suburban by way of tree-lined streets and gated communities and has a population of 14,691 according to the 2014 census estimate.\(^{39}\) It is, however, classified as a city and not a town. As mentioned before, many of the surrounding areas which fall outside of the corporate limits are considered Williamsburg but are not reflected in the census numbers, which creates problems when talking about what populations the commercial structures of the City service. The government city profile boasts that it is a “regional employment center,” giving 12,000 of its total 13,879 jobs, mostly in the hospitality industries, to people who live outside of Williamsburg proper (so here, James City County, Norge, and Toano probably count, although I can’t be positive because different reports count different areas). Paradoxically, the unemployment rate of the City proper remains at 6.5%, one full percentage point higher than the national average.\(^{40}\)

At the more macro level, many of the businesses, especially the ones that have been built in the last ten years and continue to be built, are part of larger chain stores, where the initial capital comes from a national corporate headquarters outside of Williamsburg. Alternately, chain businesses open through franchising, which involves a local resident putting up her or his own money to sell the products of a well-known brand. Either way, if the Williamsburg location does not do well, it is not a major financial hit for the company. In the last nine months, a Pizzeria Uno on Bypass Road closed after 20 years of service with no reasoning given. Additionally, after 38 years of business in the same location (since 1967), Friendly’s at 1803 Richmond Road closed. The reasoning given was that the lease expired. However, Massachusetts-based Friendly’s Corporation, now owned by Sun Capital, shut down sixty-three stores in October 2011, as it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection; thirty-seven stores in January of 2012, narrowly avoiding bankruptcy; and at least 3 stores in September of 2014 in Rockland and Westchester County, NY. According to The Huffington Post, Friendly’s attributes its financial problems to the 2008 recession and “the rising cost of cream,” but this is erroneous; their financial problems are “of [their] own making.” During Sun Capital’s takeover, they used


a sale-leaseback arrangement that had the restaurants paying above market rents to stay in the same buildings. The Williamsburg location was part of a shutdown of fifteen locations nationwide in November of 2014, including all fourteen locations in Ohio. Presently, a sign taped to the door reads: “Thank you for your years of patronage. This restaurant is closed” (Figure 3). In a photograph I took as part of the Spaces of Williamsburg series (for more detail on the series, please see the Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World: Exhibition section below), one sees a white brick and red-painted wood building clearly identifiable as a Friendly’s Restaurant in shade as the sun is about to come over the horizon line of the roof (Figure 4). The stencil of the logo, a cursive rendering of the restaurant’s name, remains visible as the sun damaged the paint surrounding the words. An industrial-sized vent fan sits atop the low roof while a faux cupola looms over the building, acknowledging the faux historical nature of the City’s architecture. The dull shade of the parking lot and the many faded yellow paint lines show the building’s age. On the right side of the photograph, other chain business signs show that the location is on a road of like businesses. The landscaping surrounding the building is still in good repair, with the bushes still in overly-manicured round shapes, although they are sparse. Because of the specificity of this building’s architecture, it is unlikely that another business would move into this location. It will either sit empty, while small animals, plants, bugs, and bacteria slowly take over the space, or the next renter or owner of the land

will tear down the building to make way for another highly-specific franchise’s architectural plans.

While much of Williamsburg’s commerce, especially outside of the historic district, is chain-based, commercial building emptiness also pertains to local businesses, such as Edwards Ham Shop. With roots going back to the 1920s, this business has slowly grown over the course of time into a multi-store and Internet sales success. The company sells ham and other products that are made in Surry, VA (just on the other side of the James River). The president of the company attempted to purchase the building at 1814 Richmond Road from Robert E. Yancey (the present building owner), but a deal could not be made, so he instead chose to relocate the business to a newer development a few miles down the street for a cheaper price. (5541 Richmond Road).\footnote{Brittany Voll, “Edwards Ham Shop, Starbucks Coming to Olde Towne Road in Williamsburg,” \textit{Williamsburg Yorktown Daily}, June 25, 2013, \url{http://wydaily.com/2013/06/25/edwards-ham-shop-starbucks-coming-to-olde-towne-road-in-williamsburg/} (accessed August 22, 2015).} The company moved into the new space in October of 2013. The original building pictured here (another photograph from the \textit{Spaces of Williamsburg} series) has fallen into disrepair in a short period of time (Figure 5). Framed symmetrically, the red clapboard house-like building (complete with chimney) still has a sign in the windows advertising the business. Someone has placed one letter per pane printed on 8.5 x 11 inch office paper “WE HAVE MOVED ONE MILE -- -- -- -- >>>> / 5541 RICHMOND RD THANK YOU.” The parking lot pavement is faded and fallen leaves are collecting at the curb and in the front of the building. On the front eave of the building, there is a solid darker red shape indicating that a sign
used to hang there, and underneath, a light is falling out of its fixture that likely illuminated that sign. According to the photograph, there are no indications of nonhuman animal life; however, when the shop was open, nonhuman animals, albeit dead ones (ham), splayed out on every surface and in every refrigerator wrapped in plastic to slow growing bacteria. Behind the building, one sees pine trees, which gives the appearance that this building could be isolated, when, in fact, it is just across the street from the Friendly’s that went out of business in November 2014.

According to a September 9, 2008 New York Times article entitled “A Squeeze on Retailers Leaves Holes at Malls” which focuses predominately on Chicago suburbs, Williamsburg’s relationship to chain stores and empty architectural spaces is not unique.\(^\text{46}\) The financial panic of 2008 created much bankruptcy and closure at the personal and commercial level across the country (and the globe due to Americanization); however the panic of 2008 is not the sole reason for Williamsburg’s financial problems. In fact, Williamsburg’s economic history is quite unusual as I will address later.

While it is relatively easy to do research on the financial health of an individual business or the human demographics of a town, there is no effective way to quantify the quality of nonhuman animal populations and other species in the same way that we do for humans. The best local reporting system is the Williamsburg Bird Club’s annual Spring Bird Count that records the number of

species found in the area and tallies the population within each species. Seventy-six seasoned bird watchers went around the City on May 2, 2015 to record these figures. This year, they found 150 species although obviously it is impossible to get exact numbers in this way.47 Thankfully, the City of Williamsburg (corporate limits) is serious about its birding as a designated bird sanctuary in which killing or hunting birds is illegal. Charting the exact effects of economic and architectural development on these nonhuman bodies also poses a challenge.

While studies have been done on the impact of various toxins on specific animals, such as the College of William and Mary's 2005 Cristol lab project that examined mercury contamination in terrestrial songbirds in central Virginia,48 capturing the information on a larger scale reaches beyond present-day technological processes and resources.

One of the main ways that development acts on animals is through habitat fragmentation, or “the division of natural habitat into progressively smaller patches of smaller total area isolated from each other by a matrix of habitats unlike the original.”49 By building roads, strip malls, and massive apartment complexes, fragmentation creates problems such as “faunal collapse, invasion of exotics, alteration/disruption of ecosystem processes,” “habitat loss and

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insularization,” and “a decline in biodiversity.” Capitalist developers and city planners rarely take into account nonhumans when drawing up architectural plans.

Subverting the language of development, Wolch declares:

Wildlands are not “empty” but teeming with nonhuman life; “development” involves a thorough denaturalization of the environment; “improved land” is invariably impoverished in terms of soil quality, drainage, and vegetation; and judgments of “highest and best use” reflect not only wild or feral animals but captives such as pets, lab animals, and livestock who live and die in urban space shared with people.

Within the “Code of the City of Williamsburg of 1992,” that describes city ordinances especially relating to buildings and construction, there is a chapter entitled “Animals.” While most of this section relates to pets, section 4-9 is called “Cruelty to animals.” In (a), the code reads:

Any person who overrides, overdrives, overloads, tortures, ill-treats, abandons, willfully inflicts inhumane injury or pain not connected with bona fide scientific or medical experimenta- tion to, or cruelly or unnecessarily beats, maims, mutilates or kills any animal, whether belonging to himself or another, or deprives any animal of necessary food, drink, shelter or emergency medical treatment, or causes any of the above things, or being the owner of such animal permits such acts to be done by another, or who willfully sets on foot, instigates, engages in, or in any way furthers any act of cruelty to any animal, or who shall carry or cause to be carried in or upon any vehicle or vessel or otherwise any animal in a cruel, brutal or inhumane manner, so as to produce torture or unnecessary suffering, shall be deemed guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished in accordance with Section 1-15 of this Code.

50 Ibid.
52 Code of the City of Williamsburg of 1992, Chapter 14, Section 4-9. “Cruelty to Animals.” Section 1-15 states: “Whenever an act or offense, or the failure to do any act, is declared to be a Class 1 misdemeanor, such act or offense shall be punished by a fine of not more than $1,000.00, or confinement in jail for notmore than 12 months, or both such fine and imprisonment.”
What I wish to draw attention to from this legalese is “deprives any animal of necessary food, drink, shelter or emergency medical treatment,” as this is exactly what habitat fragmentation does to animals as they are driven out of their ecosystems to make way for new developments. Should we fine or place all those invested in real estate or those who exterminate field mice and cockroaches from their homes in jail with a misdemeanor? Numbers and demographics of human and nonhuman populations aside, architectural spaces in their own right, as products of globalization and capitalism, work in and through human bodies, but not solely. In fact, architectural spaces also work in and through nonhuman bodies, as buildings always inhabit more species than just humans and more nonhumans than just pets. As a space is abandoned or left empty, this is amplified. Therefore, each human building is also a building for nonhumans, whether by intention or not. Despite capitalist forces of systemic extermination through architecture, buildings—especially abandoned ones—often become overrun with bugs, small animals, and plant life, each of which has also adapted to or co-evolved with the space. Pramod Nayar in his book *Posthumanism* articulates: “‘Life’ in posthumanist discourse is discussed as a process of becoming through new connections and mergers between species, bodies, functions, and technologies.”\(^{53}\) Is this not true of the “life” of architecture as well?

As many scholars and visitors know well, Williamsburg is an important site of American history. The details lie beyond the scope of this paper, but I will

\(^{53}\) Nayar, Posthumanism, 30-31.
highlight some of the key factors and contours of Williamsburg’s history, a history needless to say, that has been told emphatically from a humanist perspective largely devoid of records of nonhuman bodies. Because of its original status in Virginian colony of Great Britain, Williamsburg’s global link to commerce has always been intrinsic to its identity. And strangely enough, its most thriving times economically were: the eighteenth century, when the City acted as capital of Virginia from 1698 to 1780; and also, with a touch of irony, during the Great Depression, when John D. Rockefeller, one of the greatest capitalists of all time, purchased all of the dilapidated homes on Duke of Gloucester Street, giving the residents some money to work with as laborers restoring the buildings to their eighteenth-century appearance.54 According to Mark Wenger, Williamsburg never became a prosperous commercial city like Charleston or Philadelphia, the other colonial capitals, for two reasons. Firstly, it was not a port city, even though two rivers surrounded it. The rivers flow too far away from the center of town to be useful for serious commerce. Secondly, none of the gentry maintained their residences in the downtown areas; instead they made homes on the outskirts of town, in the surrounding farmlands.55 Given the following evidence, it is clear that Williamsburg has had trouble with empty architectural spaces since its founding in 1623. Its remote condition of being off-the-beaten track arguably continues to

54 Not all displaced residents were treated the same way; race and class was a factor in how much money was offered for the homes, whether a life tenure agreement was employed and how helpful the buyers were in finding the citizens new homes (Handler and Gable, The New History in an Old Museum, 73).
plague the city today in an era of new urbanist migration back to major metropolitan areas.

Even as early as 1699, as Virginia's Capital, for half of the year, when the House of Burgesses was not in session, the town was at least half empty. And when the capital moved to Richmond in 1780 at the request of Thomas Jefferson, who aimed to rid of corruption in government dubbing the City “Devilsburg,”56 the town immediately began to fall apart. As reported by Jedidiah Morse, a visiting New England cleric, in 1792, only twelve years since the capital had moved,

Everything in Williamsburg appears dull, forsaken, and melancholy—no trade—no amusements, but the infamous one of gaming—no industry and very little appearance of religion. The unprosperous state of the College, but principally the removal of the Seat of Government, have contributed much to the decline of this city.57

The nineteenth century, generally, was considered a “time of decay”58 where “drinking, gambling, cockfighting, horse racing,”59 as well as scarcity and a plethora of fires prevailed. Williamsburg also housed the first mental asylum in the United States, which opened in 1773 just off Duke of Gloucester Street. In the mid-nineteenth century, because of Dr. John Galt’s renowned “moral management program,” the patients were able to roam “unattended and at will about the neighborhood,” creating the reputation that Williamsburg was “a place .

57 Jedidiah Morse, 1792, as quoted in, Parke Rouse, Jr., Remembering Williamsburg: A Sentimental Journey through Three Centuries (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1989), 78.
58 Rouse, Jr., Remembering Williamsburg, 1.
59 Ibid, 79.
where ‘the lazy lived off the crazy.’ Williamsburg also played a significant role in both the American Revolution and the Civil War, conflicts that largely destroyed the town in both instances. In 1887, almost one hundred years after Morse’s account, Elizabeth Gilman, daughter of Daniel Coit Gilman, a founding president of Johns Hopkins University, wrote, “[Williamsburg] was a most pathetic place, full of the past with no present but one of dreary decay and no future.” Around the turn of the twentieth century, run-down Williamsburg had a population of approximately 1,000 residents, a college with about 200 students, a mental institution (Eastern State Hospital, which dates back to the eighteenth century) that housed 600 persons, and little else, all centered around Duke of Gloucester Street.

In the 1930s, everything changed due to the imposition of John D. Rockefeller’s master plan, as envisioned by W.A.R. Goodwin, to restore Duke of Gloucester Street to its eighteenth-century colonial condition and to open it to the public. Some have said that segregation was not an issue until the restoration began and Rockefeller money began buying up the houses. This is not to say that Williamsburg was untouched by Jim Crow and problematic race relations, but it was not a site of extreme racial tension. Meanwhile, Eastern State Hospital and commerce moved from the City’s center. The first main modern-style

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61 Elizabeth Gilman, 1887, as quoted in Parke Rouse, Jr., Remembering Williamsburg: A Sentimental Journey through Three Centuries (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1989), 103.
63 Greenspan, Creating Colonial Williamsburg, 24.
shopping center was located where the Food Lion rests on Richmond Road today. It was relocated there to get the locals away from the tourist shops at Merchant Square, the previous major site of commerce. And then the chain store revolution began to unfold and the tourist industry began to dominate the consumer capitalism of the City. The more recent inclusion of big box stores such as Walmart, Target, Michael’s, and Bed Bath & Beyond in the built landscape of the City underscores the entanglement of the city with the global economy as these stores sell cheap goods that originate offshore as well as threaten local businesses. It is thereby obvious that since the City’s birth, the hand of globalization and capitalist enterprise have always been present even when the town was in economic turmoil.

This brief history sets the stage for an exploration of the relationship between specific Williamsburg land and architectural space, capitalism, and how posthumanism is always already present. In 2010, the capitalist geography in Williamsburg expanded: developers found it necessary to tear down trees and ecosystems (enter: more habitat fragmentation) that did not enhance capital accumulation in order to fabricate a new city within the preexisting city. The Endowment Association of the College of William and Mary teamed up with venture capitalists C. C. Casey Limited Company to take over a 365-acre plot of land. They named it “New Town.” While the New Town website calls the
development a “mixed-use ‘New Urbanism community,’” its spectacle of newness is not enough to disguise all of the spaces leased for commerce.

One likely reason the college undertook this “New Urbanism” project was to counter the recent trend of people returning to the city (which is, ironically, the real “new urbanism”) instead of the “white flight” which drove people into suburban areas like Williamsburg in the middle of the twentieth century. By creating a more urban-looking environment, the College sought to entice possibly more people to stay in the City and/or to attend William and Mary. New Town’s website, for example, employs the language of gentrification. “A new urbanism community” is what happens when capitalists enter into poor and/or ethnic neighborhoods and bring their businesses at the detriment of the local community; however, prior to breaking ground, this land was the local community of the species in a field-like ecological setting, not minority humans. However, it is important to note that a 1952 “Location of Negro Dwelling Districts: Williamsburg and Vicinity” map makes clear that New Town butts up along the edge of what they consider to be a y-shaped “dwelling district” of this population (Figure 6).  

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66 According to William and Mary alumni, environmental science classes used to go to the location that is now Newtown to perform environmental impact reports on the water there.
The 2012 Williamsburg Economic Development Plan proclaims that Williamsburg was hit hard by the global economic downturn in 2008. Is it a coincidence that The College of William and Mary Office of Economic Development is housed within the boundaries of New Town itself? Capitalist logic follows that new businesses will bring new business and that will save the City from economic distress, right? But I would ask: why would any investor construct a brand new city in a landscape with so many vacancies? Is it just that, as Harvey suggests, capital needs to find new spaces to begin accumulating more capital? Surely the City must continue to abandon older spaces in search of the new, the shiny, the Disney land-like, artificial, utopian spectacles of today. And the sad reality is that it is much cheaper to construct a new building that to rehabilitate an older one (even those that are only 5-10 years old).

In a photograph I took in New Town in February 2015 (another Spaces of Williamsburg series photograph), a new brick building with painted white trim stands behind four perfectly manicured bushes covered in snow (Figure 7). On the left of the image is an orange and white construction cone, and on the right is the entrance to the office building. Sticking out of the snow, a sign reads “Office Space/Available/New Town/Thalhimer/757-873-3661.” In the reflection of the windows are some snow-covered cars. This homogeneous space could be literally anywhere in the Western world that gets snow, exacerbating the illusion of clean blankness, drawing attention to the never-ending impact of construction.

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69 Thalhimer is one of the major commercial real estate firms in the Williamsburg area. Please see: http://www.thalhimer.com.
on the environment, and nodding to the design guidelines provided by the City. The photograph has posthumanist implications and shows the interconnectedness of even the most banal “white cube” kinds of spaces. The snow carries chemicals that are polluted in the air from near and far lands, and as it melts within one or two days (based on Virginia winter temperatures), that water may enter the ground, collect on its concrete bed breeding bacteria, or enter the public sewage system, creating contamination until it evaporates into the atmosphere once again. The bushes likely house chipmunks, squirrels, mice, and birds, which, seeking shelter from the elements, may try to enter the brick building. The door handles are cesspools of bacteria transferred from the hands of all the humans who enter this particular building. As humans utilize this clean-looking space that also houses other species, flows of information as they interact with the time-dimension, they co-evolve with the environment. The building becomes part of them, and they leave their trace within the building as well.

Although not pertinent to all vacancies in the area, *The Virginia Gazette* reported that in March of 2015, 390,000 square feet of retail space in Williamsburg was “classified as distressed,”<sup>70</sup> meaning the landlord is in financial trouble either facing bankruptcy or a similar financial problem. According to *The Gazette*, there are four main causes of this problem: vacant commercial spaces, which would usually give the landlords money to pay their loans; the continuous

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construction of new rental spaces; most of the spaces available are of the “big box” variety; and shoppers are not turning to these stores as often. Even Williamsburg’s first modern urban sprawled shopping center, the 242,542 square foot plaza that houses Food Lion on Richmond Road, has had an 11.6% decline in operating revenues between the years 2012 and 2013. In August of 2014, the building became the property of Citigroup after the landlord defaulted on its loan.71

Do questionable economic times and vacant buildings create problems for today’s citizens of Williamsburg? According to the 2012 Economic Plan, one of the top goals of this five-year overhauling is that “Williamsburg maintains a high quality sense of place.”72 And according to the 2012 National Citizen Survey, 92% of the residents in Williamsburg claimed the town to be a “good or excellent place to live.”73 “An excellent place to live” and a “high quality sense of place” are not the same thing. Williamsburg is a great place to live in the sense that there is hardly any crime in conjunction with a very active police force, the schools are good, the community is clean (thanks to a large city-wide grounds keeping crew), there are ample amounts of resources, and the ability to purchase anything and park anywhere. But, does Williamsburg maintain a high quality sense of place? For that, one needs more than excellent civic facilities and shopping; at the very least, there must be some form of positive vibrancy that connects the human to

71 Ibid.
Williamsburg’s human- and non-human-made objects and buildings as well as nonhuman bodies.
PART II: THE VIBRANCY OF THE CITY

The empty structures in Williamsburg produce affect for the City’s residents. My girlfriend and I joke that Williamsburg is so devoid of affect, even within the spectacles created by the multitudes of shopping malls and tourist traps, that people act in mysterious ways just so they can feel something. “Eat a whole jar of peanut butter?” “Yes, I just want to feel something.” “Run 7 miles in 90 degree weather?” “Yes, I just want to feel something.” And it certainly isn’t just highly critical graduate students that recognize this lack of feeling or the reports from the nineteenth century before the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg gave new purpose to the City; it is the present-day City Council itself. In the 2012 Economic Plan, there is a clear acknowledgment of a lack of aliveness in the City. The plan devotes a whole section to its desire to “create and maintain vibrancy.” Admitting that vibrancy needs to be “created” is a step in the right direction. In a section of The Virginia Gazette devoted to complaining and championing local matters, a concerned citizen wrote on April 24, 2015:

We understood years ago James City voters chose to fund land preservation and have been very pleased with efforts to protect open land to sustain the natural beauty here, and to prevent over development which every ones knows costs taxpayers more than development pays in. Why the misguided push by more aggressive people to end the funding? Our parks and conserved areas are a wonderful asset. They are a vital part of any healthy attractive and sustainable community.

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Here is an anonymous citizen who truly understands what I am talking about. Overdevelopment destroys natural ecosystems, as New Town and other massive shopping centers (and also smaller buildings) did. Referring to “parks and conserved areas” as “a vital part” of a healthy community, this writer recognizes that creating development instead of sustaining what is already there takes away from the vitality of the area, removes the nonhuman animal and plant life, which serve an aesthetic and health-related purpose. Although segregating animal populations to parks and conserved area is not ideal either, at least having these spaces in a city provides a serene environment for humans and nonhumans to interact. Why is it that Williamsburg seems so very dead? It can’t just be the ghost tours. Perhaps it is the affect created by matter that makes the city’s antiseptic-looking architectural spaces lack a positive vibrancy. They become forgettable, repetitive, and generic, like the accumulation of Junkspace. Rem Koolhaas alludes to this repetition as well: “Because it cannot be grasped, Junkspace cannot be remembered. It is flamboyant yet unmemorable, like a screen saver; it’s refusal to freeze ensures instant amnesia.”

All of the plaster, wood, steel, concrete, vinyl siding, brick, and other structural items create a kind of empty world.

In her essay “Affective Economies,” Sarah Ahmed questions the notion that “emotions become property; something that belongs to a subject or an object, which can take the form of a characteristic or quality,” instead looking at

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76 Koolhaas, Junkspace, 177.
“the rippling effect of emotions” or how they move “sideways between figures.”

Put differently, Ahmed looks to emotions as a sort of economy or “capital” that gain value and signification through circulation across a “social” and “psychic” plane. Although she develops her argument in relation to economies of hate related to racism and xenophobia, the theory can be applied to Williamsburg’s architectural spaces. If the populations of Williamsburg only see Junkspace and vacant buildings, to outward appearances, there is a lack of affect. Ahmed argues that “Some signs...increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more they circulate, the more affective they become, and the more they appear to ‘contain’ affect.” To go to a place like the Trevi Fountain in Rome or the Grand Canyon in Arizona, one would be struck instantly by the accumulation of intense affects that have built over time. That person would be moved by the simple experience of being present with her or his body in relation to the object/landscape/“nature.” In Williamsburg, even though some of the buildings in the historic district are from the eighteenth century, at some point later they fell out of repair and became unsightly, producing disgust or disparaging feelings. The newer capitalist buildings, too, because of their forgettable, Junkspace quality may not produce any affect at all, much less one that circulates in any kind of positive, generative way. Instead, the feeling produced is emptiness or a lack of vibrancy.

78 Ibid, 120.
79 Ibid, 120-121.
80 Ibid 120.
In *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennett argues that all matter “is made of the same substance,”[^1] that it is not “inert”[^2] nor is there a clear separation between the aliveness, affect, and agency of objects and living beings. She defines *vitality* as “the capacity of things…not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own.”[^3] Building on Ahmed’s economic affect argument, if we choose to follow Bennett’s theory, the matter that creates this Junkspace, even though it creates the affect of deadness in Williamsburg, we would call its aliveness the ability of the matter to create that affect. No affect or the appearance of no affect is, in fact, an affect. It is important to note here that I am speaking about the affect produced in humans and that this does not necessarily apply to nonhuman beings. Due to the increased populations of nonhumans in abandoned buildings, one could postulate that vacancy increases the attractiveness and/or positive affect of a building to some nonhumans. Nonhuman material resources, such as the materials that construct the buildings, have an active in shaping the world, something that Bennett calls “thing-power.”[^4] So what is the thing-power of these empty sites? How do these sites act upon humans and nonhumans through their material vibrancy? What exact human and nonhuman affects and effects are created by the emptiness of the buildings?

Bennett argues that the present-day consumer impulse to buy the newest thing hides the vibrancy of matter. This supposition stems from Karl Marx’s

[^1]: Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, x.
[^3]: Ibid, viii.
[^4]: Ibid, 2.
notion of commodity fetishism from his important work *Capital*. Karl Marx asserts that commodities “conceal the social character of private labor and the social relations between the individual workers, by making those relations appear as relations between material objects, instead of revealing them plainly.”85 Essentially, he argues that a commodity hides the human labor that makes the object. Bennett sees this as Marx “showing [commodities] to be invested with an agency that belongs to humans,”86 which begins to point to the idea of objects having their own agency. However, this view, she says, is anthropocentric, as this kind of “demystification tends to screen from view the vitality of matter and to reduce political agency to human agency.”87 If objects are also given agency through their production, that agency shifts throughout the lifetime of an object, especially when discarded. In Bennett’s account, “the sheer volume of commodities, and the hyper-consumptive necessity of junking them to make room for the new ones, conceals the vitality of matter”88 even if “a vital materiality can never really be thrown ‘away’ for it continues its activities even as a discarded or unwanted commodity.”89

In the same way that modes of worker exploitation are hidden by the capitalist system, so too is the object in a dumpster or the animals used to make building adhesives. The energy of a thrown away object shifts through various life

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86 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, xiv.
87 Ibid, xv.
88 Ibid, 5.
89 Ibid, 6.
cycles and spatial arrangements that are not visualized by the consumer. Even though the thing-power of the object changes, the act of discarding does not make the object dematerialize in the landfill. For example, imagine we discard a scarf (made from either animal wool or synthetic fibers) that went out of style in 2009 in favor of the latest and greatest. When it reaches the dump, the fibers become encrusted with leftover pizza scraps, creating microorganisms that eat the fibers and shift the vitality of the scarf’s matter again. A more concrete example of this is the Superfund site located just outside of Williamsburg—the Naval Weapons Station Yorktown Cheatham Annex facility. Because of its former owner, Dupont, as well as certain Navy operations, toxic waste from metals and semi-volatile organic compounds pose a threat to the health of local surface waters. Even if the Environmental Protection Agency comes in and cleans up the site, the toxic waste will still have to go somewhere, and this poses a threat for humans and nonhumans everywhere unless the agency of the toxic waste can be transformed in some way to be beneficial to life forms, objects, and environments.

Vitality and its relation to human and non-human bodies, objects, and their environments can change from positive to negative and back again because material things and living bodies stay forever in relation to each other. Sometimes the relationship is physical, such as a disease-causing bacterium from the pollution of decay, or it can be affective, such that the object’s

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appearance or smell from decay causes a disgust reaction based on memory or culturally circulated affective responses to these types of images. Most often, these kinds of affects/effects are happening all around us on the molecular or subconscious level, and we are never the wiser. If all of this matter is connected through the flows of commerce, globalization, decay, and material relationships, how can we change the form of matter to be for the positive without reifying systems of consumer capitalism? Or does matter have its own force and agency? Is there something in the materiality of Williamsburg that has created economic distress since its founding in 1623? How can we overcome this dilemma?

Williamsburg’s current solution to this problem is “The Demolition Program.”³⁹¹ This program gives property owners a ten-year loan of $20,000 for each “qualified property parcel” (whatever that means), to demolish their building and create a new one in its place. Since 2007, this program has brought the City: Chipotle, The Crust, and Q’doba (Figure 8). The problem with this plan is that, again, there is no different dimension where trash goes; it is matter that must be placed somewhere in the material world. We can demolish buildings all we want, and it ends their building-ness phase and changes their thing-power from erected structure to slabs of broken concrete and brick, but it does not mean that those building materials, rat nests, and uprooted landscaping disappear completely; they still have to go somewhere and exist as debris. In Williamsburg, this means

journeying from the city-operated Transfer Station to the larger landfill in nearby
Charles City County. The Demolition Program only creates more architectural
refuse, forces the property owner to pay back the loan (with interest!) as well as
find a tenant in the sea of empty commercial spaces already for rent. Will this
work? It has been reported that approximately 40% of all trash generated in the
United States comes from construction sites. Some of the materials, like certain
kinds of metal and clean wood, can be recycled, but the vast majority end up in
landfills that are many stories tall, much like the Charles City County one.92

Bennett asks “How would political responses to public problems change
were we to take seriously the vitality of (nonhuman) bodies?”93 And maybe the
more important question is how to get people to visualize nonhuman matter as
alive and to be used for the uplift of Williamsburg as the problem of empty
buildings is approached?

92 John Ryan, “Construction Debris: Where Seattle’s Old Buildings Go to Die,” KUOW.ORG,
(accessed August 18, 2015).
93 Bennett, Vibrant Matter, viii.
We can find hope within Ahmed’s and Bennett’s theories. Affect and thing-power are not just about dystopic futures. Agential objects and bodies have the ability to uplift communities in lieu of destroying them. If we could bring humans, nonhumans, objects, and environments into better relationships with each other, positive vitality and vibrancy could take over this city and circulate across the country and the world.Respecting animals and nonhuman matter as more than pets, pests, dangers, and trash will enable all beings and objects to maintain more lively lives. But how do we get there?

In March of 2015, I curated an art exhibition entitled *Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World* in Millington Hall on the campus of The College of William and Mary that brought together thirteen emerging artists to contemplate these ideas. The site of the exhibition was especially fitting, as Millington Hall is in the process of being decommissioned prior to its demolition in 2016 to make way for collegiate expansion and development (for more information on the history and capitalist implications of Millington Hall, see Appendix 1: *Millington Hall, The College of William and Mary: Exhibition Site*)(Figure 9). Millington Hall was formerly the home to the Psychology and Biology departments at the College, and now it houses a variety of side departments and programs plus its four thousand square foot greenhouse. As a site of science experimentation,
more species converge here than in the majority of buildings, accentuating its posthumanist features. At the end of a hallway in four abandoned, windowless (and airless) offices, the exhibition took place, and the artwork took on a rather unexpected site-specificity.

As visual research for *Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World*, I took photographs of these vacant structures around the City, which became the *Spaces of Williamsburg* series and examples of which are peppered throughout this paper (Figure 10). Even as they exemplify the juggernaut of neoliberal capitalism, these empty buildings materialize certain counterforces and alternative agents best understood through critical analysis with posthumanist theory. After all, these discarded structures are more-than-human assemblages of plants and organic matter (building materials such as wood and unwelcome additions such as weeds growing through cracks in the floor boards); they house bugs and animal species (both intentional as in zoological structures and animal testing labs and unintentional such as “pests”); and they exist at the intersections of flows of information, capital, commodities, obsolescence, waste, pollution, mutation, and time. As a result of toxins from building materials and bacteria overtaking their abandoned spaces, these structures have a complex vitality and richness barely visible except through posthumanist analysis and artistic interpretation. Also, because this is not solely a problem of Williamsburg, perhaps these sites can be seen as a meditation—at once cautionary and celebratory—on the bigger picture of American capitalism and its alternatives.
Spaces of Williamsburg points beyond the problems of accumulating architectural ruins and waste towards creative solutions by acknowledging the interconnected, complex, and dynamic relationships between humans, nonhuman animals, objects, environments, climates, natures, cultures, and economics. Must the large-scale, long-term implications of capitalist architecture necessarily only be capitalist in orientation? By highlighting evidence of commercial construction, accumulation, decay, and demolition in Williamsburg as well as revealing neglected nuances of vital agency and matter within and beyond that process, the series defamiliarized capitalism as something neither "natural" nor inevitable. This archive also aims to document these spaces as historical objects in juxtaposition with the “authentic” historic buildings in Colonial Williamsburg (most of which are reconstructed since 1928 and not original to Duke of Gloucester Street) and as spaces in which multiple plant, nonhuman animal; and insect species, flows of information, and outdated technologies eclipse the capitalist impulse inherent in their architecture. Hope comes from this posthumanist recognition that complex forces and the agency of matter acts upon capitalism with benevolent force.

For example, Figure 11 depicts an abandoned tourist motel owned by Shree Hari of Virginia LLC, formerly the Williamsburg Travel Inn at 1800 Richmond Road. The outer walls of the lobby and roof of are overtaken by plants that once acted as decorative touches to the space. Rust coats a painted metal connection. Parts of the concrete are chipping away with an unknown genealogy of causation. The ground surrounding the planter just looks dirty, as if a collection
of cigarette butts and food particles has found its perfect resting place. A greenish layer of mold coats the sidewalk. All of these different species are taking over the human-created space with seemingly no effort at all. Even before this motel went vacant, it had fallen into ill repair. According to a 2010 Yelp review, the beds had bed bugs and bloody sheets and stains abounded.94 A 2007 Expedia reviewer had both black mold and roaches in her room.95

In another photograph, the fenced-in pool cover of another out-of-business motel, formerly the Princess Anne Motor Court of mid-twentieth century grandeur, teems with bacteria, algae, leaves in various stages of decomposition, mesh, and rope (Figure 12). In the background of the image, we see a sign for Bangkok Garden (a brick Thai restaurant along the Commercial Corridor Protection District) that situates the image at the corner Richmond Road and New Hope Road. The trees reflected in the pooling water bring attention to this integration of “nature” and capitalism, which is unavoidable.96 This Motor Lodge is one of the last mid-century modern motels (built in 1946) still standing in Williamsburg, although it has been abandoned recently. In fact, there are still rusty bicycles and other detritus in front of a few of the doors and one door that says “Danger / Chemical Storage Area / Authorized Personnel Only,” which invokes a sort of meth-lab feeling (Figure 13). This door is the only door that has

96 To see more examples of Spaces of Williamsburg, please visit: http://www.lindsaygarcia.com/spaces-of-williamsburg.html.
a shiny silver keycard lock on it. This off-white/yellow painted brick motel was inhabited until at least December 2013. In 2007, the motel was re-named The Heritage Inn, and in 2010, the space transitioned from a motel into an apartment complex and the historic sign at the front of the business was removed. In October 2013, a car spun out of control leaving the Dunkin Donuts across the street, barreling into the front building, in which a family lived. This building has since been repaired, but the collection of buildings that make up this motor lodge is in generally ill repair.97 The owners of the building, Westgate Resorts LTD, own many resorts around the world, and it will be interesting to see if they demolish these buildings to make way for a luxury style resort like their other spaces.

Beyond my own work, each artist in this exhibition looked at how human and nonhuman species, objects, time, and information congregate in architecture from a variety of angles and utilized a multiplicity of artistic media to present their ideas and opinions. I will highlight just three out of the thirteen: Adam Brasil, Karen Lee, Julia Norton.

In *Duck displacement 1: route 22: Descent into Newark* (2015), Adam Brasil creates a playful visual experience as the viewer watches his rubber duck move up and down a comparable deleterious site of (sub)urban sprawl: Route 22 in Newark, NJ (Figure 14). The artist took photographs in which a small, yellow rubber duck rests in front of commercial buildings. He presented them as a

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slideshow using the out-of-date technology of a slide projector that progresses every 2 seconds automatically. Even though the photographs are taken in 2015, the quality of the slides gives them an instantaneous nostalgia and calls into question what Route 22 would be like without these structures. Musing on Robert Venturi's essay "On Ducks and Decoration," Brasil subverts the notion that modern architecture is a series of "ducks," buildings whose form mimics their function, and "decorated sheds,"98 architectural boxes to which decorative elements and signage are affixed, by picturing the duck as the anti-consumer of these structures. As the artist states, the duck is "displaced, trapped in a maze of snow, car exhaust, and uninspiring ‘decorated sheds,’"99 and cannot ultimately find a home within this built environment. The piece asks viewers to think about their own sense of dislocation within the spirals of consumer culture and the architectural sprawl that it creates. Williamsburg, of course, is not the sole location where capital accumulation of businesses persists. New Jersey, too, has this problem, and one of abandoned buildings. However, New Jersey is taking strides towards its abandoned building problem by inventing a system that identifies them under a specific set of criteria, allowing for the legal owner to appeal, and ultimately, the properties go up for re-sale to municipalities and other potential buyers.100

100 Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey, "Abandoned Property List," http://www.hcdnnj.org/index.php?option%3Foption%3Dcom_content%26view%3Darticle%26catid%3D19%3A-site-content%26id%3D605:abandoned-property-list (accessed August 22, 2015). For a detailed
Looking at the agency of architectural spaces from within, Karen Lee created the *Dead Air* series to comment on the obsolescence of interior building materials (Figure 15). The artist applied the light-sensitive material of cyanotype, another almost outdated technology, onto three drop ceiling tiles, a typical building material of the postmodern era, in a circular pattern. Each of the three circles refers to moons, especially because of the water stains present on the tiles before any intervention took place, likely from a leak in the location where they were originally placed. This elucidates the unnatural connection between these human-made materials, the need for cleanliness and “sanitary” conditions in capitalist space, and the “natural” world. These particular ceiling tiles were originally in a William and Mary building and left to be thrown away, lending site-specificity to the work. As the exhibition progressed, the patterns within the circles changed: the photosensitivity of the chemicals allowed for the color to deepen as they interacted with the fluorescent ceiling lights, and the water stains became more pronounced. The artwork literally co-evolved with the space and drew attention to the vibrancy of matter in all capitalist space. Lee specifically investigates “the pervasiveness of the artificial in our surroundings,...the pace at which we in industrialized societies take in information” and how this “has altered our relationship to the physical, especially natural world.”

Julia Norton’s contribution to the exhibition is a gouache on vellum painting of the Atocha Train Station in Madrid Spain, *Station #2*, as it becomes

Outline of the process, including the criteria for what constitutes an abandoned building, please see: [https://hcdnnj.memberclicks.net/assets/documents/NJToolkitFINAL.pdf](https://hcdnnj.memberclicks.net/assets/documents/NJToolkitFINAL.pdf).

overwhelmed by plant life (Figure 16). Atocha Train Station is a large space that has squares of landscaped planters in it that allow it to have an indoor/outdoor feel. Norton takes this further by butting the viewer against the trunks of palm trees and other swaths of greens, reds, and yellows. The only indication of the interiority of the space is the large skylight looming above and a hand railing which could be mistaken for the greyish leaves of a plant in shadow. Norton describes her work as “a series of associative layers" that “begin with a feeling or a specific landscape, which [she] then build[s] out, into, or on top of with a series of structural or topographic interventions.”\textsuperscript{102} The spaces she paints act as “impossible arenas to conquer” and portray “the thwarted desire to overcome obstacles.”\textsuperscript{103} Although the building depicted is one in which humans designed and built for human purposes, this work suggests that humans lose control of other species once they set them loose to grow as they please. \textit{Station #2} asks the viewer to question his/her relationship to human and nonhuman spaces “on both a physical and psychological level.”\textsuperscript{104}

\textit{Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World} (the exhibition) begins to point to the agential qualities of matter and how it could be transformed to create better relationships between humans and all that is nonhuman. Brasil's sculptural installation expands our field of inquiry to all of (sub)urban America and enlivens it through the figure of the duck. Lee’s gesture exaggerates the coevolution of all beings and things in time and space. And Norton’s luxurious painting

\textsuperscript{102} Julia Norton, Artist Statement, 2015.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
acknowledges the agency of matter to take over capitalist space. But how do we get from here to a fully acknowledged posthumanist world full of healthy human/nonhuman relationships?
PART II: CONCLUSION:

UTOPIC VISION AND THE SOLUTION TO THE DEADNESS OF WILLIAMSBURG

Where there is a will, there is a way. To create a posthumanist world out of existing capitalist structures, empty and inhabited, I contend that we take seriously Jennifer Wolch's argument about the "Zoöpolis" as a desirable vision for urban design. She writes: "To allow for the emergence of an ethic, practice and politics of caring for animals and nature, we need to renaturalize cities and invite the animals back in — and in the process re-enchant the city."\(^{105}\) She calls the city post-renaturalization: zoöpolis. In this world, "caring replaces dominionism to create urban regions where animals are neither incarcerated, killed, nor sent off to live on wildlife prisons but instead are valued neighbors and partners in survival."\(^{106}\) Of course, she is not suggesting carting wild animals wholesale to the City to be released on a future date, but instead, to perform massive amounts of research especially in urban animal ecology and invent a "transspecies urban practice" which subverts the capitalist order of separation by making nonhumans the "other" and constructing physical walls between us. In order to do this, we have to look at how development has created "habitat fragmentation"\(^{107}\) in Williamsburg and channel Sarah Ahmed and Jane Bennett to shift affect and the thing-power produced by nonhumans towards an openly posthumanist globe.

\(^{105}\) Wolch, "Zoöpolis," 29.
\(^{106}\) Ibid, 30.
\(^{107}\) Ibid, 33.
To concern ourselves with the notion of “caring,” of nonhuman subjectivity and of nonhuman standpoint is a tall order. As Wolch acknowledges, creating a world that incorporates the standpoints of every animal (and plant and object) is nearly impossible, and “Such polivocality may lead to a nihilistic relativism and a paralysis of political action.”108 She goes on, “Instead, we must recognize that individual humans are embedded in social relations and networks with people similar or different, and upon whom their welfare depends.”109 This extends to nonhumans as well (Wolch focuses on nonhuman animals instead of all that is nonhuman). Undoubtedly human and nonhuman animal relationships punctuate anthropological history and serve co-evolutionary roles, as “concrete interactions and interdependence with animal others are indispensable to the development of human cognition, identity, and consciousness, and to a maturity which accepts ambiguity, difference and lack of control.”110 Therefore, her solution to consider the standpoints of all living beings is to accept that humans are in a web or a “matrix” with nonhumans that “embrace[s] kinship as well as difference and encourage[s] the emergence of an ethic of respect and mutuality, caring and friendship.”111 This idea of “caring” and consideration of animal standpoint opposes the intended effects of capitalism to separate humans and nonhumans through walls and ideological obstacles in the name of capital accumulation.

Zoopolis is not “Bring your dog to work day.” It is not allowing the heritage breed sheep and horses in Colonial Williamsburg to float effortlessly around

108 Ibid, 27.
109 Ibid, 27.
111 Ibid, 27.
town. It is not New Delhi, India, where the multitudes of feral monkey and cows roam the streets and attack residents.\(^{112}\) It is not to suddenly release all captive animals at local animal shelters, Busch Gardens, and the research labs at the College of William and Mary. Instead, it begins with breaking down ideological barriers about human/nonhuman relationships. Small policy changes and a few vegetarian converts is not enough to create a ripple effect across the globe that makes the world a place where all beings and objects can respectfully cohabitate. For humans, it has to begin at the core: cognition and consciousness.

How are we going to persuade the general population to change their ideologies about the separation between humans, nonhumans, objects, and environments? As Wolch writes, “Granting animals subjectivity at a conceptual level is a first step.”\(^{113}\) I contend that because it is the visualization of Williamsburg’s Junkspace that produces negative affects in human populations, the visual arts would be the perfect medium to depict the subversion of capitalism’s role in habitat fragmentation and nonhuman violence as the result of development to make way for zoöpolis. Through techniques such as multi-species collaboration, culture jamming, exposé, and depictions of a re-imagined Williamsburg, local populations will begin to see how changes to frame of mind will create a snowball effect that ultimately generates a great sense of place in the City. Eventually, this would include massive structural changes at the city and


state levels developed as the results of tons of research that include information and new discourses derived from these posthumanist art projects. Below I will outline two art projects that ultimately fail in their full visualization of zoöpolis but begin to get at this notion of human/nonhuman integration, as did works from the Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World exhibition in the previous section. While each one is a failure for the reasons I will highlight, they act as precursors to future art that will succeed in changing ideology about human, nonhuman, object, and environment relationships towards an actively posthumanist world.

In a multispecies collaborative art project, Doug Aitken’s 24-minute film migration (2008), the artist brings a wide variety of nonhuman animals into empty motel rooms (Figure 17). In contrast to my own phototext project Spaces of Williamsburg which documents what is already there, Aitken uses animals that wouldn’t usually be there, specifically animals that are wild North American migratory animals. The animals ranged in human-assigned use-value from the massive beauty of a horse, to the endangered buffalo (that humans mostly killed off), to the pest-status raccoon and everywhere in between. Although Aitken imposed his anthropocentric artist vision on his subjects instead of documenting preexisting human, nonhuman, object, and environment collaborations, Aitken, too, points to the strange ways that species can meet.

The video installation comprises these animals interacting with a human environment such as a fox sniffing at some puzzle pieces left on a bed as well as beautiful panning shots of the building’s architecture, shot in a way that give immense value to the cheaply built architectural structures. Without trying to
anthropomorphize, all of the animals appear positively baffled at their temporary environments. Because of the over-determined camera work, the viewer instantly is brought to think about the human. Is the human sharing the spaces with these animals? For instance, at one point, the horse looks directly into the camera. Are they responding to a human in the environment that they are being forced to inhabit, however temporarily, as in the case with Joseph Beuys’ *I Like America and America Likes Me*, from May 1974, where he cohabited the Rene Block Gallery in New York City space with a wild coyote (Figure 18). Why doesn’t the human behind that camera intervene when (s)he sees the deer drinking from the chlorinated pool and filling their veins with unnecessary chemicals? In another scene, a human has intervened by leaving the water on for a beaver who plays with the faucet, and yet another when an owl is forced to endure being pummeled by feathers from a possible pillow or duvet eruption. How many birds were killed in the making of that bedding? Torturous, right? And the ethical concern of how Aitken’s trapped or borrowed the animals from a wildlife preserve (or wherever he borrowed them from) and transported them into these spaces is also circumspect.

While Aitken’s project points to the edges of the posthumanist thinking, the artist creates unnatural human, nonhuman, object, and environment relationships. Because, of course, within the confines of the hotels’ walls where Aitken shoots his video, nonhuman species, such as animals, bugs, and plants already inhabit the spaces. Even though Aitken’s animals are allegedly wild, from the “Wild West” even, because of the human intervention, this is called into
question. Jennifer Wolch asks for a new way to look at this wild vs. domestic dualism between animals, such that it "be seen as a permeable social construct; it may be better to conceive of a matrix of animals who vary with respect to the extent of physical or behavioral modification due to human intervention, and types of interaction with people."\textsuperscript{114} If her argument proves true, then every body’s cellular makeup, not just human’s, is touched by and has the potential to resist capitalism, and Aitken’s displacement of animals from the natural world into the anthropocentric world of a motel is the perfect depiction of this matrix.\textsuperscript{115}

The second artwork is the ongoing installation, \textit{bhome} (Figure 19). In response to the New York City art world, in the early 2000s, artist Matt Bua purchased a section of land in Catskill, New York, not far from the nineteenth-century art studios of famed Hudson River School painters Thomas Cole and Frederic Edwin Church. Bua built a fully-operative cabin completely off the grid in the woods to live in and invited artists to visit and build their own architectural-scale structures. Part-functional, such as the compost toilet and outdoor kitchen, and part-playful, such as the lower case “a” frame structure shaped like a lower case “a” and the shoe-shaped cabin where one is meant to bring shoes and make potions out of them, these structures serve as inspiration for a world where humans can live respectfully with their nonhuman others. Most of the building materials are recycled, left over from finished construction projects, or donated.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, 28 (emphasis in original).
\textsuperscript{115} To watch a clip from \textit{migration}, please visit: http://www.dougaitkenworkshop.com/work/migration/.
and in large part, they are not used traditionally, which draws attention to the silliness and arbitrariness of building regulations and design guidelines.

When I asked Bua how he dealt with “pests” in his cabin, he responded that when he and his partner found a black snake, they would try to keep it around to take care of any mice. Occasionally, they would build humane traps to capture larger animals and release them on the far side of the property. Most of the time, however, they just lived with the animals (including bears walking on their footpaths). Without trying to romanticize the good old days or strike down modern technology, incorporating techniques for pest control that do not include harmful poisons and create greater ontological relationships with animals are something that should be incorporated into Williamsburg’s future zoöpolis. What is especially successful about Bua’s art installation is that the line between the visualized “cleanliness” that capitalism provides, “nature,” humans, and nonhumans is completely blurred. Bua’s world is posthumanist in application and acknowledgement.

Bua’s structures point to an important ideological break with capitalist architecture. Nonhumans are integrated seamlessly into bhome. However, bhome could not be directly applied to Williamsburg. We are still left with the question of how to make zoöpolis a practical reality. Wolch’s essay does not outline a plan of action in which to make it possible. Instead it serves as the opening of a discursive shift towards newly founded human/nonhuman relationships. But what would zoöpolis look like in Williamsburg? How would we

\[116\] Information comes from a casual conversation I had with Matt Bua at bhome on July 8, 2015.
go about letting the animals back in? Could we use the empty buildings in
Williamsburg as a means to foster better human/nonhuman relationships?

Certainly, a huge amount of research is required. Who would do it? What kinds of questions would they ask? For such a large undertaking, it’s hard not to look towards Williamsburg’s two major educational institutions and seek use of some of their resources, even though their role in the architectural issues of the City is great. One option could be to engage the College and Colonial Williamsburg to use their infrastructure and graduate student programs to conduct pertinent research. However problematic in its application, as a start, Williamsburg could adopt a model similar to that of West Philadelphia and its relationship to The University of Pennsylvania. Instead of focusing only on human poverty and crime in the surrounding areas (which are important issues that should also be addressed) as UPenn did, the College could focus some of its dollars and research in fixing the decimation of nonhuman species and improving human/nonhuman relationships. In *The University & Urban Revival: Out of the Ivory Tower and Into the Streets*, Judith Rodin, former president of The University of Pennsylvania, documents her journey through aiding in West Philadelphia’s recent revitalization. She recognizes the university’s role in fostering a healthy community:

Universities have powerful social and intellectual impact on their cities and regions. They provide cultural resources that often serve large public audiences. Attractions associated with universities, including musical performances, art shows, and lectures, stimulate ideas and energize people ranging from local schoolchildren to older, continuing learners. When a university channels its intellectual power and creativity, it has the
potential to create a valuable dynamic that is mutually beneficial to the university and the community.\textsuperscript{117}

Of course many of the initiatives in Rodin’s project were met with criticism (often questioning whether university expansion could lead to any positive effect for neighbors), especially from the residents of West Philadelphia prior to revitalization. One of the main criticisms was that the university did not look from the standpoint of the residents as they charted their plan to end crime and poverty as well as address the “powerlessness they feel in contemporary real estate development and planning.”\textsuperscript{118} In Williamsburg’s zoöpolis project, the standpoints of human residents \textit{and} nonhuman residents would have to be considered. As Wolch points out, “Animals have their own realities, their own worldviews — in short, they are \textit{subjects} not objects.”\textsuperscript{119} And if we are able to think of animals as subjects, we are given “an ethical and political obligation to redefine the urban problematic and to consider strategies for urban praxis from the standpoints of animals.” Thus, an approach to research and planning would have to take into account issues that they are not accustomed to in order to plan for a true zoöpolis, such as the acknowledgement that the sciences are anthropocentric and andocentric in their approaches. The project of “re-enchanting” the city with nonhuman life is not so much a singular practical solution, but a new way of thinking and a new way of living. Everyone would have to get on board: the College, Colonial Williamsburg, real estate developers, all

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\textsuperscript{119} Wolch, “Zoöpolis,” 25 (emphasis in original).
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businesses, the governmental bodies, the people, and the nonhumans (not sure how to quantify this except perhaps through population/emotional response tests like the annual bird counts, which could be harmful to the nonhumans). The way to this new way of being is through art. Art has the power to touch people through sensory experience, through empathy, through memory, in a way that reading facts on a white piece of computer paper or scrolling on a technological device does not always do. Through projects, such as the *Spaces of Williamsburg* phototext, that reveal the intermingling of species, architectures, and environments as they interact with time and economic forces, the negative impacts of capitalism and overdevelopment can be properly visualized in order to make way for positive changes. Williamsburg already has certain arts festivals which could skew resources towards developing an aesthetic that serves this purpose, such as Second Sunday Arts Festival, which takes place on North Boundary Street and Prince George Street once a month and a weekly farmers market which invites thinking about the multiple ways that humans interact with plants and animals.

We are a long way from zoopolis in Williamsburg and other urban environments in the United States. The role of capitalism in creating fragmented natures has created ideologies that oppose posthumanist ways of thinking. That said, through scholarly and artistic research, it is clear that the world is always already posthumanist, even though capitalism tries to make us blind to that fact. Through art and perhaps additional institutional research, we should be able to visualize and put into place a new future that takes into account nonhuman
bodies and objects and gives them agency and subjecthood. And by doing so, we can vitalize the City of Williamsburg.

Or, as a start, with the acknowledgement that nonhumans enjoy human-built indoor structures as much as humans do, we could care for some “wild” species by leaving the windows of some vacant buildings open to allow posthumanist “nature” to take its course.
Opened in 1968, Millington Hall was named retrospectively for John Millington (1779-1868), a civil engineer and teacher who spent 12 years of his international science career teaching at The College of William and Mary (1836-1848) as Professor of Chemistry, Natural Philosophy, and Civil Engineering. Millington’s teaching style was highly influential in the United States, and he championed combining classroom learning with “on-the-job training.”\(^1\)

Millington’s emergence as an engineer came at a particularly important time, “the first great construction boom.”\(^2\) Just before the Civil War, the American economy was shifting from an agricultural society to an industrial one. For this change to take place, engineers were needed to create transportation pathways including railroads, roads, bridges, canals, and buildings. Due to the lack of formal training programs for engineers in the United States, Oxford-educated Briton John Millington was able to develop a program at the College to feed this new need and even wrote the first textbook on civil engineering in English. Even though Millington was self-trained in engineering (meaning he worked as an assistant to another engineer), as his Oxford University degree was in law, prior to coming to the United States, he worked on many governmentally-driven projects in England as well as lectured extensively on the subject, making him the perfect candidate


\(^2\) Tarleton, John Millington, 30.
to enrich the College with his experience and expertise. Millington did not finish his academic career at the College. In fact, a schism developed between he and the Board of Visitors, which caused him to leave on a bad note for a teaching position at the University of Mississippi.³

In light of its dedication to science and its commemoration of an important civil engineer, Millington Hall aptly embodies William & Mary’s enduring commitment to capitalism and development of the built environment, making it an appropriate site for the exhibition. The building is 5 stories tall and 72,672 square feet. The roof of the building houses a 4,000 square foot greenhouse, built in 1970. Officially christened the John Millington Hall of Life Sciences, it housed the Psychology and Biology departments until recently when they moved to a newer building next door (Integrated Science Center). This building replaced Biology’s previous location of the basement of Washington Hall as well as other pockets of space located on and off campus as well as Psychology’s previous location in the basement of Rogers Hall, the first science building that the school constructed in 1927.⁴ The first stirring of desire for a new life sciences building came in 1962, as the school coveted comparable buildings springing up at universities across the country.⁵ Also, the physical sciences got a new building in 1964, William Small Hall.⁶ John Millington’s name was in second place for affixing his name to the physics building, although it was placed on the back

³ Tarleton, John Millington, various. All of the information on Millington came from this paper.
⁴ Need and Justification for Proposed Life Sciences Building, circa 1964 (Special Collections, The College of William and Mary).
⁶ William Small was Thomas Jefferson’s science professor at the College of William and Mary.
burner for a future natural sciences building. The College believed that a sound and modern biology program required appropriate facilities to house it, and the combination of biology and psychology in the same building allowed for cross-use of much of the equipment, including the “animal rooms.” Finding the money to create this kind of building was a challenge. The College was able to secure multiple grants from federal funding sources such as National Science Foundation, Title I of the Higher Education Facilities Act, and the National Institute of Health as well as the largest chunk of the money coming from the State Office.

As part of the new 2015 Campus Master Plan, Millington Hall will be torn down to make way for Integrated Science Center 4 and will house Kinesiology, Computer Science, Information Technology, and Mathematics, with a special emphasis on giving each department the space to collaborate and engage across disciplines. On paper, this is a great thing for the school, even if raising money for the project places a heavy burden on the school’s alumni and development office. However, in practice, the debris from this old building, much of which is toxic, even if asbestos was removed in 1981, will just create more cubic footage of rubble for the state’s landfills, in this case, probably the Charles City landfill sent via the Williamsburg Transfer Station. The State of Virginia is

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8 Letter from Mitchell A. Byrd to Davis Y. Paschall, February 14, 1962.
the second largest trash importer in the United States (Pennsylvania is first) and approximately 24 states dump their trash here. In 2010, 959 tons of asbestos from buildings outside of Virginia comingled with other trashes in its landfills indicating that this is where building materials are sent not just from Virginia, but from around the country.¹⁰ This leads to plenty of environmental concerns and the question of agential matter acting negatively upon the landscape, objects, and the human and nonhuman bodies of Virginians.

Figure 2: Powhatan Street, Williamsburg, VA, 2015
Photo credit: Dale Picken
Figure 3: Lindsay Garcia, *Spaces of Williamsburg*, 2015
Figure 4: Lindsay Garcia, *Spaces of Williamsburg*, 2015
Figure 5: Lindsay Garcia, *Spaces of Williamsburg*, 2015
Figure 6: City of Williamsburg, Virginia, Location of Negro Dwelling Districts: Williamsburg and Vicinity, 1952
Figure 7: Lindsay Garcia, *Spaces of Williamsburg*, 2015
Figure 8: City Council of Williamsburg, VA, The Demolition Project, 2012
Photo credit: 2012 Williamsburg Economic Development Plan (download available from williamsburgva.gov as of April 6, 2015)
Figure 9: Millington Hall, 2015
Photo credit: Lindsay Garcia
Figure 10: Lindsay Garcia, Spaces of Williamsburg (Installation shot from Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World exhibition), 2015
Figure 11: Lindsay Garcia, *Spaces of Williamsburg*, 2015
Figure 12: Lindsay Garcia, *Spaces of Williamsburg*, 2015
Figure 13: Lindsay Garcia, Spaces of Williamsburg, 2015
Figure 14: Adam Brasil, *Duck displacement 1: route 22: Descent into Newark* (detail), 2015
Figure 15: Karen Lee, *Dead Air I, II, and III*, 2015
Photo credit: Lindsay Garcia
Figure 16: Julia Norton, *Station #2*, 2014
Photo credit: Lindsay Garcia
Figure 17: Doug Aitken, *migration* (still), 2008
Figure 18: Joseph Beuys, *I Like America and America Likes Me*, 1974
Photo credit: WikiArt, as seen on http://www.wikiart.org/en/joseph-beuys/i-like-america-and-america-likes-me
Figure 19: Matt Bua et al., \textit{bhome} (detail), ongoing
Photo credit: Lindsay Garcia
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