

Jackson Valette Sypher
Puma Rose
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Int. Studio 1: Avatar
Bridge 2: Artists' Statement

We spent time reflecting on both our individual issues and the project prompt, as outlined in the syllabus, to best approach this design challenge. The syllabus asks students to “imagine a utopian place in which both of the issues you have identified have been solved”. The issues we chose to tackle are the lack of access to public education and to healthy food, specifically in low-income neighborhoods.

Initially we found ourselves looking at this project through the lense of a design challenge which, in some ways, gave our work a stiff feeling – more architectural than artistic. Our intention for this project was to create a multi-purpose space that aims to provide both access to public education and create a sustainable source of organic produce for residents of the Bronx – a real neighborhood, right here in New York City, which currently faces both of these issues. Moving forward, our hope for this project became not only to create said utopian space, but to use our platform as artists to start to examine the implications of our utopia. Where were their dichotomies between our intentions in designing our facility and the reality of its effects on the community it was meant to serve?

A utopia can be defined in two ways. The Google Dictionary defines a utopia as “an imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect.” Merriam Webster, on the other hand, defines utopias as “an *impractical* scheme for social improvement.” Which is ours? Does it exist in a space between the two? These were questions we felt we could not fully answer – and we thought it would be important to reflect our uncertainty in our completed project.

Our final composition consists of three sets of overlaid twin-visuals, each meant to address both of these distinct definitions of utopia. The base layers of these layered visuals are architectural sketches of prominent details in our design. These beautified sketches present an image of efficiency and innovation. In these sketches *everything is perfect*. The top layer, however, takes a more skeptical look at our facility: layers of tracing paper sewn over the base sketches expose our doubts and concerns; it begs to ask the hard questions whether our attempt to aid a community as outsiders will simply become a means through which it is gentrified and displaced in the long run.