

ISSN 1923-6166

ATELIER **rzlbd**

PAPER NO. 04 APR. 2018

FROM THE WEDDING RING TO THE FASHION HUB

Atelier RZLBD is a Toronto architecture practice established by Reza Aliabadi in 2010 with a deep investment in research and an ongoing commitment to conceptual experimentation. The atelier designs objects, products, installations, and buildings that express the purity of geometry, adapt nimbly to a wide variety of contexts, scales, and budgets, and in the case of residential projects, advance sustainable, modern design as the optimal solution for the 21st-century single-family dwelling. RZLBD views its influence as akin to that of a positive virus. Through its built work, its curated exhibitions, and its writing, the studio spreads insights into the positive impact that design can have on both one's life and the urban environment at large. As a boutique studio dedicated to quality, RZLBD treats each of its projects with the same high regard and passion.

While private residential architecture represents the most significant share of the practice's built work – from a 16-foot narrow infill to a 146-foot long bungalow – a bird observation tower, post-disaster shelters, trekking cabins, numerous museums, and a kilometer-long fashion hub in Bologna, Italy are just a few of the other architectural scales RZLBD has operated at. The studio is similarly invested in exploring architecture's allied crafts. Following the "Dal cucchiaino alla città / From the spoon to the town" philosophy of Ernesto Rogers, Aliabadi embarks on projects that range from wedding rings to cutleries to self-tying bowties to limited edition custom chairs. These projects, while each the result of rigorous research and conceptual experimentation, remain unified by their carefully plotted geometric underpinnings. In architectural projects, invisible axes demarcate different types of space – served and servant, public and private, solids and voids.

RZLBD's artworks and ideas are also expressed through a periodical, rzlbdPOST, distributed for free at various zine shops. Over the course of the publication's 22-and-counting issues, Aliabadi has worked to demystify the practice of design through critical essays, analyzing iconic buildings, and studies on a variety of topics such as infill housing.

In recognition of the high quality of the studio's work at a variety of scales, RZLBD has been distinguished with numerous accolades, including the International American Architecture Prize (2017), the City of Markham Design Excellence Award (2014), and two awards from the Ontario Association of Architects (2009, 2011).

RZLBD works have also been exhibited in many venues locally and globally, including the Sir Joan Soane's Museum in London, England (2018), the World Architectural festival in Berlin, Germany (2017), and the Toronto Harbourfront Centre (2012).

The Practice's craft has been celebrated in more than 70 print publications. This coverage includes stories in Architectural Review, MARK, Wallpaper*, the Globe & Mail, Canadian Architect and Canadian Interiors; features in anthologies from international publishing houses Phaidon, Braun, Rizzoli, Harper Collins, and Archiworld; and online articles by ArchDaily, Dezeen, Domus, and DesignBoom. UK publisher Artifice recently released a monograph, RZLBD Hopscotch, which recognizes the past seven years of Aliabadi's practice by collecting essays, project profiles, and annotated drawings. Furthermore, in July 2017, RZLBD had the significant honour of being selected by Canadian Architect Magazine as one of the country's top emerging talents.

This selection of works, taken from the last ten years, has been ordered by size. They range from a small 18.1-millimetre diameter wedding ring to a one-kilometre long fashion hub, demonstrating the firm's dedication to design at all scales. Volume 04 of the rzlbdPOST is downloadable from the atelier's website, while further images and information of each project can be browsed on our social media forums.

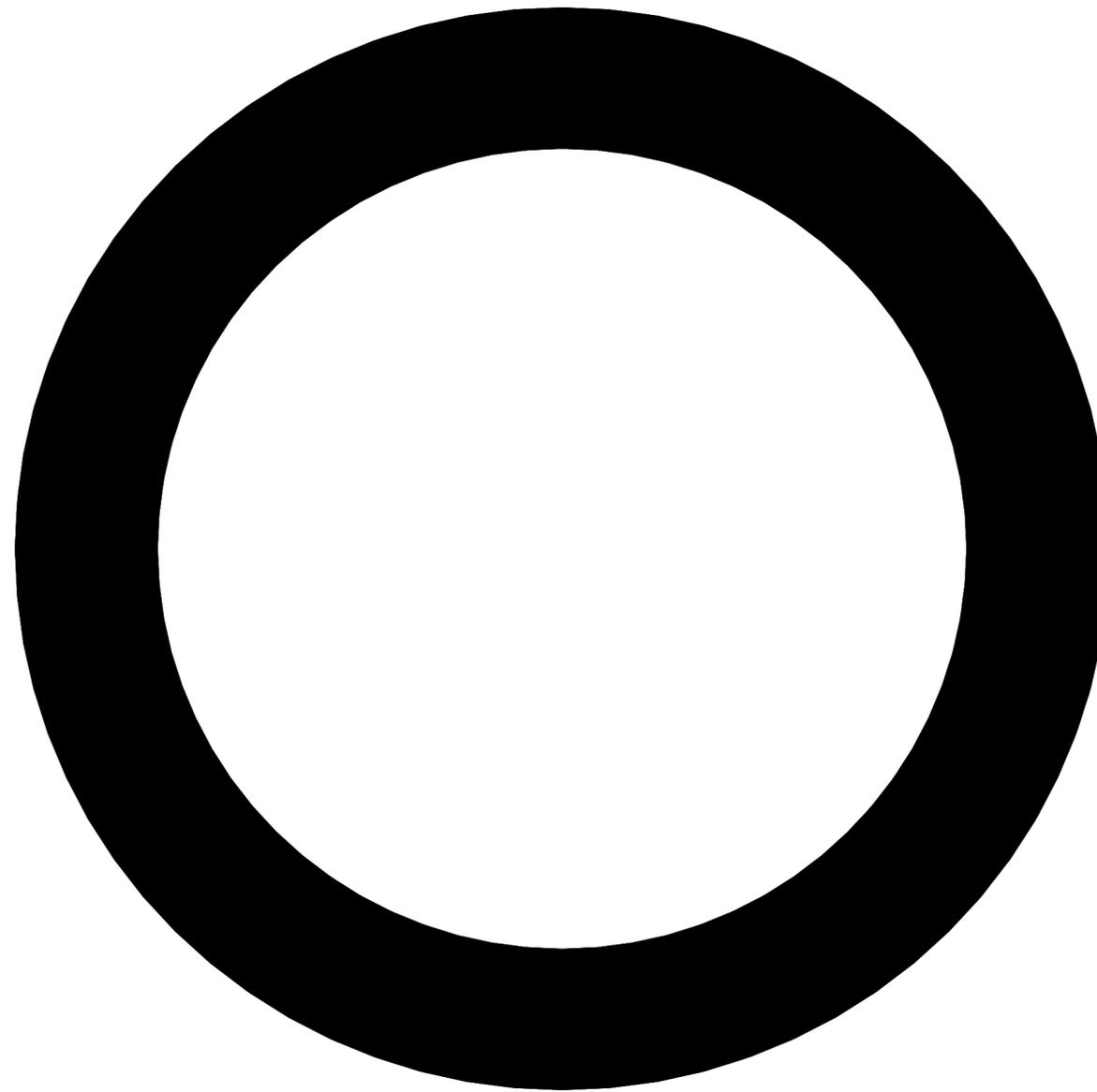
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 <http://rzlbd.tumblr.com/>

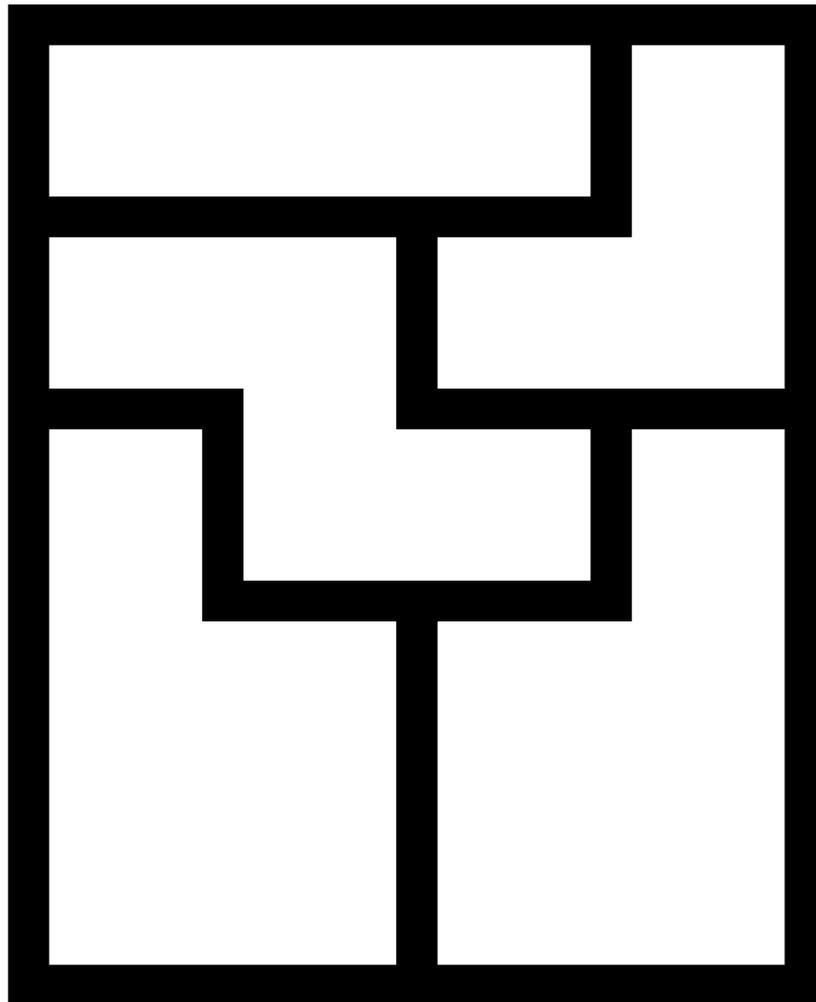
10:1



R-00 WEDDING RINGS

Polished silver is what fabricates the continuous circular form of the ring. The minimal concentric form transitions onto the finger in a fluid and ergonomic motion. Not flashy or supercilious, the materiality of the metal is subdued and modest. Like a marriage between two lovers, it demands you to care for and commit to it, and thus to live with it.

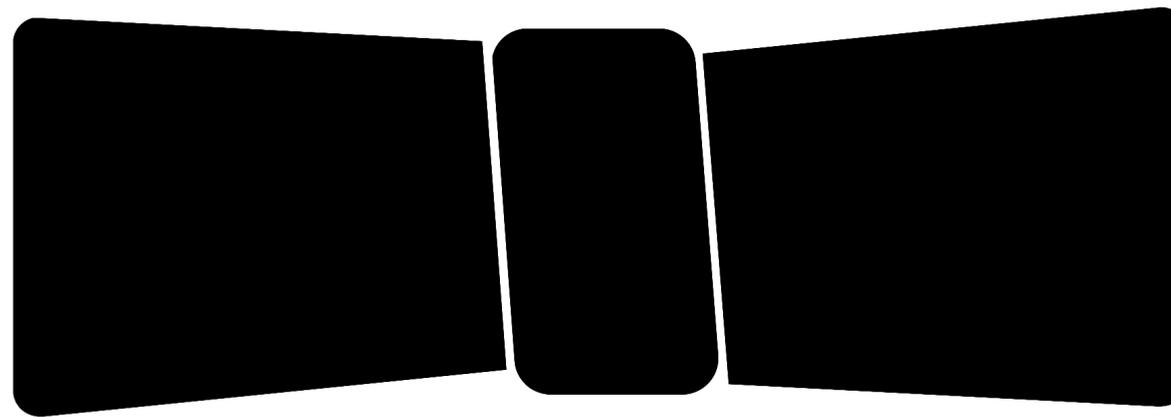
5:1



RZLBD LEGO LOGO

The RZLBD Logo is created from a modular typeface based on a square grid. Deriving all five blocks, R, Z, L, B and D from this grid collectively creates the firm's identity. Using the five original blocks from the logo, a family of 100 distinct characters were generated that work to ensure a somehow consistent expression; while each arrangement offers a different context, there is still a sense of belonging to a larger set.

2:1



R-11 BOW TIE

The bow tie, an accessory that blurs the line between casual and formal, is a familiar symbol of architectural figures – from Le Corbusier to Walter Gropius. Created for the event, Doors Open Toronto, 50 limited edition self-tie bowties were hand fabricated for charity. The minimal and contemporary straight-end design offers a slim appearance, suggesting a modern notion to the accessory.

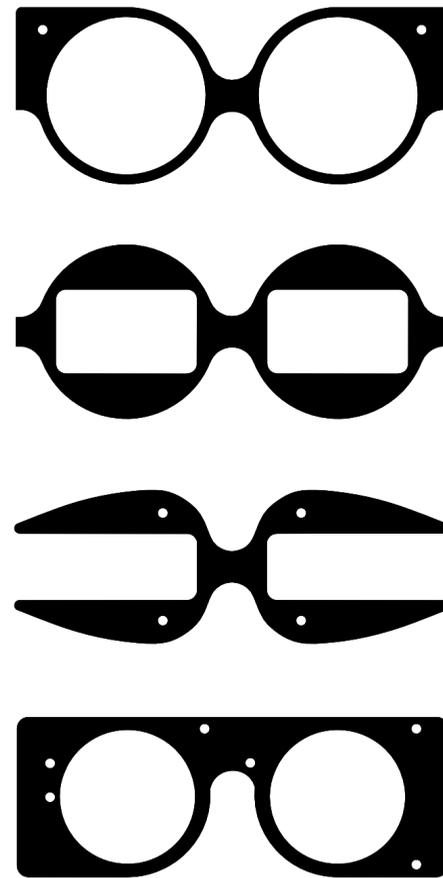
1:1



R-03 SHARK SET CUTLERY

Millenniums have passed since our primitive ancestors would hunt to survive. The concept of survival has remained the same, but the rituals and methods have changed significantly. Cutlery can be considered as the contemporary translation of this phenomenon. The Shark Set is a design response to this occurrence, creating a future collection of cutlery for a future environment of dining. R-03 was inspired by the characteristics of a shark, deriving parallels from the simplicity and purism of its body, sharpness of its fins, and the absolute cutting performance of the jaws.

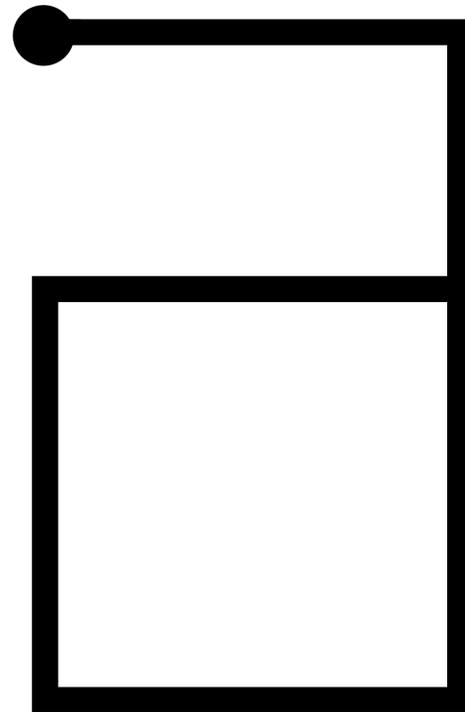
1:2



R-12 EYEWEAR

Just as a home must be customized to a family, a wearable product must be tailored to a client. The R-12 exclusive RZLBD Eyewear collection was inspired by two mainstream entertainment figures to create four individual eye accessories. Two sets of casual wear are modelled with pop culture references, while the other two take on a more formal appearance, presenting mascaraed gestures. Together, the collection fights against the perfect symmetry that everyday eyewear seems to insist on.

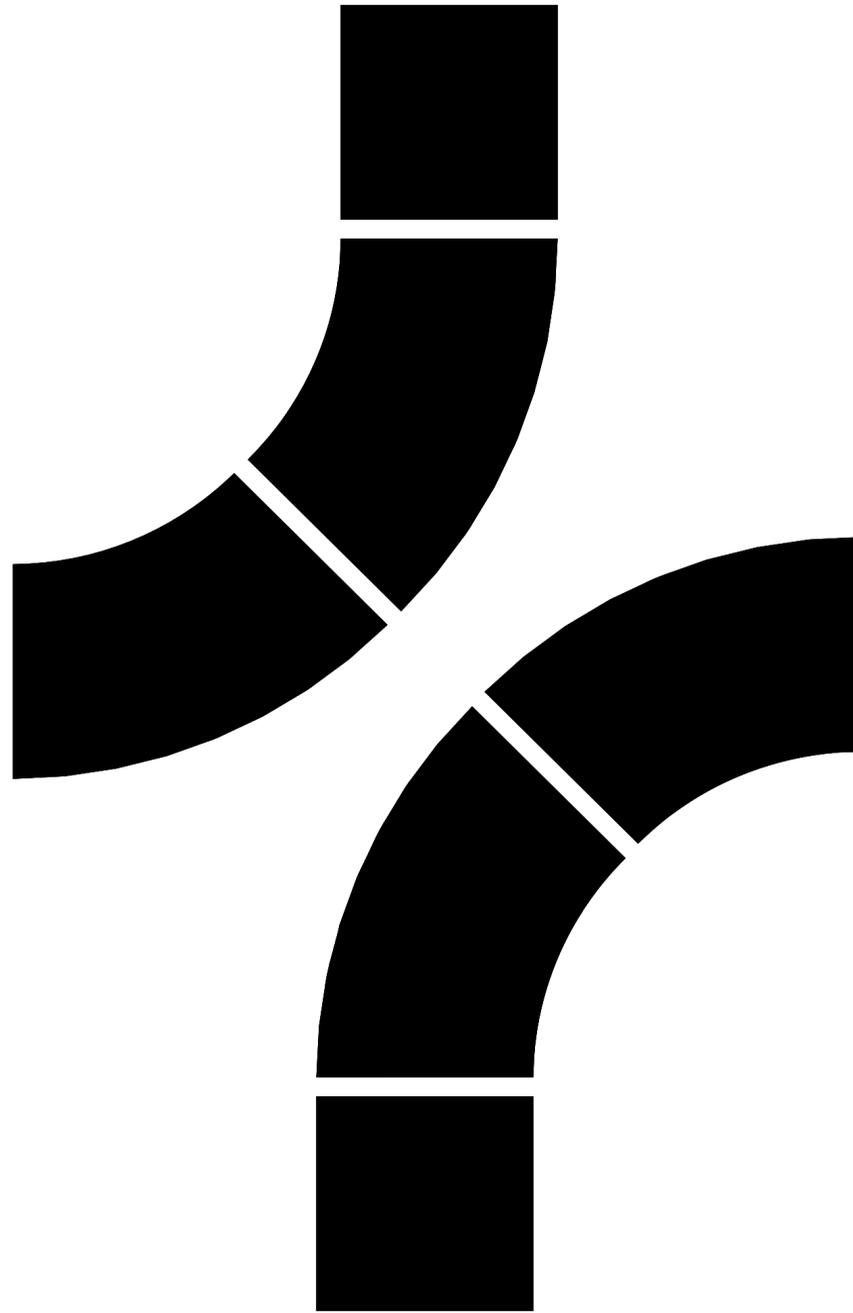
1:5



R-01 CHAIR

R-01 is an affordable designer chair that is easy to manufacture with minimal details and materials. Limited to only essential materials and elements, the R-01 Chair would fail under the removal of a single component of the structure. Adjustable footings allow for the levelling of the chair in case of any imperfections on the floor, creating resiliency in the product. A flexible material establishes the back pad to ensure ergonomic comfort to its user.

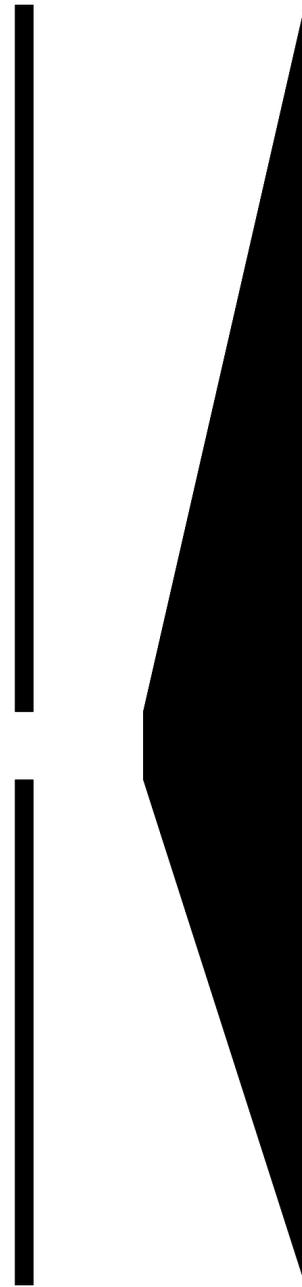
1:10



R-08 MODULAR BENCH

Designed for an intervention residential project, the R-08 Modular Bench contrasts and complements the linear gallery interior with its concentric modules. Situated next to a 20-foot, free-standing wall devoted to the client's immense art collection, the modularity of the bench supplies the needed flexibility to compliment the feature wall and entertainment space.

1:20



BOWTIE

The Bowtie Installation begins to explore the relativity of scale and imposes the question, "what is big enough?" by allowing its interactors to travel within to discover a position customizable to their unique size. The interior slowly tapers down in both height and width towards the centre. The most claustrophobic middle-point is enlightened by a window, conveying an illusion of openness, giving the impression of a larger space.

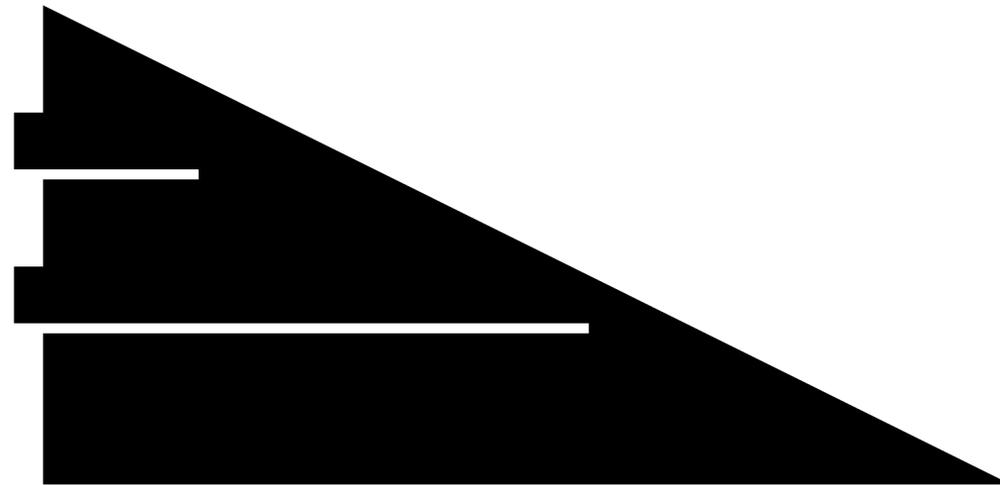
1:50



UN[A]LIKE

Created for an open international design competition for Amber Road Trekking, the design scheme proposes a collection of shelters all developed from the same five modular components. The result is a family of distinct forms with shared underpinnings that work to ensure a consistent visual identity while offering customization for varying requirements of space.

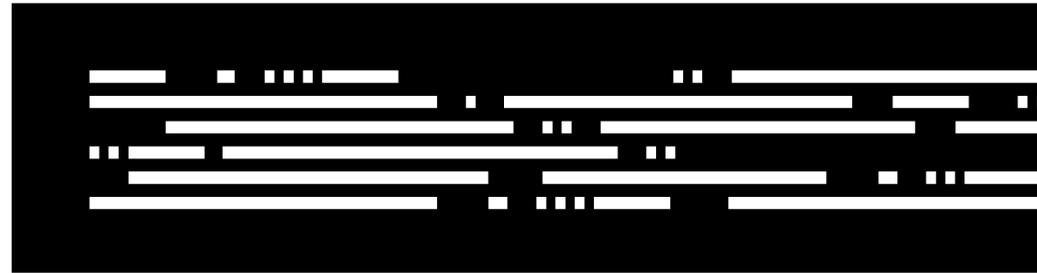
1:100



GNOMON

Gnomon was created in an open international competition for the Pape Bird Observation Tower. The design merges two essential elements – bridge and tower – that are arranged to mimic the fluid motion of a bird soaring into the sky. As visitors transcend to the top viewing platform, they effectively take flight, escaping the limitations of their earthbound body and lifting their souls up to commune with nature amongst the clouds.

1:200



NOSA

The Nosa Software + Hardware Research and Development Workshop provokes a subtle negotiation between the built and natural environment by integrating a wall that covers the west side of the project. In the wall are numerous randomly-positioned openings which are representational of an old punch card and are in constant deferential dialogue with the sun at the intervals of sundown. It acts as an installation dedicated to the landscape while providing an atrium space for the three-story office building behind it.

1:250



OPPOSITE HOUSE

Designed to follow the dynamic interplay of contradictions, Opposite House is at once familiar yet different, spectacular yet comfortable, private as well as public – presenting a study in subtly rendered juxtapositions. Interpreted as a north side wrapped in dark-black, textured brick and a south side presented in bright glass and smooth white stucco, the single-family home differentiates between introversion and extroversion.

1:500



MALI MUSEUM

Valuing the geometrical influences of its context, the museum's design intention was to construct the site and frame the Exposition Palace. The proposal both excavates and bridges over, creating a shaded civic hangout, offering the agora to gather and perform cultural activities. Shaping a dialect between itself and the current context, the monolithic, hovering volume encloses a column-free gallery space.

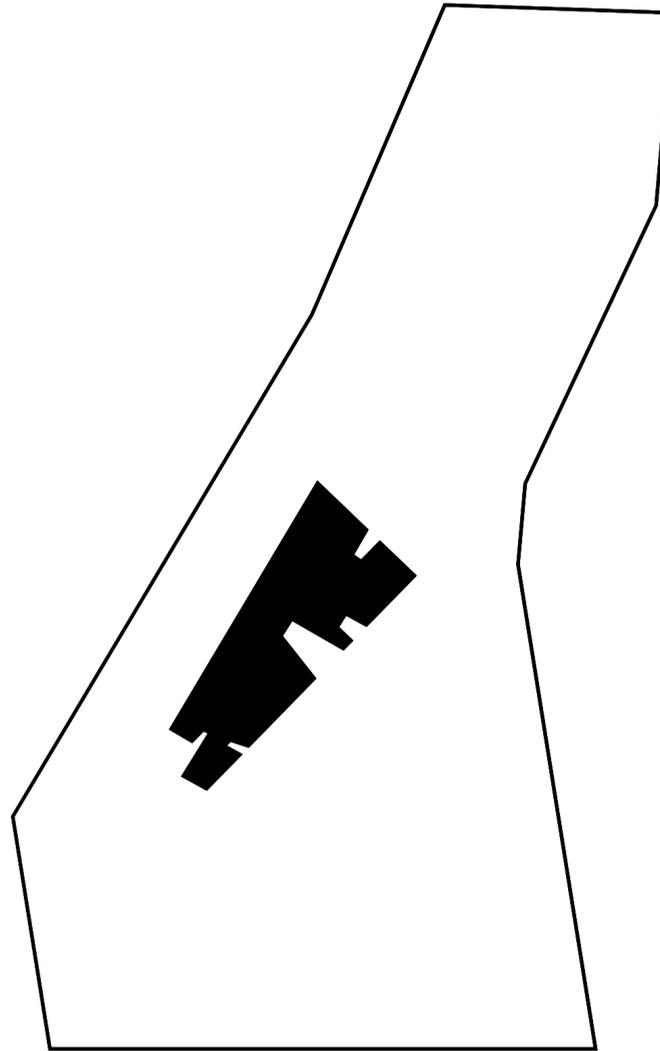
1:1000



RAIN MANIFESTO

Rain Manifesto is a proposal derived through the simple extrusion of the not-yet-present volumetric capability of the site. Conventionally, architecture is a considerable rupture on earth regarding scale, energy, time and material, and inevitably leaves traces, footprints, and effects – but to what extent, and by what means and intentions? Here, in this experiment, the architecture is a result of an interruption by the very natural phenomenon of random falling raindrops within a specific time frame.

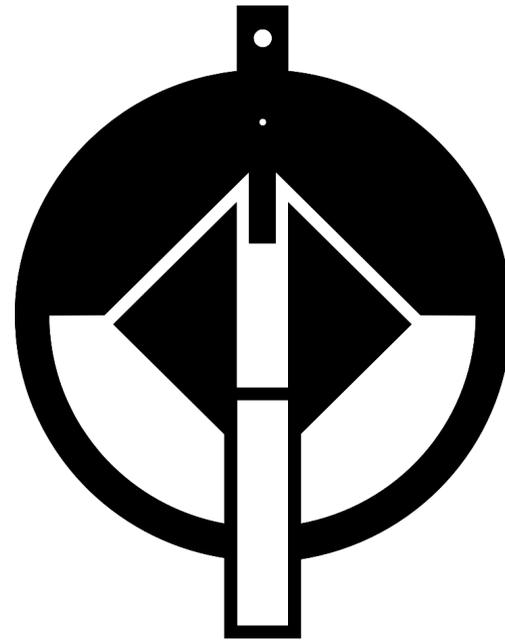
1:1500



BAMIYAN CULTURAL CENTRE

The design intention of the Cultural Centre was not to construct on the site but to construct the site. The proposed building bridges the multi-tiered terrain, turning the difficulty into a virtue by shaping a dialect between itself and its surroundings. The building rises from the imperfect, unlevel situation of the landscape, taking its form using a new massive construction to provide the longest vista towards the Buddha Cliff. It engages in a dialogue with the Bamiyan Valley while affirming its presence and contribution to the distant bluffs.

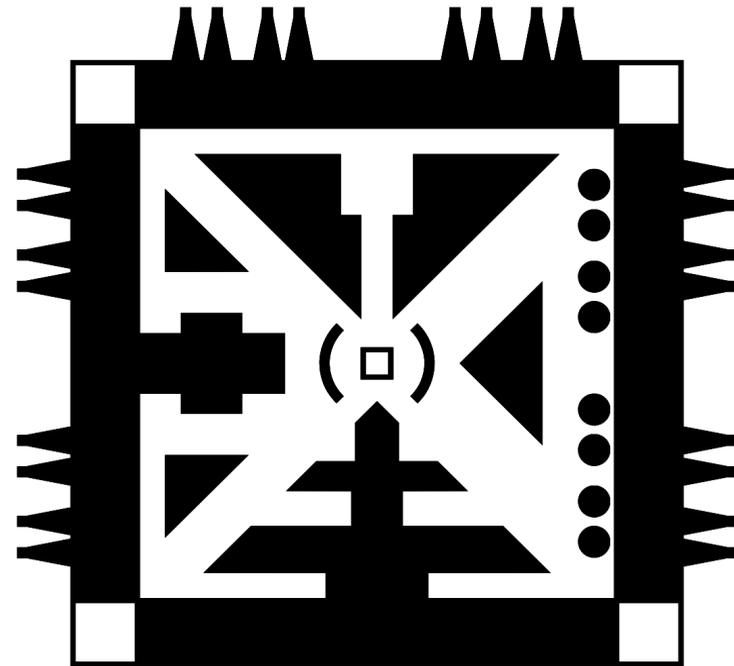
1:2000



HOLY DEFENSE MUSEUM

The Holy Defense Museum is a symbolic, architectural dedication to the war between Iraq and Iran. Mimicking the physical strength and presence of a mountain, the form of the museum rises upward. The structure is not aggressive but insistent, remaining firm in its place. Rendered in white stone, it appears light and unthreatening, like a peaceful dove taking flight.

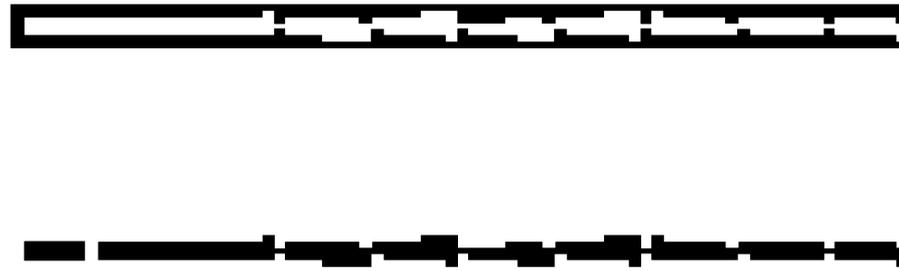
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GREAT EGYPTIAN MUSEUM

The Pyramids, the most influential and memorable symbol of Ancient Egypt, have predominated the architectural concept of the Great Egyptian Museum. It was not the intention to imitate the infamous structures, but instead to elaborate and innovate the absolute simplicity of the geometry. The design, therefore, takes form as an inverted transparent pyramid excavated in the ground. The underground architecture creates a sense of silence - returning the artifacts and treasures to their original location below.

1:5000

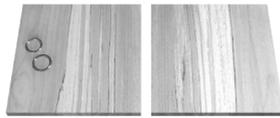


CENTERGROSS FASHION HUB

The design proposal for the addition to the Centergross Fashion Hub respects the geometrical forces of the present buildings by bridging over, taking its form from the existing spinal structure. As a result, the project shapes a dialectic between itself and the current context; like the body contours of two lovers that complement each other while coupling. Due to its many supporting legs, the new volume that unifies the complex will hover above, rather than disturb the existing intricate web of access points and circulations.

R-00 WEDDING RINGS

The Wedding Ring set was designed in 2005, in Toronto, Ontario. Fabricated from polished silver, the rings have a lightness to them that no other metallic material could have achieved. The walnut holder carves out the volume of the rings, so they are cradled by the wood.



RZLBD LEGO LOGO

In 2017, during the Atelier's office relocation, RZLBD launched a new branding to represent the firm's evolved identity. First created and explored in the digital realm, the five modular letters have since been constructed in tangible form from white maple in an 8cm x 10cm size.



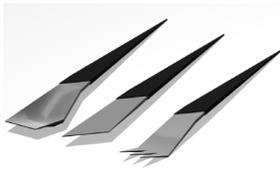
R-11 BOW TIE

Designed for a Toronto charity in 2014, the 50-limited edition self-tie bowties were hand-fabricated and sold for charity. All ties were unisex, ranging in sizes small, medium and large and features various materials from cotton to silk, accommodating differing formalities and occasions.



R-03 SHARK SET CUTLERY

Designed in 2006 in Toronto, Ontario, the R-03 Shark Cutlery takes form through the combined stainless-steel utensil head and charred wood handle. This 12-piece cutlery set includes a fork, knife, spoon, whisk, teaspoon and dessert/salad utensils.



R-12 EYEWEAR

The R-12 exclusive RZLBD Eyewear collection was designed in 2016-2017, in Toronto, Ontario. The four unique frame styles can be fabricated from both acrylic and reclaimed wood.



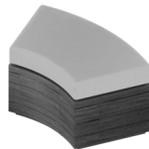
R-01 CHAIR

The R-01 Chair was designed in 2011 for a boutique restaurant in Toronto, Ontario. The chair structure is constructed from brushed steel, while painted plywood is used for the seating pad and a resilient insulation foam is applied as a back pad. The overall chair dimensions are 43cm x 43cm x 69cm.



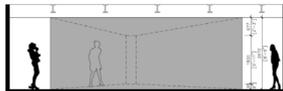
R-08 MODULAR BENCH

Designed in 2016, the R-08 Chair offers a flexible solution to its restrictive surroundings. The base, created from layers of laminated plywood, is stained to match the shade of the hardwood flooring, while the upholstery is rendered in canary yellow – the residences accent colour. A reveal at the foot of the bench seating allows the modules to appear as though they are floating.



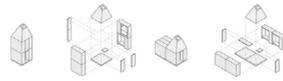
BOWTIE

Designed for an exhibition commissioned by the Toronto Harbourfront Centre in 2012-2013, the Bowtie Installation encourages individuals to question the concept of scale. The temporary structure is fabricated from metal studs and is wrapped in drywall.



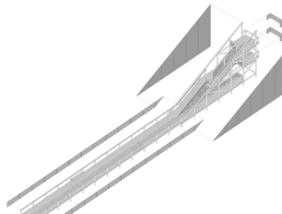
UN[A]LIKE

Un[a]like was designed in 2017 for the Amber Road Trekking Cabins in Latvia, which stretches along the vast topographies of the Baltic coast. The cabin modules are constructed from pine lumber to correspond with the surrounding pine forests, each being an adaptation of a 3m x 3m cube. The project was among the top nine selected design proposals in the competition.



GNOMON

In 2017, RZLBD received the BB Green Award in an international design competition for the Pape Bird Observation Tower in Latvia. Fabricated from standard lumbar framing, the large 18.8m x 9.4m structure blends in harmony with its surrounding natural landscape.



NOSA

The Nosa Software + Hardware Research and Development Workshop was designed and constructed in Pardis High-Tech Park, Tehran, Iran between 2002-2010. The monumental West wall, originally intended to be concrete, was later exchanged for glazing upon request of the client. Though this substitute compromised the ambiance of the interior atrium space, the spatial programming remained unaltered.



OPPOSITE HOUSE

The Opposite House, designed in 2014 and completed in 2016, is a commissioned private residence located on the Scarborough Bluffs. The new build sits partly on an old bungalow's footprint, with a 2.7-acre site sloping down to the shore of Lake Ontario. To the northern street side, the house presents a purposely low, dark-brick profile – just a single, unobtrusive 146-foot long story [equal to the length of an Airbus A321]. To the southern lakefront, the home's face opens into a 10-foot curtain wall, lozenge in white.

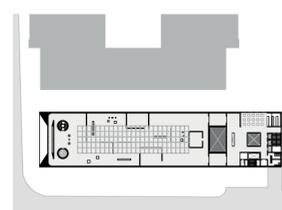


MALI MUSEUM

Designed in 2016 for an open international competition for Museo de Arte de Lima, Mali Museum investigates the dialogue between solid and void to shape an architectural frame around the existing context.

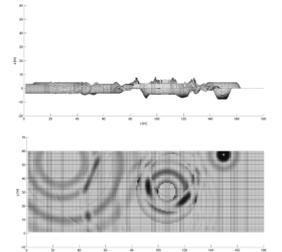


Raised 15.5m off the ground, the volume of the locally poured in-situ concrete form matches that of the Exposition Palace's courtyard, spanning 100m in length. The supporting pillars on the West edge of the volume provide means of egress while the multi-level, block structure on the East, designated for minor functions of programming, connects the marquee to the ground.

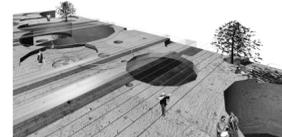


RAIN MANIFESTO

Rain Manifesto was designed in 2006 for a site in Calgary, Alberta. In this experiment, a wave rupture was modelled in a domain of 60m x 180m (proportional to the site). Ten drops of rain hit the surface of this domain in random locations, time delays, amplitudes and frequencies, originating ten ripples. The impact of this rupture was simulated in MATLAB for 49 seconds, and freeze-frames were produced every 7 seconds.



These indexical diagrams were transformed and re-read as a manifestation of becoming – the resultant project is the action of becoming rather than a representation of function and program. Voids in random diameters and depths, with unpredictable spatial intersections and super-positions, provide a different kind of space and place in an architectural realm.



BAMIYAN CULTURAL CENTRE

The Bamiyan Cultural Centre was designed in 2014 for an open international competition in Bamiyan, Afghanistan. From both the city panorama and the Buddha Cliff, the building is perceived as a unified whole. However, the primary solid does not remain intact: subtractions from its mass create a volumetric interplay between solids and voids but also transitional interior-exterior spaces.

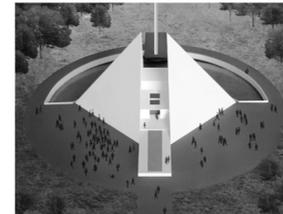


The buildings materiality resembles old archetypes of the area maintaining the sense of totality and historical relevance. Locally handmade sun-dried pressed mud, known as Pakhsa, creates the shell of the building and is being supported by a reinforced concrete structure on the interior. The thick Pakhsa protects the supporting building components from weathering while creating a sense of vernacular belonging.



HOLY DEFENSE MUSEUM

The Holy Defense Museum, design for an open international competition in 2005 in Tehran, Iran, is an architectural dedication to the War between Iraq and Iran. The site takes a concentric form, abstractly representing the totality of the universe. Half of this exterior space is solid ground – a representation of the physical world we exist in – while the second half is submerged in water – symbolizing the spirituality of afterlife, reflecting the sky above. Those who participate in the acts of war straddle the line between the two, where the structure of the museum resides. Defence, an act of resistance, is an indication of power and resilience. Like that of a mountain, it is not aggressive, but sturdy and unwavering. Oriented towards the peak of Damavand Mountain, the architectural form mimics its movement upwards, splitting in the centre to frame the peak. Aligned in this sight line is the monument for the unknown soldier.

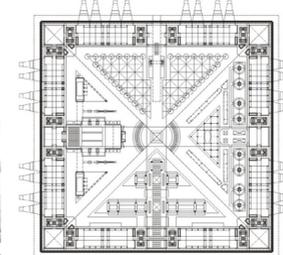


GREAT EGYPTIANN MUSEUM

The Great Egyptian Museum was designed in 2002 for an open international competition in Giza, Cairo, Egypt. The simple geometry of the inverted glass pyramid borrows the exact dimensions and orientation of the Great Pyramid of Giza, recalling its grand volume by representing its absence.

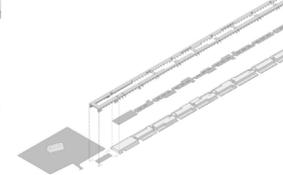


A cascade of water poured elaborately down the transparent surface, controls the interior light and generates a mild ambience. A virtual pyramid created by laser beams above ground completes the concept, creating a subdued landmark for the museum that is abstractly suggestive of the historic monument.

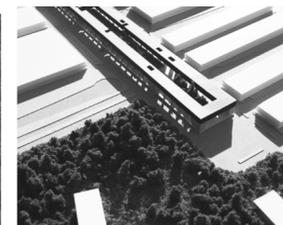


FASHION HUB

In 2018, RZLBD was among the finalists in an international design competition for The Italian Fashion Hub in Bologna, Italy. The proposed one-kilometre long form is offered by the extrusion/subtraction of the existing buildings.



Like a centipede, its many supporting legs create permeability to the structure, generating an airiness to the overall concrete structure. Separated into three components – the existing office programming, the proposed fashion hub, and the suggested one-kilometre long rooftop agora – the Centergross becomes a destination for activity.



RZLBD HOPSCOTCH - SEEKING A TERRITORY FOR A VISION



Certainly, at the scale of the stand-alone, single-family dwelling – where ingenious itineraries and openings and shuttings can be orchestrated – Mr. Aliabadi has shown himself to be a high-order poet of volumes and voids.

Mr. Aliabadi's art is not about manufacturing the versatile "universal space" cherished by the modernists. It's got more to do with making specific places for contemporary living.

rzlbd houses stand out, as they should, and they offer a bracing precedent for the ongoing revival of their tired streetscape.

The Globe and Mail

Part monograph, part manifesto, **RZLBD Hopscotch: Seeking a Territory for a Vision**, questions the conventionality of the single-family home through 12 built residential infill projects within the Greater Toronto Area. Exploring space through volumes and voids, RZLBD works to positively infect the urban context pixel by pixel.

COLLABORATORS

Architecture:

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Arman Azar
Aziza Asat
Kiera Hughston
Sebastien Beuegard
Khatoon

Design:

Bahar Joshapoosh
Borzu Talaie

Engineering:

Amir Aliabadi

* Khatoon - friend, collaborator, and
Peregrine Falcon - lives in the window
of the Atelier.

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Layout: atelier rzlbd
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2018, Toronto, Canada.
ISSN 1923-6166

