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Making Camp

Lola Sheppard Lateral Office

A foundational myth of North America is our collective relationship to our expansive, often rugged, and remote national landscapes. From Thoreau's cabin in the woods, to nineteenthcentury cottages offering urbanites respite from the city in the summer seasons, the notion of retreat and the restorative role of immersive landscape experiences has formed part of the North American conscience. Camping in North America did not develop on a large scale until after World War II, when increased leisure time, car access, and the possibility of camping with motorized vehicles greatly expanded the activity. This growth was served by public and commercial campsites which offered a range of camping experiences.

Modern day camping is the product of multiple, simultaneous evolutions over the past century: legislation that created national parks; the evolution of camping gear which shadowed the advent of new materials and technologies; and transformations in the actual configuration and layout of campsites. Private campgrounds catered to recreational vehicles by offering paved parking areas in picturesque locations. Public camp grounds, often in national or provincial parks offered remote campsites and more accessible car camping. The layout of most campsites embrace a suburban plan, even with cul-de-sacs. A distribution of camping plots are sheltered by trees but within viewing and hearing distance of each other. The car pulling into each lot serves as the first act of setting up camp.

The enduring appeal of camping over the past century is driven by the desire to escape modernity, and a primal interest in the "primitive hut." The desire for immersive experiences by reducing the envelopes and infrastructures that traditionally separate us from our environment. Yet, we are



increasingly far from this experience, embracing a suburban relationship to wilderness. Is there a possibility for other forms of collectivity in the remote? The Making Camp series of proposals consider new possibilities of collective camping. It questions the role of the campsite, the experiences enabled by it, and the environments created by camping infrastructures.

The form and services offered by both private campgrounds and

government-run parks has evolved significantly over the past century. Many visitors today expect a range of modern services at campsites, from electrical hook-ups, water, showers, and bathrooms to Wi-Fi access and even small-scale food retail. There have been many technical advances in camping materials and equipment, from tents and inflatable mattresses to portable stoves and lighting devices, all striving towards lighterweight, enhancing performance, ease of use, and greater comfort. While these technological evolutions of camping gear offer greater comfort at the bodily scale, little thought has been given to the larger experience of camping—the architecture of the campsite. If anything, new shifts in the camping experience are bringing visitors ever closer to the more familiar, comfortable domestic experience. Landscape experiences are kept at distance, and the ranges of landscapes experienced are less than the full range of landscape types that make up national and provincial parks. The explosion of gear and equipment to satisfy the widening range of camping sub-cultures, has produced an exhaustive array of choices for the camper. The dilemma in selecting a tent alone reveals the incredible diversity of options for size, thermal properties, materials, and siting. When this is also considered for camping rituals such as cooking, water collection, or trekking, the ex-



b) They plan for up to 150 locations over the next and manual inflating Most access will be free of charge. below a sleeping ba Itended to be placed lighter and more durable. Geny Ci takes advantage of these product biogramments biogramments plosion of gear reveals technological innovation and personal customization. Yet, the architecture of site and the planning of campsites remains nostalgic and singular.

The Making Camp series of proposals combines innovations in camping gear with alternative site strategies, to imagine new experiences mediating architecture and environment. Existing technologies and innovations are amplified, aggregated, or integrated into more ambitious structures. These proposals also consider the hybridization of campingrelated equipment with site-based structures. If equipment and gear is more akin to temporary environment furniture, how might it inspire new architectures for camping culture?

Closed Loop

The Closed Loop campsite offers a camping experience in which daily practices and their processes are integrated into the campsite structure itself. A ringed platform provides dedicated extensions for collective camp use-water collection, washing, camp fire preparation, and pitching a tent. Camping rituals are distributed around the platform in a continuous loop encircling a fragment of the landscape, with the tent pitches along the outer perimeter and spaces for collective common rituals oriented toward the interior. In particular, the campsite integrates camping's water cycle with that of the site. Rain water collection and distribution conduits are at the base of the tents. All collected water is then accessed from a gathering platform extension, which helps to enhance the social aspects of this basic activity. In addition, cleaning and washing takes place at a specific edge of the platform which consists of a constructed wetland composed of a series of terraced trays that mediate between the platform and the water below.

In the Closed Loop campsite, cycles and continuity of the site and its oc-

cupation are foregrounded for the camper to experience more directly. The formal organization of the campsite avoids the more typical sprawling suburban configuration. The prototype is also intended to address the challenge of a fragile campsite—in this case, a wetland, or bog. Hovering above the water and within the tall grasses, the ringed platform is supported by friction piles. Only at a single point does the ringed platform engage the ground for access. Below, the water cycle and its attendant species remains uninterrupted







Suspend

Camping is often about the ultralight, testing how light-weight or how compact temporary inhabitation can be. Camping has also, historically, been about occupying the ground. The very act of staking a tent involves anchoring it to the ground, albeit delicately and temporarily. As a result, level ground is ideal to stake a tent and sleep comfortably. The Suspend campsite embraces an ultra-light and un-grounded camping experience, expanding the range of conditions in which one can sleep: in forested, uneven grounds, suspended in the air, or inhabiting the tree canopy.

There have been many recent innovations in suspended tents, however they tend to isolate the tent as a stand-alone tower hovering isolated in the air. The Suspend campsite evolves this approach from the hanging individual tent plot to a suspended collective campsite with zones allocated for camping plots and others designated for collective use. Within this system, the tent is designed as an expandable pocket within the larger fabric, able to expand up from the collective surface of the raised mesh-like ground. Additionally, private storage pockets can be hung from this elevated ground.

A series of cables demarcate a netted structure suspended from trees at a height of approximately 8 meters, and onto which a tent fabric is hooked through a series of eyelets. The collective branch-like surfaces are held in tension and anchored amongst robust

tree trunks. The pattern of the netted branches can be expanded or grown in response to demand. In addition, they can be rolled away and stored in the off-season, or replaced and upgraded if necessary. At the intersection juncture of branches, there is a vertical structure that serves as the primary access point for the Suspend campsite. The access towers are fabricated of wooded frames, and covered with a translucent, nylon polyurethane membrane. (The structure is informed by design innovations for ultra-light canoes.) Solar powered illumination lights the access structure during the night to act as a luminous beacon. The access structure also houses a campfire, storage, and daily water needs.











Lookout

The Lookout campsite provides a camping experience that is tailored to the forest. It is a vertical stack of camping plots, with a ladder circulation core that invites an immersive relationship with its site. The Lookout has private camping plots as well as common gathering platforms, and a public observation deck. The vertical campground enables a modest footprint on the site, and provides a powerful sense of floating within the forest canopy. Using an open structure, individual camp plots pin-wheel around the circulation core vertically to produce a slender tower. The variety of plot dimensions generate varying sizes of campgrounds, for individuals, pairs, families, or larger groups. Camp plots are defined by mesh surfaces on the floor and facade, similar to foliage, while tent fabrics can be deployed from within the slender steel structure frames. Tents are rolled up within the underside of the floor above each plot.

The tower is wrapped in a dense array of cables that produce a veiled enclosure. Cables can be clustered and grouped by campers to create apertures at their temporary plots. Cables can also be used for hanging and drying gear. As the camper customizes their cables, a facade emerges that is in constant change. At its base, the tower can extend in four directions in response to the availability of land. These platforms offer a space for common activities by campers, such as gathering, excursion preparation, camp fire and cooking activities, and water access. All podium platforms have cables as guidelines for their roof-line, which can be used to hang or store gear and equipment.

The uppermost level of the tower is reserved as a shared viewing space, transforming the tower's best asset into a public infrastructure yearround. The height of the tower clears the thick of the canopy and offers a unique opportunity for birdwatching and long-distance views of the landscape, a vantage point difficult in the thick of the forest.







Off Grid

The Off-Grid campsite imagines a minimal but technologically amplified campground that embraces a logic of the infinite but adaptable grid. It integrates a range of smallscale infrastructures-offering water, electricity, and super Wi-Fi-often sought after in campgrounds without requiring plugin to the infrastructure grid. The project consists of an expandable grid of columns of three types: smaller ones that flex and bend to form the structure of tents, medium-height poles that splay into four to serve as supports for solar panels or water catchment pouches, and taller poles distributed intermittently to offer Wi-Fi. Poles can also be used to suspend elements such as tarps, food containers, and gear. Tents, specifically customized for the pole infrastructure, are distributed by the park rangers upon arrival at the park.

The Off-Grid campsite offers an alternative to the RV park, in which visitors can cluster in smaller or larger groups, in greater or less proximity to each other. This enables a more immersive relationship with the landscape, while simultaneously creating a subtle, ambient technological landscape of its own. The shorter tent poles are topped with small LED lights creating a field or canopy of tiny lights when campsites are available. The greater the use, the less light the campsite offers, working with the assumption that the campsite will gain other illumination as campers bring sources of illumination to use locally.

The field of poles can be expanded in any direction or eroded away to accommodate landscape elements.

When unoccupied, the scheme is a grid of enigmatic poles stretching across a landscape. Users set up camp using an established set of materials including fabrics, cables, ropes, and stakes; and a choreographed set of operations including pulling, staking, stretching, and clipping. It is occupation that generates a campsite that changes in density, zones of use, and infrastructure bias as users come and go.





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Thermal Layers

Camping in Canada is often limited to the summer months, both due to users' desires for comfort and the limited performance of typical camping gear. The Thermal Layers campsite embraces a hive-like or animal-herd logic of aggregation. Warmth is maintained by keeping tents compact to reduce volume of space required to heat, and then by further clustering tents, so that heat loss is transferred to the adjacent tent. Tent structures aggregate into a linear configuration, with each row then offset and shifted to negotiate topographic changes, but also so that segments serve as wind and snow shields. At the spaces of overlap between segments, a communal space is established. This is a collective warming space that embodies the essential need to keep warm and the benefit of social interaction during this. A third space is outside of the tent plot and the common space, and appears only in weather patterns when the third layer is necessary. This outermost layer can be activated by occupants of a single segment or in collaboration with an adjacent segment of tent plots.

The tents in the Thermal Layers campsite are intended to operate in summer and winter by a series of removable and additive layers. A first (outer) layer is a thin waterproof but breathable membrane for basic protection in warmer weather. A second (inner) layer is a "space blanket," a light metal-coated sheet designed to retain body heat through reflection

and intensification. A final external layer is used in extreme cold, sheathing over segments of tent plots to protect against snow and wind. In summer, the breathable tent layers accommodate warm weather and the collective spaces might remain uncovered, while in winter months, additional high-performance materials ensure warmth, while shrinking the space required to warm. Tents sit on a wood deck raised up on jack-pile footings, enabling a new ground on rocky, or uneven terrain. While other campsites can be reduced down to skeletal armature in winter months, the Thermal Layers campsite reverses the logic where it is in its most expanded form in winter, and operates more minimally in summer.

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03.3_SEASONALITY

Lookout is primarily occupied in the warmer summer months, but it remains accessible year round, with only tents closed up in winter months, when the campsite function shifts from campground to primarily viewing tower for visitors following local trails.



3.10_SITING MAKING BREAKING



The Lookout campsite is rooted within the forest and offers a vertical campground experience.

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