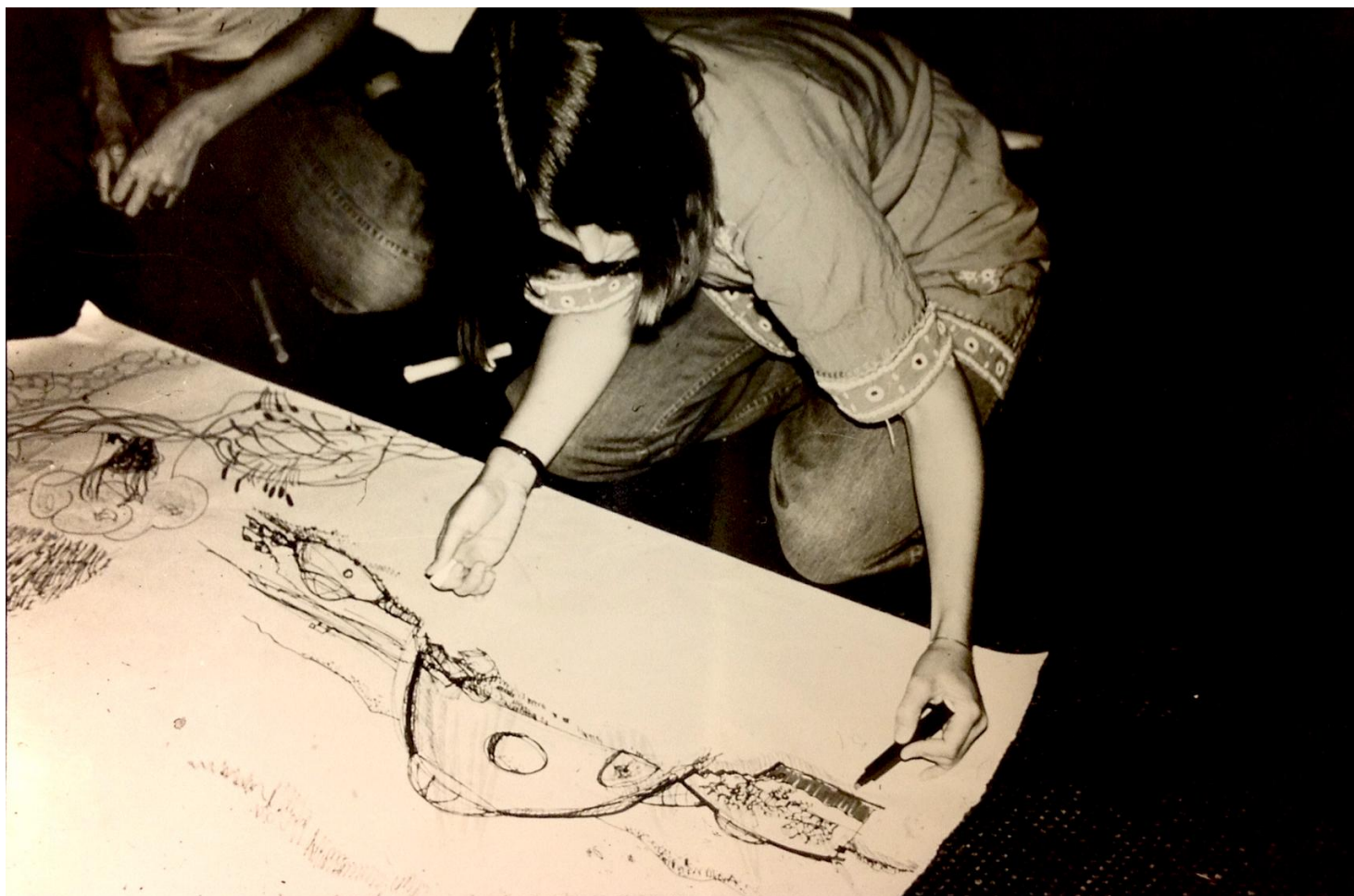


# Learn with MoMA



**MoMA**

## Step 1 Look closely

1. What is happening in this photo?
2. What kind of structure do you think is being designed?
3. What do you notice about the process?

## Step 2 Learn

When Phyllis Birkby graduated from the Yale School of Architecture in 1966, she was one of only six female students in her class of nearly two hundred. She saw this gender disparity as having profound political implications: Because men were the primary authors of the built environment, women had to occupy spaces and landscapes that had not been designed with their needs and desires in mind.

In 1973 Birkby launched her Women's Environmental Fantasies project. Birkby unrolled sheets of butcher paper and asked women to "imagine and draw their ideal living spaces, free of pragmatic constraints." Many of the drawings produced during these Environmental Fantasy sessions display the tropes of ecological architecture, only now featuring spatial elements that the male designers had not considered: Groupings of back-to-the-land shacks, for example, are designed with spaces for private reflection, and in one fantasy drawing the envelope of a geodesic dome deflects not just polluted air but also unwanted "demands" on one's time.

## Step 3 Activity: Design a fantasy environment

Suggested materials: large sheets of paper and pencil or pen. Optional: found materials such as boxes, bottles, plastic, paper, etc., tape, glue.

1. In a group, think of places where you feel uncomfortable or spaces you feel have not been designed for you. Make a list of all the ways those places are uncomfortable.
2. Working as a group, on a big sheet of paper, draw a redesign of one of these spaces with yourselves in mind. What would make the space better suited to you, your community, and the world? Feel free to make notes on your drawing to indicate how some areas might function and how spaces can be used. Do not be limited by what you know is possible—let your imagination run free.
3. Optional: You can also add 3D elements to your drawing as needed or build your space in 3D with found materials, if you feel that this will better convey your design.

## Step 4 Share!

Share your fantasy environment with a friend or classmate. Or you can email the images to us at MoMA:  
[schoolprograms@moma.org](mailto:schoolprograms@moma.org).



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Generous support for School and Teacher Programs is provided by the Carroll and Milton Petrie Education Program Endowment, the William Randolph Hearst Endowment Fund, and the Mimi and Peter Haas Endowment Fund for Elementary School Programs.

Additional funding is provided by the Ducommun and Gross Family Foundation, the Lewis B. Cullman Education Fund of The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, and by the Annual Education Fund.

Image: Phyllis Birkby (American, 1932–1944). Photograph of a participant drawing a dome structure during a Women's Environmental Fantasies drawing session, c. 1970. Smith College. Sophia Smith Collection of Women's History. Noel Phyllis Birkby Papers