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Niall McLaughlin

Niall McLaughlin is the Spring 2015 Norman F. Foster Visiting Pro-
sessor at the Yale School of Architecture and has delivered the lecture, “Origins and Translations,” on January 22. Nina Rappaport conducted the following inter-
view with him in his London studio.

Nina Rappaport: How did you start your practice in London, and what brought you there from Ireland?

Niall McLaughlin: When I was passing through London for a couple of months on my way to live in the U.S. My mother is from New York. I grew up in Portobello Road, where I met an amazing group of neighbors, so I stayed. They all became friends for life. I started my own practice in London in 1977, with some friends.

NR: In your recent buildings, in both sensitive landscapes and urban contexts, you have created environments that integrate new materiality and tectonics in conversation with the past. How has your interest in materiality guided your work and experimentation?

NM: I tend to see things as being compatible and equivalent. The biggest influ-
ence on me as a student at the University College of Dublin was Robin Walker, who had written about Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe and for whom Mies was a prophet. He gave extraordinary lectures about the corner steel post, the concrete pour, and the organized detail in 880 Lake Shore Drive, which was a massive problem for him. Robin firmly believed in the version of Mies that came through the Anglo-American tradition, that insists upon the truth of architecture. But he couldn’t square it with what he actually saw in Mies. So, after I left university, I was interested in where Mies came from, in the tradition of Gottfried Semper and Karl Bötticher and the relation-
ship between the Kernform (conceptual form) and the Kunsthform (defensive form). I’m not so interested in the idea of architecture having a truth-telling capacity, but rather how it enacts the world and how it is outside of truth.

NR: But what does it represent if the material is not concealing? You’re revealing the quality of the masonry in your work, for example, in your design for the Bishop Edward King Chapel, in Oxford.

NM: One of my favorite words is semblance, or appearing to reveal. It seems that notions of truth—to materials, to struc-
ture, and to form—ignore the fact that we are figurative creatures. The idea that you can get beyond representation, to something more than a ground for the epithelial function, is how I understand the world, and his model is something that stands for the loneliness of God: endlessness and isolation. He considers the relationship between light and structure as the threshold of the Spirit. We have formed a structural frame within which the community sits, and beyond the structural frame the white wall goes all the way around the edge, and there’s a breach in the frame. Schwarz writes that there should be a break in the structural frame, and he calls this a breach, or a breach of human understanding of God. He equates the relationship between light and structure as the threshold of the Spirit. We have formed a structural frame within which the community sits, and beyond the structural frame the white wall goes all the way around the edge, and there’s a breach in the frame. Schwarz writes that there should be a break in the structural frame, and he calls this a breach, or a breach of human understanding of God. He equates the relationship between light and structure as the threshold of the Spirit.

NR: How does it relate to a spiritual construc-
tion? What are the spiritual qualities?

NM: We almost have an excess of refer-
ences—but that is how we work. I had two systems, one of which related to the “ineffa-
ble” aspects, which are the sense of spatial experienc-es and ideas of the divine. I went from Mies to Schwarz’s extraordinary book The Church Incarnate and his method for creating the presence of the divine or the threshold of infinity. His diagrams show in theological terms how a human being experi-
ences the world. He talks about the eye, the ear, and the hand generating a symbolic structure, which we used directly in the church. In tectonic terms, we refer to Semper, but the spatial model comes very strongly from Schwarz. He talks about the altar and the star being brought into the eye and the darkness of the body coming up to the eye and an image being formed where the darkness meets the light. And his drawing looks like a plan of people gathering around an altar. Schwarz has a fabulous descrip-
tion of the altar as this perfect line, this ineffable line, as though worlds were dissolving. He uses the metaphor of the body as something that understands the world and his model is an understanding of human being. He equates the relationship between light and structure as the threshold of the Spirit. We have formed a structural frame within which the community sits, and beyond the structural frame the white wall goes all the way around the edge, and there’s a breach in the frame. Schwarz writes that there should be a break in the structural frame, and he calls this a breach, or a breach of human understanding of God. He equates the relationship between light and structure as the threshold of the Spirit.

NR: How did you start your practice designing little loft conversions, and then you were asked to make the building in stone, and you thought, “How do you weave in stone”? So, the stone bond on the outside, which we invented, is intended to be a tapestry motif.

NM: You do have a relationship to something that’s beyond the material, in terms of what Rudolf Schwarz called “the ineffable,” so influential to Le Corbusier! How does the sacred space achieve relevance today as the ineffable in terms of tectonics and spiritual qual-
ities?

NM: The chapel is a kind of embodiment of Semper’s primitive hut; it has the earth-
work, the hearth, the tectonic frame, and the woven screen; each one is characterized by ways of making. Semper says, “Weaving is always associ-
ated with the separation of the inner world from the outer world, and that’s the origin of architecture.”

NR: Semper’s observation that the white marble altar at one node and the lectern at the other. Which architectural term would you use to describe this ambiguous nature of the building’s form?

NM: When you design for that which is not definable, does this quality enter the project in other ways, as in the athlete’s village, in Stratford, whose surface is more Russian in contrast to Semper? How do you reconcile what you have written about as an abstract building with applied design, as in the façade, in terms of the authenticity of the chapel?

NR: The 2012 London Olympic Park was managed ruthlessly. The buildings were going to be used by athletes for six weeks, and then they were to become part of the housing stock of the city. It’s counterintuitive to design it for athletes and then reengineer it for athletics. But then it had to comply with all the standards of the International Olympic Committee and those of registered social-housing landlords. They hired architects to design what they called a chassis as the generic form of the building, and then, with the Architecture Foundation, they asked architects to design facades.

NM: I became quite interested in this separation of inner and the outer forms, and it fits back into Semper’s ideas of represent-
ted form. We said, “Here’s our project: it’s an athlete’s village, in Stratford, whose surface is more Russian in contrast to Semper!” How do you reconcile what you have written about as an abstract building with applied design, as in the façade, in terms of the authenticity of the chapel?

NR: In using a concrete casting of the Elgin Marbles, how did the relationship of
The marbles are lost pieces that have become something on their own. They were burnt, damaged by a volcano, defaced by Christians, and blown up by the Venetians. When Elgin took them down, he cut the backs off, turning solid stone walling elements into veneers. They were taken to London, the most polluted city on earth at the time, where they acquired a sulphurous coat. There was a dreadful attempt to clean them by chipping the surface until they whitened. So, it’s this weird mixture of being copied, translated, and re-idealized—at the time. We were able scan them one long night in the British Museum, and the Keeper of the Stones suggested that we use the section with the horses. Ruffer, a local boy made good, said he would buy the paintings if they would also sell him the castle. So, he bought both and plans to make a museum of religious faith, a visitor attraction, an art gallery, and develop cultural tourism to revive the economy of the town.

What is the focus of your studio at Yale this semester?

What is your working method?

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NR Andrew Benner, who is teaching with us, and I have developed a brief that builds public representations of democratic institutions in the context of an almost autonomous world city, like London. We are examining the relationship between conceptual ideas and material practice. Our teaching is very iterative, allowing design ideas to emerge through physical making and trusting the creative potential of making and remaking.

The Normans built this castle on a fantastic site overlooking a ruined Roman fort. It became the seat of the Prince Bishops of Durham and the bishop’s palace. In the eleventh century, one bishop bought twelve paintings of Jacob and his Twelve Sons by a Spanish Counter-Reformation painter, Francesco de Zurbarán—a very odd thing for an Anglican bishop to do. No one knows why Zurbarán painted this theme at a time when the Jews were being thrown out of Spain. But then he decided to send the paintings to Brazil, and they disappeared, eventually turning up at an auction house in London. A Durham bishop bought them because he was interested in Jewish naturalization and Catholic emancipation, and he lined his dining room with them. Recently, when the diocese wanted to sell them, Jonathan Ruffer also bought the old bank in the town and is turning it into a café in the gardens. Ruffer also bought a gallery for his collection of Italian and Spanish Counter-Reformation art and has made a link with the Prado.

We are designing a museum wing with a flat roof referencing the long, narrow tithe barns in medieval England, built in stone and supported up by an extremely lightweight metal roof. The building will contain large exhibits and artifacts. The other part is a new welcoming building, in timber. The wooden shutters will open and contain representations of the castle at different stages of development. We are also building a viewing tower so that the building itself will be an exhibit on the communicative capacity of architecture to speak about itself and its own place. When you look down into the courtyard, you will see a map of the landscape depicted in a mosaic built into the ground, as in cathedrals with labyrinths or symbolic systems inscribed on the floor.

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Rafael Birmann is the Edward P. Bass Distinguished Visiting Architecture Fellow at Yale in Spring 2015 teaching a studio with associate professor (adjunct) Sunil Baid, for a massive site in Brazil. Birmann gave the lecture, “Walking from Site to City,” on January 5. He was interviewed by Nina Rapaport in New York.

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Nina Rapaport: What is your background, and how did you become a developer in São Paulo?
Rafael Birmann: I never really chose this profession. My father sold his bank to form a real estate company. I was a kid of twenty-four at the time, and he called me to work with him. I really didn’t know what it meant to do a business in Brazil—different from the way you have to do business in the United States for meetings. We did all the construction documents and our local architect, and we traveled to Sobradinho, the workers built favelas inside the Plano Piloto, and the city officials decided they had to move them. Most of the problems related to the land in Brasilia was owned by the government except for one farm, due to a bureaucratic mistake; so, we bought it a few years ago.
NR: But middle-class people were living there as squatters, so who owns the land and properties now?
RB: Because the government owned all the land but didn’t supply housing for the people to live in, one-third of the houses sit on irregular properties, without titles or building approvals, but, unlike favelas, these are upper-middle-class houses. Today, there are seven thousand illegally built houses on our property.
NR: What will you do with them?
RB: We are selling the residents the titles to their houses. The government is doing the same thing in other areas, although, because they are the government, they face enormous restrictions. As private developer, I can sell the titles for one-third of the price. My son, who has moved there to work on the project, just told me that he can sell them by using our “regularization model” for all of Brasilia. We will build new houses for about one hundred fifty thousand people. Sobradinho, which has middle- to low-income inhabitants, is adjacent. So, we have to plan the area as a single entity. And considering the site’s history, we are looking beyond its borders to understand what’s going on. We are planning for a stormwater system, public transportation, and a four-million-square-foot park, all going behind our boundaries. We are ending all unnecessary housing. It’s a big mess—it is difficult blending all of these things together, unlike a clean slate. So, if we can sort these out, this could be a model.
NR: What are the design issues at this vast scale? How will you use this in the Yale studio you are teaching with Sunil Baid?
RB: One of the issues is how you “jump-start” a city. We want to build a downtown at the area’s gravitational center. But how to phase and start building? How to achieve viable critical urban mass? We will start with a shared street, with two big public spaces at both ends and mixed uses along it. With less cars and lots of pedestrians. We will create the urban experience that Brasilia doesn’t have, as a car-based place. The funny thing about Brasilia is that people who live there like it. Hard to understand. If you go to a restaurant, and it’s closed; you have to take the car to find a second one because there’s nothing next to it.
NR: What will the students design at Yale this semester?
RB: The students will work on creating a language and developing unit and block typologies. Unfortunately, crime is rampant in our society—we are dominated by fear. That has led to what we call “fear architecture.” People build walls everywhere; they enclose themselves in prisons while the bad guys roam free. They want houses inside gated communities, surrounded with high walls and barbed wire. That probably is the most destructive factor to urban life in Brazil. We want to provide an alternative, even against all marketing gurus advice; we want to build neighborhoods without gates, walls, or fences. We want to tear down the walls, of bricks and prejudice, and build open urban space—quality public space that can conquer fear.
NR: How has your experience increased your awareness of city-making and what other developers should do?
RB: Developers need to think beyond that. It’s boundaries. I say, “Why don’t you look across the street? How to relate, to connect to that?” Most developers think about what type of unit to build—two or three bedrooms and so on. Some may go further and ask about the architecture. But the latest thing is to think beyond the street, toward the street and the overall city. That has been a very interesting discussion.

When I go to Bloominghurth or the United States and talk to people working on public space, place-making, or, say, at the UN-Habitat, they still don’t want to talk to developers. My son and I went to Medellin for a World Urban Forum conference with twenty-two thousand people. One guy laughed when told him we were developers and said, “What are you doing here?” We’re talking about cities. And we said, “We do that every day.”
Nina Rapaport: How did you start your firm, and how has Mexico City provided you with opportunities that you didn’t have in your previous career?

TB: When I started in school, I was very interested in influencing how the city was being built, and I obsessed about becoming a planner. After I worked in the Urban Housing and Development Department of Mexico City, I realized that it was virtually impossible to do anything to improve the quality of life for the citizens because the system seemed to respond to much more economic forces, driven by political interests more than anything else. Also, it was the time when I was developing organically. So, I realized that it was probably more important to make little interventions through private practice. I learned a lot working for the city—it was like getting a doctorate—but then I ran into a friend, Fernando Romero, who was coming back from working at OMA, and we started an office in his family’s garage, evolving into a bigger firm with big partners. We realized we had no common ground, and we each went our own way.

NR: How do you engage with and confront the informality that is rooted in Mexico with more formal, abstract architectural techniques, particularly in terms of the housing issues you have been involved with?

TB: That is a very good question but difficult to answer because I think I work more organically. My family background is European, so that is my education; on the other hand, I’ve worked exclusively in Mexico City, where people take the initiative to go to their government offices. However, food and health care are the priorities, and planning is at the end of the list. But, people are willing to engage with you.

NR: You did this yourself as part of the planning process for the AguaConsistencias?

TB: The huge master plan for AguaConsistencias takes away the electric lines, which liberates a huge piece of land dividing the whole city. We surveyed a square meter that was around the line we were going to plan, and we tried to find an organic way of deciding what to do next. We gathered data but also on the information that the urban tissue was giving us. The governor of the state of Durango, for example, said, "I am really amazed with your work, what you did with this project, because the city had a scar, and yours. For example with you are erase it." This is something we really wanted to do to put things together organically.

NR: I am interested in how your architectural designs are exquisite and yet not precious, partly because of the materiality of construction in Mexico. How do you use the local materiality and engage local builders with what you know best how to do?

TB: I try to determine what their capabilities and ideas are and use, as well as learn from them. When we helped artist Gabriel Orozco build his house, it was very important to include the local builders in the process. If we didn’t include them, we wouldn’t have been able to do it, although it didn’t look so difficult. However, when we arrived, we realized they had no skills, no way of reading a plan or understanding even how to do concrete! Cement, water, and sand was too hard for them to understand. But instead of, “Oh, no, let’s find someone else!” we thought, “Let’s go with this and see what these hands can do.”

NR: Do you now base your designs on your knowledge of the available local building skills and the materials you can use, or does the design concept come first?

TB: We definitely consider the local conditions. For example, the Tangassani Funeral Home, we imagined a dramatic space with four different stages of intimacy or collectiveness—depending on how you want to see it—something very different from the typical funeral home in Mexico. We wanted to have a hall with lots of light, and we knew we needed to understand the possibilities of using concrete with the pigment, the color of the aggregate there, and how we were going to expose all the imperfections of the concrete. Once we understood that, we did the design. In this case, we knew we would have local builders who were not experienced using concrete, so we worked from the understanding of what they were able to do.

NR: Since the emergence of a global architecture, there has been also a renewed regionalism based on local culture. In your work, is this just something you do because that’s where you have to be or are you more conscious of the regional?

TB: This is an interesting question because I’ve realized recently how much Gabriel’s work as an artist has influenced me—because of the situation we faced and the construction process. I studied architecture at a school that was trying to be very global but did not have the software or teachers to teach designing architecture with an algorithm—it was really strange! This led me to becoming more honest, to be who I am and not attempt to mimic all methods out there.

NR: How does the simplicity of form in Mexican architecture, along with the work of Lina Bo Bardi, serve as an inspiration in your work?

TB: I tend to absorb the formal ideas behind it: it’s an unconscious process, as well. It started about the time we did Gabriel’s house as a rationalization of the idea of geometry, of going back to basics and starting from the most simple, direct forms in the program and our aesthetic concepts of the space and so on.

NR: Are you looking for beauty in the form and the identity for the projects?

TB: I think an aesthetic definition—and I’m going to say something that sounds very contradictory—but also a kind of rebellion to this organicity.

NR: How do both aspects apply to the Casa Ventura house, in Monterrey, which is formally intricate yet appears organically tucked into the hillside?

TB: The clients wanted a more organic flow in which you could feel the space as well as both a lot of privacy and openness. So, I said, “Okay, let’s find some sort of strategy to take the hills into account.” First, we need to do a house you can meander to, feeling like it’s all on the same level, even though you need to climb steps. Second, we need to understand the topography, the trees, and the vegetation. They wanted to be able to clearly divide the public from the private space within the house. When they are sleeping or grow older, they want to be able to secure it with a bulletproof door because they are afraid of burglars. So, I used the land that’s a little bit less hilly for the public space and placed the private quarters on the hill, so it’s really not accessible: you need to be Spiderman to get there from the outside. We found that the shape of a hexagon was the perfect geometric solution to pull it all together.

NR: How did you convince your client to accept these multiple layers of construction?

TB: They were incredible clients and said, “You can do whatever you want.” And I said, “We need you to be here every Friday to review and be sure we are going in the right direction.” At the end, they were really engaged with the project and truly worked on it with us. I don’t think the architect should define every single corner of the place. We should put in the platform, and then it develops and evolves over time. This is something about organicity that I like in my work, and really truly leave it to grow.

NR: In such a collaboration you have a strong degree of influence. How does the idea of responsibility of the architect toward the private client and the client’s collaboration, but also, more generally, what do you see as the architect’s social and political responsibility?

TB: I see my profession as the second-most important, after doctors. I really take it seriously. And one major criticism I have of architecture today is that space is not defined via an algorithm. A space is for people to live in! The responsibility is not only to the human being but also to consider what you are going to insert into the environment.

NR: You’re also designing a small, expansive home in a kind of informal and adaptable vernacular style. How did you design both the system and concept for the project?

TB: We needed a very practical idea, to have it look organic and be flexible according to different inputs in different regions. But we needed a model, a prototype, that would adapt to these changes, not only the climate but also culture. In the south, in Chiapas, where we are working now, we needed to include a very traditional kitchen and a bathroom that is also a dry toilet.

NR: How did you find out about all these local housing requirements and traditions?

TB: We conducted about two thousand interviews with some students and people from the finance department, using just five simple questions. We needed a base model, and a young woman who had recently joined the office said, “Why don’t we use the Ordos concept? It’s a beautiful project and could work as a modular system.” I normally don’t go back to previous projects, but this worked in many ways.

NR: Do you see this house type making it to more neighborhoods or is it just here and there?

TB: It is designed to be here and there. It has two versions, one more rural and one that is going to be in more suburban areas, where the people see it as their house for the rest of their lives, and the suburban people see it more as a transitional home before they can really afford a “house in the city.”

NR: This project also has been a return to your interest in housing. How are you reengaging in these issues that deal with thousands of housing units and a complex governmental structure?

TB: I’ve been trying to push the politics of the social-housing department in Mexico. The country’s full of thousands of social-housing units, which are single-family homes stacked side by side, with huge, straight streets. So, we really need to change. My father was the director of both my elementary and high school. He had a sign on the door: “If you don’t arrive with a solution, then you are still part of the problem.” I had that in mind about the social-housing issue and the poor who end up with a house and a mortgage. Under the former government, I crashed the wall, literally, but the Infonavit—which includes cut out local governments, corrupt and greedy developers—is the only institution that can make a change. Huge developments are built in small, poor towns, increasing the population by the thousands without services. When I started pushing for better solutions, their first thought was that the problem was the people who are not capable of needing a good home! Finally, with this new government, we are having a serious conversation to find new solutions.

NR: What is your specific focus for the Yale Studio in terms of site and project as well as addressing these housing issues?

TB: One big issue that has not been yet addressed is that people abandon their homes and credit. So, with the students, we are looking at the abandoned places that still have people living there. Infonavit is supporting research, so the students can look at twelve areas in different parts of the country in various contexts. Each team will have to find a clear strategy of intervention in each site that could reverse the abandonment and allow you to do projects in places as far away as Oaxaca, China and Lyon, France?
It is refreshing that the Yale School of Architecture has undergirded the projecton speculative urban futures as an urgent topic of disciplinary concern with the recent exhibition, Infra Eco Logi Urbanism. The show explores the emergence of the megaregion and its increasing dominance over urban form, examining ways possible architecture might engage this milieu. So, while much of the research currently resides within the fields of planning, economics, and political science, the work exhibited here expands this discourse by probing the possibilities afforded by architecture’s and urban design’s interests in the megaregion phenomenon. In this sense, the exhibition is both timely and provocative.

Specifically, Infra Eco Logi Urbanism is a speculative research project undertaken by RVTR, an Ann Arbor- and Toronto-based design practice led by Geoffrey Thün, Kathy Veilking, and Colin Ripley. In RVTR’s words, the project “posits a manifesto for architecture at the border; …aimed to focus on the future urban economies, cross-border governance, politics, infrastructure, and public architecture.” By investigating what have been considered the “back house” activities of cities, such as infrastructures, logistics, and transportation, RVTR is charged to present a macro-mapping of the GLM; that is, the PhD thesis, as the authors note, comprises portions of two doctoral dissertations undertaken by eight states, which were overlaid into twelve metropolitan areas and encompasses the watershed of five Great Lakes as well as a population of nearly ten million people.

The exhibition is made up of twenty-eight, large backlit panels that float at eye level and depict an array of man in the cities, renderings, photographs, and text. On the floor at the center of the gallery is an enormous vinyl map of the GLM that consolidates much of the cartographic information, shown elsewhere in the exhibition, into a kind of territorial carpet of woven economic and ecological vectors. Just beyond the large floor map, to the back of the gallery, are four models of the architectural speculations generated as part the research—all showing the extent of special attention accorded, and the fourth a larger-scale detail showing the extents of specific sites operated as part the research—three shown elsewhere in the exhibit, into a kind of abbreviated visual fashion. Here, the research project and exhibition focuses specifically on the megaregion’s physical form and the fourth encompasses an enormous vinyl map of the GLM that consolidates three retrofitted highway infrastructure systems for engaging contemporary urbanization and planning practices to the present day.

No there can be no doubt that the proposed megastuctures of RVTR are clearly distinct from those of their predecessors. The heavy beton brut concrete of Paul Rudolph and Edward Logue for the promotion of automobile and commuter mobility has been replaced by the airy lightness of fritted glass and soaring structural laminates. And the planned displacement of low-income immigrant neighborhoods by Robert Moses, Edmund Bacon, and Edward Logue for the promotion of auto- and commuter mobility has been replaced by a focus on the productive capacity of “orphaned” spaces and easements within existing intercity mobility systems. Even the monofunctional housing blocks proposed during this prior period have been replaced by the panaces of mixed-use public amenities and institutional services. However, there is little question that the three nodes are mediated by the projective cartographies and the careful consideration of the transactional nature of contemporary urbanization tells us anything, it is the need to pursue more agile, modulat-able formats of settlement and infrastructure, not larger, heavier, less flexible configurations, which are as apt to fail as their mid-century predecessors.

RVTR rightly notes that “there is increasing skepticism that traditional architecture and urban design practices can effect-ively operate within an urbanism characterized by dynamic and emergent behavior.” As such, the elaboration of new strategies and systems for engaging contemporary urbanization activities within the milieu of the megaregion are urgently needed. Infra Eco Logi Urbanism is presented as “a model for interrogation, debate, and refinement.” It is explicitly “utopian” in orientation and, as such, demands critical reflection. It does not answer even a mere fraction of the questions posed by the emergence of the megaregion as an urban phenomenon. Few projects could. But what it does do—quite well—is frame the phenomenon as a topic of urgent concern for all of the urban design disci-iplines, architecture in particular.

Christopher Marcinkowski (M.Arch '04) is assistant professor of landscape architecture and urban design at the University of Pennsylvania. He is a founding partner of PORT and previously was a senior associate at James Corner Field Operations, in New York.
On the occasion of the infra Eco Logi Urbanism exhibition at Yale, assistant dean Bimal Mendis (B.A. ’98, M.Arch ’03), professor Keller Easterling, and Chris Marcinkoski (’04) asked questions of Geoffrey Thun, Colin Rippey, and Kathy Velkov of RVT/R regarding practice and urban design at an immense scale.

Bimal Mendis: Your research considers the phenomenon of the urban “megaregion.” What is the cumulative result of the proliferation of these entities throughout the world? Taken together, do they constitute or converge toward a new form of urbanism? RVT/R: Since the urban formation of the megaregion—that is, continuous polycentric urbanization territorialized over a geographic region—was first identified in the early 1960s by geographers and authors such as Lewis Mumford, Constantinos Doxiadis, and Jean Gottman (who coined the term megalopolis), its implications have been a topic of study and interrogation by planners, geographers, and urban designers worldwide. In the literature we have found that almost everyone who has studied megar- gories: urban planners to economists and policy researchers, would argue that this is, indeed, a new form of urbanism and that its metrics are more than just scale.

One of the results of the megaregion’s emergence is that it has really challenged how we think and act on the question of the city. Cities today—particularly those that comprise or introduce new megaregions—are increasingly decentralized and distributed across extensive geographies, and entangled with their peripheral landscapes and hinterlands. The notion of the city as a contained and identifiable entity has become somewhat of a distant fiction. If we can no longer delineate the sovereign domain of the city, then the same is true regarding what was traditionally understood as the space outside of the city, the wilderness, the countryside, the periphery. These landscapes and zones coexist and coexist and coexist with the urban environment.

The spatial collapse between city and territory has coincided with corollary conceptual shifts in design disciplines. As Antoine Picon has pointed out, it is increasingly difficult to make viable distinctions between areas of territory and landscape, between landscape and architecture, between architecture and territory, between territorial and landscape. This is partly possible to take distance, disciplinarily exclusive or external positions—everything is integrated. This has profound implications for architects and urban designers for how we consider urban questions, for the nature of how we model and visualize these conditions, and for the characteristics and scope of the urban and landscape projects we propose.

Megaregions also precipitate a crisis in urban politics and policy. Due to their scale, complexity, and density, they challenge the functional status and authority of preex- isting jurisdictional units—whether those of cities, electoral districts, states, provinces, or nations. The megaregion introduces a new layer of political and constitutional considerations in which the city and state, or nation. Decision-making regarding shared issues—such as infrastructure, environment, resources, sovereignty, and labor—requires new frameworks of governance. Also imperative is a reconfiguration of work in common among academics available to a population of implicated publics insofar as their identity as citizens, their rights, and their ability to participate from that of the speculative propositions of the Infra Eco Logi Urbanism project.

Chris Marcinkoski: Can you talk about the appeal of the hyperprogrammed “big building,” or megalstructure, as an instrument of contemporary urban design? It’s a typology that has really only found traction in the rapidly urbanizing contexts of Southeast Asia and, on occasion, in Europe, where there is a dearth of developable land. What is its efficacy in the horizontally diffuse context of North America? And how do you see this typology generally responding to the emergent discourse around megareregions?

RVT/R: We’ve had a fascination with the hyperprogrammed big building for some time now, and this project has in many ways been an opportunity to experiment with the possi- bilities, and the limits, of megareregions in the contemporary urban condition of the Great Lakes Megaregion. In the project we explore megalstructural propositions at two points: the Detroit-Vineland Highways 401-427 interchange, near Toronto. Both are located in what might be defined as a peripheral urban condition.

One of the primary questions of the periphery is that of scale—but also speed. Operating in the infrastructurally scaled and shaped urban territory, specifically with railway stations and transit hubs, neces- sitates a certain scale of intervention to begin with. How could these infrastructural structures be crossbred with other urban programs to produce new metropolitizations within the megareregion? It was Kevin Lynch who perhaps first proposed that large-scale buildings could oper- ate as “nodes” within the diffuse urban landscape, coalescing not only functions but also a legible hierarchy of built form. We are compelled by the capacity for monumental forms to produce a distinct otherness within the urban periphery, providing a figure within the diffuse urban field and opening up new aesthetic, spatial, and social possibilities. The megalstructural typology can, we think, be expanded beyond its initial formu- lation in the 1970s and its very well-known critique by Reyner Banham. One of the reasons the megareregions built during that period were seen as failures was that they were cut off from their context, especially in central urban locations—as was the case in Montreal’s Place Bonaventure. Some megareregions, such as La Défense in Paris, that were conceived as much more open and interconnected urban systems with a strong public-realm design, have over time formed very successful urban precincts. An expanded definition of the type might find that North America has actually produced certain native species of megaregions, quite different from European or Asian contexts and well adapted to North American forms of urbanism. We might look to some of the major regional shopping malls, casinos, resort complexes, interconnected hospital complexes, and some major airports. These can all be seen as versions of hyperprogrammed, megalocalized buildings that produce their own distinct urban forms, spatial formations, social frame- works, publics, and identities. Many of these are, in fact, located within diffuse urban fields. We think the real question is whether we can imagine alternative urban roles and social possibilities for these structures that might be more heterogeneous, open, and accessible to a variety of publics.

An incredibly compelling character of megareregions is that, due to their scale and complexity, they produce a kind of “city in a city.” The infrastructural character is largely interesting to consider within the context of megareregions, which are often characterized by nonurban-scale market infrastruc- ture, and logistics-driven urban agglomera- tions. No longer associated with a specific “center,” these megalstructures hold the potential to coalesce urban programs and spaces, produce new urban societies, and provide figuration within the urbanism of the periphery.

Keller Easterling: How do you plan to instrumentalize some of your proposals? In other words, how will you develop a broader audience and gain the respect of environmental and political science as well as global governance? How will you address unsympathetic political climates?

RVT/R: From the outset, the proposi- tions included in the Infra Eco Legi Urbanism project have been conceived of as specula- tive. For us, they are about thinking and working on urban questions with the aim of expanding an imagination for our collective urban prospect in which design is mobilized to envision scenarios that posit plausible future worlds—including the value systems, attitudes, and design objects that might be produced through them. If the proposals are intended to be instrumental, it is in how effec- tively they create occasions for discussion and debate and how they catalyze new think- ing on urban questions. The ability to imagine alternative futures is essential to political change. That said, the question of how architecture and urban design can develop a broader audience beyond the discipline is one that we continually consider.

As this has been a multyear project, we have had the chance to present and discuss the work at conferences and lectures in the Netherlands, Japan, Germany, Spain, the United States, and Canadian venues within the GLM. Opportunities to reach interdisciplinary audiences have ranged from a broadcast with NPR and a review in The Wall Street Journal, when the exhibition opened at Yale to our consulta- tion with the Province of Gelderland (NL) regarding its ongoing development of a renewable-energy corridor linking the port of Rotterdam to the Ruhrgebiet.

When the exhibition first opened in Montreal, we organized a series of events that allowed access to the work by a range of constituencies. We led a weeklong student workshop that introduced a group of environ- mental design students from UQAM to the analytical techniques and design methods-ologies proposed by project. The exhibition formed part of Montreal’s “Nuit Blanche” cultural and artistic festival, during which more than two thousand visitors saw the show in a single evening. We also assembled a public debate with architects, planners, political theorists, and cultural geographers to discuss questions raised by the proposi- tions embedded in the work—it was a lively event. We hope to host another such event at Taubman College, when the Infra Eco Logi Urbanism book is published by Park Books later this year.

In terms of current political climates, we have found some very encouraging transformations under way in southern Ontario—especially with regard to renew- able-energy installations and regional high-speed rail—Ontario has recently announced a commitment to implement an HSR link between Toronto and London. Within this context, we see our central role as one of raising awareness about the issues involved and investigating potential outcomes, impli- cations, and scenarios.
Recenty, we remodeled or rebuilt most of our schools in a $1.5 billion initiative. We got resources from nonprofits and the state and federal governments—and we’ve also partnered with Yale, partly because we have the School of Architecture and people who, like us, are constantly thinking of new ways to achieve things and develop partnerships. You sound guardedly optimistic about the federal government. I have been pessimistic for some time now; as I explain to students, one party doesn’t really need to have an urban agenda because people in the cities vote for them anyway, and the other party doesn’t really need to have an urban agenda because its support is mostly in places outside of cities. However, it sounds like you’ve had some experience suggesting that maybe we can, if we’re entrepreneurial, overcome some of that.

TH I think the Obama administration is trying to find ways to leverage resources where they’re most needed. We applied as a “Promise Zone,” and if we are designated as such, it will give us added points and subsequent applications for federal funding.

AP That is a great attitude, especially when you reflect that New Haven has been very clever at using federal money to do what it needs to do, for example, in building highways. When Henry Cisneros was working under Clinton, university partnerships with cities were explicitly funded, and New Haven got a couple of big grants. Are there particular areas, such as coastal resilience, where the federal government seems to be spending money lately?

TH We are collaborating with forty-two agencies and very hopeful that we will get some funds for coastal resilience projects. We are collaborating with Bridgeport and Stamford to apply for potential funds from the Rockefeller Foundation.

AP How else are you working with other cities?

TH One of the things we are doing is trying to attract a gigabit network to the state, which would put us on par with the level of Internet service elsewhere. I think it’s really important for New Haven to have access to fiber, and we ought to partner with other cities to attract some of these infrastructure banks to come in and lay the fiber so that we have that infrastructure. Stamford, New Haven, West Hartford, and other towns have issued an RFQ. We hope to advertise for an infrastructure entity to come in and retrofit our town, which will galvanize even more development.

AP As someone who has seen a long evolution here from the perspective of a public official, what do you think are the dynamics reshaping the landscape within which mayors operate?

TH We still have a vigorous manufacturing sector and are competitive in terms of European countries, but we have to adjust the educational needs of our population to solve some of the urban problems we’ve had. We don’t have the big companies that are going to hire twenty-five thousand workers with basic skills at good wages. We have to prepare the workforce for five years from now—we’re a highly educated, flexible workforce with multiple skills.

AP In 1995, when Doug Rae, Cynthia Farley, and I first taught a course on New Haven at Yale, we called it “New Haven and the Problems of the American City.” The one big problem that still is on the table is education. While we have been able to upgrade and renovate the schools beautifully, from an architectural perspective, there are still many challenges. How are you working on education and youth issues?

TH We are focused on disengaged youth who don’t come to school and have been suspended or expelled. They’re making our streets unsafe for others as well as for themselves. We brought in police officers, firemen, teachers, and community activists and identified the families with disengaged kids. Then we went door to door and reached out to the parents, not the children. During the summer, we engaged student organizations, such as Yale Debate, which got twenty-five young people to articulate their position in the community. They were basically saying, “Everybody argues against you now. Wouldn’t you like to be able to argue against them?”

The husband of a Yale School of Medicine faculty member developed software that would allow all the agencies that impact the lives of these families to chat about planning for these disengaged kids. We discovered that the kids staying in school get too little support. British agencies now are planning together in real time to help these young people. It’s very exciting.

AP What other opportunities out there are you excited about in terms of ongoing projects or those that you see on the horizon?

TH Right now, there is less land we received from the state, and Alexion Pharmaceuticals is building on the Hill-to-Hill trail. There’s a real opportunity for the community to come together and help define the green belt there. We had a number of community-based development organizations, some of which were started back in my student days by School of Architecture students, that have all been dismantled. I’d like to see us repauperize the communities in development through the “Livable City Initiative.”

AP That is an issue very close to my heart. Our experience with the Greater Dwight Development Corporation has been overwhelmingly positive in that regard. The fact that you’re a women mayor, I’m thinking, for example, of the ongoing challenge of reconnecting the Hill and the area around the New Haven train station. We are working on the Hill-to-downtown and reconnecting those neighborhood. We have very little of the state to lower the highway, so the new development and former coliseum site will be the entryway into the city. We’re excited about a 4.5-star hotel that will be in the first phase of the development. We began to work with the Department of Transportation on a new garage over at the train station.

TH That’s a project that we did work on with Gordon Borgstrom to develop urban development in that area. River Street—which is not in downtown, but across from all of the oil stations—could be redeveloped. One of the things I’m looking to do is build apprenticeships, like swimming pools and a skating rink.

AP Downtown is tied more and more to Institutional functionality as a good place to live. How do you think it will be likely to be coming back to cities like New Haven, but, instead, people want to live there.

TH New Haven is also working on the Hill-to-Hill valley and other cultural attractions; we are cited for our International Festival of Arts and Ideas, our Chamber Music Festival, the International Film Festival; and we probably have the most interesting and internationally diverse food venues per square mile in the country. We are the most walkable city and soon will be the most bikeable, and we are working on a new transportation plan.

AP How can your colleagues in the architecture and design professions help with all of this?

TH One of the things that you can do—and have done—is to work with us from a community-based perspective. We’re open to new ideas. I would like to think about urban design more than we have. I’ve asked city planner Karyn Gilvar (M.Arch ’75) if she would find ways to integrate urban design in a more thoughtful and effective manner.

AP One of the challenges for cities like New Haven is balancing the need for new development with the historical character of the city, which is not always immediately compatible with the needs of a contemporary community.

TH Thankfully, there are advocates who care about preserving our history. It’s one of our challenges that there are a lot of other places in America don’t. I didn’t realize that we were the first city to have a government tree-planting operation or that we were the first planned city in the country. It’s thinking that it’s important that we maintain a sense of who we are.
Why Can’t We Talk About Architecture?

The panel discussion “Why Can’t We Talk About Architecture?” was held on December 15, 2014 on the fourth-floor of Rudolph Hall and was organized by Jennifer W. Leung on the occasion of the Poynter Fellowship in Journalism, awarded to British architecture critic Ellis Woodman. Architecture critic for London’s Daily Telegraph and author of Modernity and Revolution: The Architecture of James Gowan, Woodman was joined by Yale professor Keller Easterling, author of the recently published book Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructural Space, and Sam Jacob, Eero Saarinen Visiting Professor, cofounder of FAT Architecture, contributor to Icon and Dezeen, and author of the blog, Strange Harvest.

Ellis Woodman. I proposed to Jennifer the issue of why we cannot talk about architecture. The question refers to the reasons we don’t have a real public discourse. A desire to address that faltering was a key motivation when, at the age of thirty, I left practice and became a writer about architecture. I thought there was an opportunity to write about architecture with the seriousness with which art and film critics or novelists address their subjects, without patronizing a general audience. I write for professional and general audiences, but there isn’t much of a difference.

When I was writing, there was a generation of architects who had begun to offer a new set of ambitions for British architecture. I write about buildings, and my activity is closely related to the core of that discipline. I think there are a lot of architects that could do better than I can, although one thing I have over them is independence. I wouldn’t like to overstate the importance of that. I am up to my knees in architecture, but I am not a professional architect.

The idea that a critic should have a position is an interesting one. I certainly don’t think I have a theoretical position, and I don’t think, in any English critic does. There is something in the national character that makes it hard to adopt such a strident polemical standpoint. Maybe Colin Rowe was the last English architect-writer who was capable of that sort of polemical standpoint.

So what questions might that criti cal basis be grounded on? Sam and I were talking the other day, and Sam was making the observation that we actually write the same article over and over again. I think that’s certainly true of me. The two questions I’m always asking are: does it work, and does it meet its obligations to the city?

I worry that the discussion about the stuff of architecture, about its form and spatial effects, is in retreat. In the last year architectural exhibitions, biennales, and triennials have left me feeling bleak about the state of the public discourse. Thus, I question how we can strengthen it to contribute to the design of architecture.

Keller Easterling. Here are some ways in which people don’t talk about architecture when it is architecture and urbanism that is at stake or when space is the unexploited variable in global power plays.

You all probably know that I work on spatial products, repeatable free zone world cities, broad band urbanism and global standards that shape most of the space in the world. This space generates de facto, forms of policy that can outpace law, and it is the secret weapon of some of the world’s most powerful players in the world.

Audiences often think that the infrastructural space I describe is means the death of architecture when they think it signals a new political power. And I wonder why we can’t talk about that power.

We also often think that extradiplomatically related to social and political sciences somehow overshadows architecture. But really, it’s the other way around. There are multiple disciplines that could use our skills and evidence.

As I am at it, I am very interested in Ellis to see an architecture biennale that is more like bad sociology or bad art, it is very irritating to me to think about art-as-urbanism. Realization of global political problems in the gallery especially when these are, with self-congratulation, treated as evidence or result. I am not sure that culture treats architecture as it is somehow soft. Not appropriate for governance or real decision making or real research funding. Only appropriate for the gallery. I wonder why we can’t we talk about architecture and urbanism as having the skills worthy of respect and funding beyond the often powerless fee-for-service position.

Just at a moment of ubiquitous computing, internet of things, smart city etc., the book I just finished, Extrastatecraft, was asking us to see space itself as an information system whether or not it is enhanced with digital technology. I am always amazed that if there is a choice between tuning the eye to see information latent in and carried in space or seeing information carried in a shiny new technology, audiences will often see something redemptive in the technology. But space is the underexploited medium of invention at the moment. So again, I am left asking, “why can’t we talk about architecture?”

Jennifer Leung. The idea that architecture needs to define itself against other forms of criticism, as well as itself, is interesting. I am thinking about art criticism in particular, when in the 1970s, Rosalind Krauss was writing against the art critic. What do you think about the practice of writing against one’s predecessors?

Sam Jacob. At a certain point, I felt there wasn’t any writing that I wanted to read. There had been a kind of failure of the older generation to describe architecture and design in a relevant way. This was just at the moment when the Internet was making it possible to publish without anybody between you and the reader. And that is how I started to write. I chose to write from a very particular position, that of an architect. I wanted to write about the stuff around me, the stuff around us, and to try to understand that in architecture terms.

I suppose my real medium is the review. I often like to choose the most ridicul ous subject: for example, the film Sex and the City 2. Here was a cultural phenomenon using two great words—“sex” and “city”—that nobody had written about in terms of architectural content. So, in relation to Ellis’s point, there perhaps is already a public debate about what cities are, what architecture is; it is just that we’re not participating in it.

Sex and the City is a proposition about the city exactly the same way Delirious New York was a retroactive manifesto about Manhattan. So, maybe it’s productive to see what Sex and the City is really saying about the contemporary city.

The introductory scene was an incredible story of the history of Manhattan in three phases: nature, city, and commodity. Once upon a time, there was an island with some parallel with some island. When the screen, Manhattan turns into this Swarovski-covered city. I suppose that is the thesis of the film, that urbanism has dissolved into consumerism. But once understood as the diversity of Manhattan has been replaced by a thousand ways of making exactly the same decision.

So this is an example of the types of subjects I’m interested in, which are usually nonarchitectural and noncanonical but always placed in dialogue with core disciplinary ideas. Perhaps it is in places like Sex and the City 2 that the real arguments about the future of the city are actually taking place. And this is the trick in most of my writing: trying to turn things inside out, turning low codes into descriptions of much more important issues and vice versa.

I wonder if it may not be a desire for sex and the city but rather for something like real estate. In journalism, architecture is talked about in the style or the arts-and-culture section. Often part of the review is to talk about its success or failure as an investment, and how stakeholders feel.

I found the architecture I wanted to write about was not on the architecture pages but on the international pages of newspapers. I started writing Enduring Innocence because I opened the paper one morning and saw a Hyundai cruise ship—the one that was used in the Love Boat television series—and it was being used for a cruise ship tour of the DPRK. So many of the stories about real estate are drenched in fantasies and fluffy fairy tales and other fantasies.

When I write for the Daily Telegraph, I’m very conscious of the fact that architecture is covered in various sections, and I write for the arts pages. To be candid, it is hard to persuade my editor to write about a building that isn’t an arts building in the arts pages. Certainly, the move to digital is helping to break down that format. They understand why you might review a museum, a theater, or an exhibition, but if I want to write about social housing or a school, it is a struggle.

Who has influenced your methodology and interest in writing?

For me, John Summerson is the great communicator. I’m not a historian, but the history of architecture is a fundamental reference point for everything I write. If I’m reviewing a department store, well, what does this mean as an addition to the history of department stores? Before we get to criticism, the more useful thing I hope I do is describe, with some precision and economy, Summerson writes so beautifully, if only I could write like him. I sense Sam has a much stronger connection with Banham. The best Banham writings has this speculative quality. His wonderful L.A. book is looking at a subject that hadn’t received much critical inquiry, and discovers in it a very potent set of architectural implications. One can think of many architects for whom a project of writing runs parallel to their work as designers. A fundamental difference between the two activities is that writing cannot really be critical as an architect—you have to contribute to the world in a positive manner. For example, Koolhaas’s architectural projects; they shot through with cynicism, but I don’t think you can bring those same attributes to architecture.

I think it’s self-propagation. It’s partly about trying to define an idea that is somewhere in front of you but slightly fugitive, to capture its shadow and begin to think about it as an architectural problem or project. I think making buildings is also a way of talking about architecture. In that sense, building is directly related to forms of writing, drawing, and making models. They are not very different from the act of imagining architecture.

As much as writing is changing, so is practice. What are the implications for the future?

I can imagine that, in a couple of years, my building reviews will be in voiceovers with film footage. This year, I’ve already been making a lot of films for Architectural Review.

The ability to communicate and publish immediately and directly are increasing. The idea that you can build a practice that is indistinguishable from a point of view is also inevitable. Your personality, your 140-character witticisms, and your Instagram posts will inevitably become your architecture; they will be the way you announce architecture to the world. That is very exciting.

From left: Keller Easterling, Ellis Woodman, Jennifer Leung, and Sam Jacob.
In 2014, two skyscrapers painted a certain kind of picture of the contemporary city. One, 4 World Trade Center opened in New York, becoming the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere. It was solid and shiny, but not very lived-in. If it follows the path of its twin predecessors, it may never be, even though a number of floors are filled with pricey and well-appointed tenants, there to pick up the slack. Earlier in the year, in Caracas, Venezuela, the illegal but densely packed tenants of a squatter high-rise occupied incrementally after its developer died during construction, were cleared through forced evictions. A much-cited paragon of resourcefulness and informal settlement, of people making and doing outside of planned systems, the tower is destined to return to the global real estate market that could not finish and fill it the first time. Next to Caracas’ unfinished tower, New York’s finished one, though architecturally similar, appears as a kind of shell, a polished exterior without the urgency of the simple need to animate its inner life.

Together, the two buildings demonstrate an awkward fact of contemporary life: private development and city planning processes and the most efficient mechanisms for addressing basic human requirements, and when they fail, other systems inevitably step in to take over the job. Curated by Pedro Gadanho, the exhibition Uneven Growth looks to harness those informal, systems to interrogate and address economic and social inequity in a handful of large cities around the world. In much of the writing that surrounds the show—the catalog, on the curatorial imperative, and in texts like Justin McGuirk’s Radical Cities, which inspired some of the show—the formal elements of the projects are juxtaposed with the creativity and ingenuity of its informal elements. Rather than focusing on recently planned cities, the show looks at established cities, and instead of totaling designs, the curators privilege small, activist, and community-based projects—so-called tactical urbanisms—to show how they might be powerful forces in contemporary city-making. Uneven Growth adopts the format developed for the exhibitions Rising Currents and Foreclosed, the two previous entries in MoMA’s “Issues in Contemporary Architecture” series. As with those shows, the work on display was produced over more than a year, and the thematic focus and feedback between exhibited projects through a series of workshops and public presentations.

The projects exhibit a range of sites for sites in Hong Kong, Istanbul, Lagos, Mumbai, New York, and Rio de Janeiro can be divided into those that accept the curatorial imperative to act tactically (Rio, Lagos, Mumbai) and those that shirk it in favor of more systematic proposals (New York, Istanbul, Hong Kong).

The urban prototypes designed by the Lagos team, the catalog of domestic products for Rio, and the do-it-yourself, scaffolding-like structures imagined for Mumbai use small and/or community-based tactics like those that inspired Tactical Urbanism, to show how they might be powerful forces in contemporary city-making. Uneven Growth adopts the format developed for the exhibitions Rising Currents and Foreclosed, the two previous entries in MoMA’s “Issues in Contemporary Architecture” series. As with those shows, the work on display was produced over more than a year, and the thematic focus and feedback between exhibited projects through a series of workshops and public presentations.

The examples of small-scale, clientless architects and are changing, and it’s heartening to have practitioners and theorists. This track record demonstrates that there is no single solution to the many problems in the contemporary city. This is undoubtedly true, but these projects never rise to the level of a plausible solution, and with few exceptions, the work is loaded with so much ambiguity (admiration and trepidation, seriousness and satire) that the research and responses bleed unhelpfully together. The effect is visually overwhelming and intellectually stimulating.

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The examples of small-scale, clientless architects and are changing, and it’s heartening to have practitioners and theorists. This track record demonstrates that there is no single solution to the many problems in the contemporary city. This is undoubtedly true, but these projects never rise to the level of a plausible solution, and with few exceptions, the work is loaded with so much ambiguity (admiration and trepidation, seriousness and satire) that the research and responses bleed unhelpfully together. The effect is visually overwhelming and intellectually stimulating.
This fall’s Architectural Forum, continuing as in past seasons to draw a crowd from across the university, welcomed four scholars, each challenging conventions in undertaking architectural scholarship in four completely different ways. A joint effort between the departments of the History of Art and the School of Architecture, the forum invited scholars undertaking cutting-edge and interdisciplinary scholarship to Rudolph Hall’s Smith Conference Room. This semester, the forum lived up to its promise and exceeded expectations in everything from its transit construction to efforts to understand our current obsession with mobile communication devices through attention to the role of the “screen” as an under-recognized medium in material history.

The forum opened with a talk by John Ochsendorf, professor of architecture and of civil and environmental engineering at MIT, on the topic of Gustave Eiffel. Ochsendorf’s interest in handmade Gustave Eiffel tiles—composed in elaborate geometric patterns that are structural—comes from his day job as an adviser on contemporary vernacular building technology became an important feature in buildings, such as at Grand Central Terminal, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in America. After emigrating from Spain to the United States, Rafael Gustavino talked his way into the job of tiling the Boston Public Library by arguing he could do it more cheaply than it could be done with imported Italian tiles. The project was a sensation, and Gustavino ceilings became a national trend just before concrete and steel became standard. The technology eventually fell out of fashion in the middle of the century, but Ochsendorf argued convincingly for the technique’s enduring potential to create beautiful and structurally complex constructions.

Giuliana Bruno, professor of visual and environmental studies at Harvard University, continued the forum’s focus on materiality with an attention to understanding how the proliferation of screens in everyday life provides an opportunity to inform our reading of art history. Bruno began by considering the conceptual history of the term “image,” emerging as an offshoot of design object used as a pictorial platform. She emphasized the long history of artists using machines to create such environments in tandem with other mediums to make sensorial experiences that prefigure today’s ubiquitous multimedia environments. Bruno ultimately issued a challenge for thinking about material culture, pointing out that screens did not exist as such an entity until the late 20th century. This led to audience member questioning about whether he was actually creating art objects rather than usable instruments. Rankin came back with the idea of geographic objectivity, saying, “There are two kinds of lying: deliberately misleading, and mapping.” Like Rankin’s critique of the base map as neutral and Bruno’s argument against screens as an ahistorical phenomenon without materiality, Mabel Wilson uncovered an alternative story by looking at the racialized history of American cartography. How do maps produce culture can encode ideas of a racial nationalist project. An associate professor at Columbia’s GSB, Wilson juxtaposed institutional spaces on the National Mall as a means of highlighting the social and ideological function of interstitial places, liminal territories, and ambivalent space. The city is a locale that has been suggested in keeping with Adajye’s own transnationalist background, the design specificity, the geopolitical specificity, the African American cultural history. One precedent is W. E. B. Du Bois’s “Temple of Beauty exhibition at the Paris World Fair in 1900, which specifically, Egyptian, architectural motifs as a means of creating a distinctly African-American design.” Her dissertation is set off a lively debate that centered on the symbolic power of maps and African American cartography. Wilson was a part of a design team that was passed over in favor of an African architecture and her project. An associate professor at Columbia’s College’s summer travel research grants.

Cities of Darkness: Greg Girard

The role of photography in the representation of interstitial places, liminal territories, and urban communities is essential to the way in which we understand the culture of cities. Eugène Atget’s photographs of Parisian street scenes, for example, drew out an appreciation for the pictorial ordinariness of the city just as Walker Evans’s observations of Hanoi Calling were translated the vernacular of cafés and hand-painted signs into relics. The status of this mode of representation in the contemporary Asian context was brought to the attention of students and faculty at the School of Architecture through the work of the Canadian photographer Greg Girard, who came to speak this fall at the school.

Girard, who spent most of his career in Asia, examines the social and physical transformations of the Asian city. His work has been published in books such as The City of Darkness (1993), Phantom Shanghai (2007), Harco Calling (2010), and The City of Darkness Revisited (2013); he has worked on assignment for publications such as National Geographic, The New York Times, and Der Spiegel, as well as exhibiting at New York’s International Center for Photography.

At Yale, Girard presented two series as interpretive records of the spatial realities and daily lives of residents of extraterritorial spaces in the Asian city. His work calls to the importance of photography to bestow iconic significance on the “unsung.” The first series Girard discussed is rooted in his recent book, The City of Darkness Revisited (authored with Ian Lambot), which focuses on Kowloon Walled City, the photographer recorded life in this legendary unplanned, labyrinthine city in Hong Kong, thought to have been the most densely populated place on earth when it was razed twenty years ago and is currently our current obsession. Thirty-three thousand people lived there in more than three hundred interconnected high-rise buildings, none of them built by an architect.

Girard captured the unraveled area, covering a single Hong Kong block at the end of the Kai Tak airport runway. The images showed a world unto itself, largely ignored by both Chinese and British authorities—a place of decrepit dark lanes and shadowy stairways, of malodorous and damp narrow alleys, where rainwater is backed up by garbage. Families share 250-square-foot apartments, products are made, and drug dealers are rampant. It is a locale that has long fascinated architects and writers (the 1988 film Bloodsport was filmed there).

The second series Girard presented, “Half the Surface of the World,” is a collection of photographs taken at U.S. military bases around the Pacific and designated by the Pentagon as the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), covering half the world’s surface. His images record the bases he first encountered when he lived and traveled in Japan in the 1970s. They show a landscape intended to feature the characteristics of American small-town or suburban life of the 1950s—with the unexpected intrusion of an attack jet or warship at the end of the block.

Presented together, the two series called attention to two very distinctive—and seemingly opposed—urban typologies: rarefied contexts of the “unsung” Chinese community, absent bureaucratic control, and the pristine ordered American military sites of the post-World War II and the Korean War.

Because Kowloon Walled City was considered by Auguste Perret to be one of the world’s most horrible, the inevitable questions following Girard’s presentation dealt with a concern about whether his images “intellectualized” or “aestheticized” an environment where people lived under conditions that most would find unacceptable. However, Girard, who spent five years photographing and interviewing residents of Kowloon Walled City, survived that it incorporated an authentic community life in spite of its surface appearance and political and geographical context. Girard was hosted at Yale by seniors in the architecture program enrolled in the seminar “Images and Architecture,” taught by Karla Britton. Britton’s talk contributed to the larger theme of the colloquium, which addressed research methods and approach to representation of urban transformations in cities around the globe including Hong Kong, Beijing, and Shanghai. Coauthors such as Girard have deepened the students’ work by drawing out the importance of personally disclosing the practices of their colleagues, and of collaborative research trips, such as those done through Yale College’s summer travel research grants.

—Karla Cavanna Britton

Britton is a lecturer at the school. She is the author of Augustine Perret (Phaidon, 2001); editor of Hawaiian Modern with Dean Sato (Yale University Press, 2008); and editor of Constructing the Inflatable (Yale School of Architecture, 2011).
Architecture students are saturated with imagery. Images are, in large part, the currency of architecture schools (and of the profession, for that matter). Students don’t make the architecture they represent in their design studios. They can only point to it with drawings and models and words. And few of us ever set foot in the vast majority of archi-
tecture that influences our work. Architecture is constantly being reduced to images, and architecture students are given little indication that it’s otherwise. Through this insatiable addiction to imagery, we come to understand architecture largely from its surface.

Therefore, the overriding ambition of “Systems Integration,” a fourth-semester core sequence course, is to get behind the image of architecture to uncover what sustains that image. The course is an exten-
sion of the design studio in both literal and figurative senses, in that we select a group of the students’ projects from their previ-
ous design studio to develop further (literal) and that the course, while part of the technical sequence of the curriculum, emphasizes thinking about technical issues with the same design mind that’s used in the studio (figurative).

For “Systems Integration,” students must design the building of their build-

ings. We ask them to see architecture as a complex system of systems, to design those systems, and to design how they combine in time and space to create Space. Space is something we are all familiar with when talking about architecture and design, but time is often overlooked as a critical factor—not in the sense of time equaling money but in how the temporal sequence of construction plays as important a role in how architecture is perceived and experienced as anything else.

About fifteen projects are selected from the fall semester design studio to be used in the course based on broad criteria, some are chosen because they are straight-

forward and well-suited for advancement, and others because they present design challenges that will be tested when faced with questions of constructability. In either case, by designing the infrastructure required for these proposals and confronting the so-called “realities” of gravity, life safety, the building industry, and so on, students come to realize the opportunities for innovation inherent in these constraints and develop a new, original arsenal of tools to carry into the advanced studio sequence.

The students work on the projects in teams: two or three are paired with the author of the selected project; and while the original author may maintain a leadership role, design decisions are established by consensus among these members and their instructors. Student teams are matched with a team of faculty “consultants,” composed of an architect, a structural engineer, and a mechanical engineer. They meet with this assigned team on a weekly basis to review progress and plot the course of their work. These critics also give assignments intended to provide a structure within which to pace the development of the projects. Students propose and develop, as fully as possible, appropriate systems related to structure, enclosure, egress, climate, and light. The investigation and development of each is based on the technological role each system plays within the building as a whole and on its suitability relative to larger issues of architec-
tural intent. The goal, however, is that these advances ultimately serve to both reinforce and re-inform the formal origins of each work.

A more familiar version of this course, taught in many other architecture programs, is known as “Comprehensive Design,” as a separate course, while the work of “Systems Integration” at Yale is combined with the design studio into a single course. There are several advantages to structuring the sequence the way we do. First, it’s apparent that students are already stretched when faced in the studio with trying to resolve the spatial and organizational challenges of a program into a convincing architectural form without also having to answer to quantifiable structural and mechanical issues. Second, students are able to take a more objective position once some time has passed, after the physical and emotional exhaustion of a studio final. And, third, we believe it is instructive for students to recognize how far many presumably completed studio projects need to be unpacked in order to be repack-
aged as viable architectural propositions.

The demands placed on buildings are formable, arising from both the physi-
cal environment and the people who inhabit them. Climate, gravity, our thirst for energy, our need for safety and comfort, and our materials and methods of construction all conspire as conditions that require their own unique and interrelated responses. If a design is to harbor human occupation robustly and intelligently, “Systems Integration” addresses these issues directly. Students focus their attention on isolating, developing, and, ultimately, synthesizing the many layers of structure and infrastructure required to bring architectural ideas into a sustainable physi-
cal reality. The results of this labor lead to a more comprehensive rendering of students’ original conceptual intentions, one that goes deep below the surface of architecture.

—Martin Finio

Finio is the coordinator of the Systems Integration course at the school. He is partner in the New York-based firm Christofio: Finio.

In 2000, the U.S. Department of Energy initiated the “first-of-its-kind solar house competition.” Fourteen teams representing universities and colleges from the United States and Puerto Rico competed in ten different categories as they designed and constructed solar-powered houses over a fifteen-month period. The houses were shipped to Washington, D.C., in 2002 and assembled into a solar village on the National Mall, where their performance was measured as the village was assembled into a solar village on the National Mall, where their performance was measured. In 2004, in response to those who participated in the Solar Decathlon, the University of Arizona, in collaboration with the University of Maryland, Edu-

cational Technology Systems (ETS), organized the Solar Decathlon. This is an international competition that challenges teams to design and build a solar-powered house in a compact footprint. The competition aims to promote sustainable design and raising awareness of the benefits of sustainable design and development. The Solar Decathlon is held every two years and is open to teams from all over the world.

The Solar Decathlon includes ten categories: solar architecture, solar building systems, solar energy systems, solar heating and cooling, solar structural systems, solar thermal systems, solar electrical systems, solar thermal systems, solar lighting systems, solar information technology, and solar communication systems.

The team at the University of Arizona is composed of students from the College of Architecture and Planning, the College of Science, the College of Engineering, and the College of Social Sciences. The team is led by Professor James Winkler, who is also the director of the Solar Decathlon program.

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Fabrication Comes of Age

Fabrication is deeply embedded at Yale, beginning in the 1990s with hands-on workshops in the studio art courses taught by Steven Hauer and Robert Engman. Since 1967, the Vlock Building Project has involved students in the design as well as shop fabrication. Over the past fifteen years, with the introduction of sophisticated computable fabrication, the Schools of Architecture and Art, in collaboration with the Yale Computer Science Department, have created the Disheveled Constructs Studio, which has been incorporated into workshops, studios, and seminars as both a tool and as design provocations. John Eberhart, instructor and director of the fabrication lab; Mark Foster Gage (’01), assistant dean and director of the School of Architecture; and John Wolle, associate professor and critic in architecture, and Kevin Rotheroe, lecturer, sat down with Disheveled Constructs to discuss new directions in fabrication at the school and in the profession.

John Eberhart

Back in 2001, when we realized we were talking about something outside the parameters of the then-current digital technologies, we went through a period of what you might call definition. We had a limited amount of money and didn’t know whether it was going to take off or what would give us the most impact. We focused on the tools that were available, that expanded the material range to where, all of a sudden, you could start designing models in one of the many creative workspaces in the School of Architecture. This in itself meant a shift in understanding because people expected technology to be something in a lab or a workshop. It wasn’t. It was something you could take home and fondle it, no matter what the thing was. People would say, “Oh my God, this is amazing!”

One of the things you quickly learn when you shift from student to instructor is that, if your knowledge is purely technical, you will fall back behind. It’s important to understand the conceptual implications of any technique or technology. That’s what we have to offer, more than a specific technical knowledge.

As students in the early 1990s, we were often limited in what we could design because of the potential for a representation. If you could represent something with a straight edge and a utility knife, the form would make its way through a design process. Now, with rapid prototyping, you can do this iterative design process to test their ideas through multiple ways of form-making, and it is not so precious.

This happened in a design process that resonates more with what is happening in professional offices. The shifts between Frank Gehry and Thomas Heatherwick, telling fifty interns to each model a maker, our students can use robotic tools to generate their final models on certain scales simultaneously. One of the students produced a 3-D printed model the size of a coffee cup that represented what he called a “girl.” It was a giraffe and an Audi occupying the same space, and it was ridiculous and brilliant. Ten years ago, a student could not have produced it because there was no way to model it except by hand drawing. You can’t convey the meaning of what a giraffe or an Audi has without accessing its actual 3-D complexity of these forms, and you can’t access the form without the ability to produce something easily with 3-D printing and the software required to model it. Ideally, the software and the 3-D Print will become so commoditized as to be invisible, and the students will simply be able to manifest their ideas. That’s the goal, and I think that’s where Yale is going right now.

In the core curriculum, every first- or second-semester student is exposed to required courses in which they have to make something using a tool. But even those courses become somewhat critical of the fabrication processes. Often, people realize that milling something out of a piece of foam is a very time-consuming, expensive, and wasteful process. Those courses then pivot and ask, once you’ve milled the thing, how else would you think about it? That’s when you’re compelling the students to create complex processes, handmade versus machine-made, and that moves right into professional practice.

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We’re at the point now where a lot of the technical teaching of equipment is happening on student-to-student. That is one of the reasons the 3-D printers are located on the studio floors. You can always tell when something really hot is coming out of the 3-D printer because you get six or seven students crowded around, looking at it. I think these things will be like refrigerators; we won’t remember how we survived without them. We will get smarter in terms of how we live-cycle this equipment. The robot may not be necessary anymore. There was a huge explosion of technologies in the past decade that has plateaued.

MFG I think a little differently. There is too much information out there to count on any one group of technical expertise. Things are fracturing, and certain people will take on certain interests. If you are interested in something you don’t know about, you download the intelligence like you would an app, or you collaborate with an expert in that area. Innovations in fabrication aren’t really in the machines themselves anymore but in the materials you use with them. All of a sudden, that distinction is breaking down; the innovation is contingent on both, not on one or the other.

After the 3-D printing was up and running, the students asked, “What’s the next big thing?” I think it’s things like Arduino, the mini-microprocessors, and layering the ability to control something through an input stimulus and output reaction—and to fold that into design is an interesting moment. In my current post-professional seminar, we’re working an Arduino-based smart panel. We are putting them throughout the building, and they’re reacting to sunlight or people walking by. The students have really responded to the potential.

If there is a little crisis, a micro-crisis, around technology and complexity, I’m moderating a panel at this spring’s Architectural Complexity Conference, “Architecture’s Complexity Complex,” about architecture’s complexity complex and about our collective loss of faith in complexity as a discipline, which we have been pursuing since the middle of the twentieth century. More people are questioning complexity as we plateau in terms of computation and fabrication technology, placing these technologies into a more interesting and fraught territory than when they were new.

We’re in a period of absorption and digestion, when technological change is leading us to diverse aesthetic expressions and distinct notions about the relative virtues of various forms of complexity. While we are settling in to a period of mature creative exploration with established tools, digital devices will evolve in wonderful ways as we keep investing in and collaborating more with outside enterprises. Some of the people I work with in the aerospace industry are developing large-scale, automated additive materials to make complex metal structures. The time may well come when architects will be able to harness 3-D printing as an actual production technique for making complex forms.

For a while, you could get more and more complex because you were pushing against technology. Now, we realize you can get as complex as you want, and there isn’t any barrier. Now, you look at something that is incredibly complex, and you ask why, not how.
47,547 Homes, Ixtapaluca, Estado de Mexico. Photograph by Livia Corona Benjamin. (30" x 40" | Archival C-Print, Ed. 5+2 AP | 2000)
Year the Jim Vlock Building Project
Each year, the Jim Vlock Building Project gives first-year students the opportunity to work collectively designing and building a finished work of architecture. While lively team dynamics, valuable hands-on experience, and challenging constraints continued this year, two new partners—an open-minded community non-profit and a fearless private-equity firm enabled a different take on the 2014 house that positioned it as the first prototype in an ongoing exploration of new housing in New Haven.

The prompt was starting: design an 800-square-foot house on a narrow lot with a 500-square-foot unit for a homeowner and a 300-square-foot rental unit. What client would be interested in such a tiny house? Several, in fact. For one, NeighborWorks New Horizons, a New Haven-based non-profit dedicated to building affordable housing, was interested in testing unconventional house designs, a perfect match for students eager to design. But with experiments coming on board: Would such a small house sell? Could students make this a livable space? HT Ventures, a private-equity firm owned by New Haven entrepreneur Thach Pham, stepped up to cover the risk. Additionally, the selection of a “silver lot” in the West River neighborhood was intentional: the 2014 Building Project is part of an ongoing collaboration with the New Haven Liveable City initiative to encourage innovative development of the city’s vacant sliver lots, too skinny to entice conventional developers.

Led by studio coordinator Alan Organschi (’88), the semester began with a rapid-fire sequence of design exercises focused on developing a “minimum dwelling code” to prepare students for the challenge of designing small spaces. By early March, each first-year student had designed a two-unit, 800-square-foot house. Just before spring break, the pool of fifty-four was culled to seven houses, which were assigned to student teams. In late April, the winning scheme was selected by faculty consensus, with representatives from NeighborWorks and HT Ventures. Under the leadership of Building Project director Adam Hopfner (’99) and lecturer Avi Forman (’12), the class was redistributed into task forces responsible for structure, envelope, site, systems, massing, and cabinetry to fine-tune the design and prepare construction documents before student work crews began assembling formwork on May 19.

The house is unusually sited on the lot, 65 feet from the street. Because the old footings of a previous house are buried underground, the new construction was moved to virgin soil that could bear the new frost-protected shallow foundation without additional excavation and fill. This decision yields a $15,000 and uses twenty-five percent less concrete. The result is a generous front yard, seen as an opportunity to offer a visually shared garden on the street. Despite its 19’-22-foot footprint, the house feels expansive. The front door opens to an airy double-height living space, linked to the bedroom above without sacrificing privacy. French doors hopped to a massive window extend the living area to a private patio sheltered by mature trees. The parlor, third-floor room, is entered via an exterior concrete-and-steel stair, sheltered by a wood-clad canopy.

To maximize living space within the tight setback and height limitations, the southeast and northwest corners are chamfered, giving the house a unique form. Both generic and particular at once, the house’s iconic form owes its shape to the technical language of regulation; but, ultimately, it is a design opportunity, an appropriate metaphor to designing within extreme constraints of time, program, area, zoning, and budget.

The generous donors included Breakfast Woodworks, Stony Creek Quarry, Kohler, Nomad, Dalie, and DuPont. It made possible to select durable materials that will age gracefully: white-cedar shingles, bamboo floors, solid-core birch plywood cabinetry, custom concrete stair treads, granite countertops, and stone pavers. High-efficiency windows offer a view to the landscape from every interior space.

In the aftermath of the recent economic crisis that exposed traditional homeowner-ship as a fragile construct, this house seeks to challenge accepted norms of house and home through its scale and adaptability: the larger unit may be occupied by a homeowner who can rent out the third-floor apartment for additional income. Eventually, the homeowner may take over all three floors and connect the two units by simply adding one door, as the family grows. Or they may move to a larger house while the tenant purchases 179 Spratling, starting the cycle again.

The 2014 Building Project
On September 18, 2014, the house was given a Student Award of Honor by the Connecticut Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council, which cited the project’s adaptability and ethos of reduced consumption via a reduced footprint. This is the first year NeighborWorks New Horizons and HT Ventures have partnered with the Yale School of Architecture. The collaboration looks to have a promising future, engaging issues of risk, adaptability, and financial sustainability in the tradition of the Jim Vlock Building Project.

—Katherine Stege (’17) and John Klein- schmidt (’17)
The book analyzes and recommends ways to revitalize the south coast Massachusetts communities along the commuter-trail routes by network- ing their physical and economic patterns. The book analyzes the historic structure of these areas, with student work done in Taunton, Fall River, and New Bedford projecting the potential for education, new industry, housing, and agriculture as sources of potential economic growth and development leading to a brighter future for these older industrial cities.

**ASSEMBLY**

The book Assembly documents a Yale School of Architecture 2012 design-build project, pavilion for the International Festival of Arts and Ideas on the New Haven Green. The project was initiated by students in an advanced studio taught by adjuncts mushrooms to the project's design fabrics. The unique aggregation of plasma-cut aluminu m panels rendered the pavilion completely transparent from certain vantage points on the green. The book includes a description of the design and building process as well as a series of essays and interviews on integral themes including the teaching of digital fabrication in architecture, Asa Abloy supported the project and this publication.
Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space

By Keller Easterling

Keller Easterling’s book Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space is a particular chord as a beautifully written and thoroughly researched treatise on how the ideology of liberalism is driving contemporary forms of architecture and urbanism toward capitalism. The author is already well known for her books Organization Space, on Investigating Innocence: Global Architecture and its Political Masquerades, the latter recounting “stories of spatial products in difficult political situations around the world.” The first book sets the context as follows: “Architects are accustomed to resolving spaces according to aesthetic or geometric principles. This book, however, is interested in organizational expressions of spatial arrangements as well as the sites or agents of change within those organizations.” Both books are critical of contemporary and global urbanism, aided significantly by architects as complicit agents of spatial change. Thus, Extrastatecraft comes as the logical conclusion of investigating the architect’s role vis-à-vis the increasing influence of ideological liberalism on inhabitable space around the world. The space as product is thoroughly examined as a point of inquiry. Infrastructure space has become like data and information, as well. The author’s capacity for carrying not only materials but ideas through space as product is thoroughly examined as an academic consideration. The book’s six chapters—“Zone,” “Disposition,” “Broadcast,” “Stories,” “Quality,” and, finally, “Extrastatecraft” (a term coined by Easterling) cover contempoary issues of current global architectural practice. Can new practices ever hope to correct how space has gone out of control? The book ties together all of the extraordinary government practices into a singular, globally oriented urban strategy influenced by liberalism. “Zone” unifies Easterling’s long-term research about the rise of free-trade ports into complex de facto cities claiming global success, such as Shenzhen, in China. “Disposition” discusses the urban dislocations of technology and human habitation away from cities. “Broadcast” describes how the Third World is crafting its global future. “Stories” is a historical recap of globalization via telecommunication and its effects on ways of living as well as its planning. “Quality” comprises a fascinating review of the rapid historical rise of the international standardization of ubiquitous products and its effects on global production of space and networks through uniformity, hegemony, and top-down organization. The final chapter, “Extrastatecraft,” summarizes discoveries from earlier chapters by defining contemporary urbanism. On deeper reading, it seems “extrastatecraft” has become a global standard beyond Harvard and politics and ideology that makes cities like Shenzhen successful. It contributes to the internationalized urbanism begun in Harvard’s Project on the City, with Michael Crcian’s chapter “Shenzhen: Ideology” (published in 2001 and edited by Rem Koolhaas et al.). Many have written on Shenzhen since, including Andrew Ross in the book Digital Labor (2012). Easterling goes beyond cultural-studies methods to focus on the economics of free-trade zones. This material emphasizes the idea of the emergence of homo economicus among architects and urbanists. According to Easterling, this concept is a contemporary resurgence of a character in Karl Polanyi’s book The Great Transformation, from the 1930s to the success of business in the late nineteenth century embodied a belief in homo economicus, laissez-faire, and the market system. “Zone” concludes. Homo economicus captures the majority of Easterling’s intentions by showing that, no matter what the particular global case studies are today, the cultural strategy appears the same: an economic plan solidifying urban typologies in familiar trappings, deployed on the ground toward a more prosperous future. The chapter “Broadcast” is a chilling report on how cultural strategies distributed via informational, technological, and mobile communications create dependency for entire continents, such as Africa. Analyzing Kenya’s postcolonial development in terms of the economic reality of immaterial and infrastructural, Easterling compares the cost of broadband to that in the West, revealing that the companies implementing it demonstrate an inevitable infrastructure and urbanism that is irrational but lucrative, following conventional typologies of habitation, work, and transport in between. This is where the brilliance of Easterling’s propostions come in. The essence of the book lies in its three main directions of inquiry. Infrastructure space has become like an independent software to be deployed further as matter. However, the formulation of “spatial software” comes to the statement into something that architects are inevitably connected with: matter that has a capacity for carrying not only materials but data and information, as well. The author’s trust in her term spatial software is concurrent with the widely used term anthropocene.

In creating this survey of his work, architect Carl Abbott (1862–1928) chose his four guides well. Essays by people close to Abbott, along with comments by the architect himself, provide some rich insights into his architecture. Architect and architectural historian Robert McCarver describes Abbott’s design work as being closer in spirit to the early Modernists such as Van Doesburg, Rietveld, and Mondrian, than that of anyone practicing today. He notes that the work is often as much at home on the sea as in the landscapes to which it is anchored, like an ocean-going vessel, connecting Abbott to Le Corbusier as well. Fellow Yale classmate Lord Norman Foster (1928) sees Abbott’s work as displaying a strong sense of place, referencing Florida’s gulf coast. An early Florida-based influenace was Paul Rudolph, whom Abbott followed later to Yale. He used a concrete-block design drawn from a Rudolph house in another for the same client, making a connection not only to the client’s architectural history but also to the local beach sand, used as aggregate in the blocks. Foster sees another of Abbott’s progenitors in Frank Lloyd Wright, particularly in the way Abbott links small spaces as antechambers to great spatial explosions punctuated with light and views. Michael Sorkin lauds Abbott’s architecture for its affinity with the idea of a simple elemental gift: views, sun, wind, and water. For Sorkin, this work is a counterweight to the excesses that one might associate with the state of Florida. Abbott’s houses are designed from the inside out, relying on the views and natural light. They always possess repose, recognizing that the beach is first and foremost a place to do nothing and enjoy it, a place to see through which one might see familiar surroundings in a fresh way, without distraction. Peter Blöhm finds in Abbott’s architecture evidence of his fascination with nature, always summing his spaces, inside and out, in service and homage to it. Another Yale classmate, Lord Richard Rogers (1926), reflects on what might at first seem an uneasy alliance in Abbott’s work: the combination of the “organic and the International”; a sharp, abstract architectural language amid lush, tropical vegetation. In Abbott’s hands, that unity works in a way that strengthens each through a study in elegant contrasts. Rogers describes them as “works of art grounded in their location.”

Abbott grew up in coastal Georgia and words movingly about its influence on him as an architect, particularly his reverence for the natural world that he developed in observing and painting the plants and animals he found surrounding the history-laden built environment in northeast Florida, he was immersed in rich colors and intense sunlight. He began his architecture studies at the University of Florida, moved on to Yale, and then worked in Hawaii and with Team 4 in London before returning to the United States to work for M. Pei. Finally, in the late 1960s, Abbott returned to Florida to open his own practice, where he has continued to explore the power and legacy of the so-called Sarasota School, the movement started by Rudolph that fused the International Style with Wright’s sense of nature as sacred.

Primary photography by Steven Brooke and restrained graphic design by Sean Harris provide the perfect frames for the architecture. The twenty-six projects presented (annoyingly, without dates), mostly residences in warm climates, certainly reflect the influences of those cited by the essayists and Abbott (with strong hints of Gwathmey and Hejduk) and seem well married to, and yet contrasting with, their—those—their contemporaries in natural beauty.

Michael J. Crosbie
Crosbie is associate dean and chair of the architecture department at the University of Hartford, an architectural critic, and author of the book, The New York Dozen, Gen X Architec- tures (Images 2011), among many others.
Money—a topic often taboo within architecture—is brought to life by the essays and numerous interviews within the gold pages of Perspecta 47. No doubt architects will flock to the shelves that hold this issue, hoping to find solutions for their personal financial crisis.

However, as this issue of Perspecta makes clear, the architectural money crisis is not a crisis, but a condition. Over and over, we are shown in the journal examples of architects struggling to build, struggling to keep their office afloat, to find success; even architects that we have put on the pedestal of architectural history—Louis Kahn, Le Corbusier, H. H. Richardson, and Rem Koolhaas—are not immune to economic woes.

At points, the discussion boils down to the value of the architect. Naomi Lamoreaux states it clearly, “(Money) is a simple way to measure value.” Does this condition we find ourselves in mean that architects are gener- ally perceived as having little value? The texts in Perspecta, written by those internal to the field, deny this allegation. Perhaps that is due to what Keller Easterling calls our “narrative of artistic autonomy”—the sense that our cultural value supersedes financial value. Case in point: architecture competi- tions that demand many billable hours with little chance of financial gain. Peter Eisenman suggests that “financial value is independent from that of our disciplinary project.” But why does it have to be? No one resists the idea that the star architect—our latest example of simultaneous financial and artistic success—adds value to the project of architecture. Throughout the issue, there is an underlying tone that implies that the artistic aspect suffers in this transaction, but could that be the envy and overcriticality of those who haven’t achieved this level of success?

Aiming to fight this condition, Frank Gehry Architects / Gehry Construction, SHoP Architects / SHoP Construction, and Guick+ are three firms that take on increased responsibility in order to gain more control in projects and take a bigger piece of the pie. The consensus is that the largest slice will be taken by the developer, then the contractor, and, much further down the line, the architect. But with more control comes proportional risk and liability—a reason for these offices to form their own construc- tion arms. This does not address the fallacy of architecture itself, but merely ventures into another pre-established territory. John Portman is mentioned as someone who is able to make money while still maintain- ing architectural “street cred,” a term used by Gregg Pasquarelli. Bernad Tschumi adds a reference to the value of gold and the gold standard—perhaps our twenty-first-century currency. Moreover, the architects struggling to build, struggling to make that change on its own. They’ll find a way to crowd-source, to be entrepreneurial, to create great architecture, and perhaps even be able to afford having a family and a Le Corbusier chaise.

Like any good book, Carter Wiseman’s new work, Writing Architecture, can be read more than one way. A clear and concise manual—a “practical guide,” as he calls it—for architectural students and practitioners who want to improve their writing, it provides relevant advice for the former on organizing ideas, expressing opinions, and defending arguments and, in the last two chapters, focuses on ways professionals can secure commissions and communicate with clients. Wiseman ends the book with examples of the exercises he gives Yale students in his writing class, aimed at preparing them to respond to requests for qualifications and proposals. A rarity in most schools, the course reveals a blind spot in architectural education, which typically emphasizes visual representation rather than written communication, even though the latter may be critical in getting a commission. As Wiseman observes, most clients cannot read plans or sections, so they read archi- tects’ descriptions far more carefully than we acknowledge; and while our design skills might gain us credibility in the profession, our success as practitioners depends mostly on our writing and rhetorical skills.

From that perspective, Wiseman’s practical guide has an implicitly polemical purpose, making a persuasive case for the value of writing in a profession that has paid far too little attention to it in the past. But the book has value even for those not convinced by that argument: You can read it not just for advice on how to succeed in architectural practice but also for what it says about archi- tecture itself. Indeed, the book’s title, Writing Architecture, suggests a parity between the two is rarely discussed within the discipline. Wiseman’s first chapter, on structure, makes that point. He writes about the impor- tance of writing in a profession that has paid far too little attention to it in the past. But the book has value even for those not convinced by that argument: You can read it not just for advice on how to succeed in architectural practice but also for what it says about archi- tecture itself. Indeed, the book’s title, Writing Architecture, suggests a parity between the two is rarely discussed within the discipline. Wiseman’s first chapter, on structure, makes that point. He writes about the impor- tance of writing in a profession that has paid far too little attention to it in the past. But the book has value even for those not convinced by that argument: You can read it not just for advice on how to succeed in architectural practice but also for what it says about archi- tecture itself. Indeed, the book’s title, Writing Architecture, suggests a parity between the two is rarely discussed within the discipline. Wiseman’s first chapter, on structure, makes that point. He writes about the impor-

Writing Architecture
By Carter Wiseman

—Kyle May
Kyle May is Principal of Kyle May, Architect and Editor-in-Chief of CLOG.
Carlo Scarpa—and, in fact, it is this relation to the facts of postwar Italy. He embraced Albini was certainly keen to the realities of school in Venice and later wrote about the encounter Albini at the CIA long and prolific career that was insufficiently appreciated. The idea of the primal room may not seem so readily significant until one thinks about what others were doing at the time. During the 1930s and 1940s, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, and Le Corbusier were all designing modern objects. The buildings are exploded point, line, and plane: they are artifacts that are viewed and designed from the outside in. But it is not until the 1950s, well after Louis Kahn designed the Yale Art Gallery, his tour de force of geometry and the open plan, that Kahn decides he would no longer rely on the open plan but use the defined room with proportions, with a contained space and its geometries. It has been a conundrum because it is not hard for me to see how, between Kahn’s new monumentality and Albini’s magical abstraction, we find similar responses to post-ideological Modernism. Both architects were very active during the period of late Modernism, with clear criticisms of the problems of ubiquity, of the one-size-fits-all approach of the International Style. Land speculation, mass marketing, and mass consumption were entirely changing the environment in which they worked. Both of them taught while they practiced, were involved in the discussions of their time, and showed a great deal of reverence for human culture. They both held an idea of tradition that was carefully defined and critically assessed but, above all, constantly changing. They introduced a new reverence for site, for the city, the city’s experience, and the integrity of materials—always with innovation, where tradition and modernity were not perceived as being in opposition. Thus, both architects—albeit from different cultures—came to the same conclusion: situated Modernism.

September 4
ALAN ORGANICHEI AND LISA GRAY Louis I. Kahn Visiting Assistant Professors “Scarce Means, Alternative Uses” LG Tonight, we will speculate on the nature of what practice is and how you make buildings out of ideas in the time you have. We have discussed Louis Kahn’s buildings and oracular cryptic statements—the way he had a brick and said, “What do you want? Brick!” And the brick replied, “I’d like to be an arch.” Kahn answered, “Look, I want one, too, but arches are expensive; I can use a concrete lintel. What do you think of that?” And the brick repeated, “I’d like to be an arch.” Mysterious utterances like these were all around us when we attended Yale. The lesson could be: “Do what you think is right; keep at it even when you think it is hard, and even when people disagree.”

Alan and I knew that building would be the main theme in which our ideas would be played out best. Maybe that is part of the DNA here at Yale. We believe that building is something through which architectural ideas are most forcefully and unforgivably expressed. Today, we are officially two practices—Gray Organiche Architecture and JIG Design-build. We take on, really omnivorous, architecturally designed, construction management, fabrication, interior design, wood and metal working, site design, and quantitative environmental analysis. We weave all of that into a tangle of processes that involve reflection and documentation, representation, testing, assessment, and execution—what we collectively call design. I would characterize our approach as one of extreme earnestness, maybe even in a delusional sense, of taking on every design and building challenge. We are occasionally reckless, too, perhaps mostly in our material experimentation, but we are dogged in the belief that practice should be the orchestration of large themes executed in small and particular scales, rather than hyperspecialization. AG I also want to echo what Jane said about craft and the relationship of architects to craft. I do not think architects actually craft anything. I think they enable others if they are doing the things, building things themselves, we risk a conceptual paucity. Sometimes, taking on too much produces a lack of conceptual clarity, and that is something we are trying to correct.

October 9
JUSTIN MCGUIRK Brendan Gill Lecture “Radical Cities Across Latin America” I started thinking about the topic of radical cities in Latin America several years ago, when I was keeping my eye on a generation of architects who were perceived as being socially conscientious work in places that desperately needed it. In Latin America, I started thinking about architecture and writing about activist architects. But after starting my research, I realized that Latin America has a long history of testing radical ideas in city-making, and my book about architecture gradually became a book about cities. A housing estate in Mexico City, designed in the 1960s by Mario Pani to hold 100,000 people, was the largest of its kind in Latin America. The Corbusian idea of the city was taken to its conclusion there. No housing estate in Europe was built on this scale. But Latin America is also where the Modernist idea of utopia goes to die. Gradually, from 1970 onward, because of new liberal politics trickling down from the north as well as the Washington consensus, which argued that the free market should take over the question of free housing, architects were removed from the equation of how to house millions of the poor as the challenge became more of a social issue. Architects were replaced by economists and social policymakers, and laissez-faire urban politics took hold, as we still see today. I was naive and quickly realized that the utopian ideal I was talking about, the private sector could, Milagro Sala, the leader of a revolutionary socialist movement, Tapachula, took government funds but instead of building housing she started to build factories for building materials and employed the local community.
October 30

ANNABEL WHARTON

Vincent Scully Visiting Professor of Architectural History

“Manipulating Models”

It is quite magical: having never taught before in a school of architecture, I am learning much more from my students than I am teaching them. In the ambiguity of my talk’s title, “Manipulating Models,” lies the subject matter of the lecture: models are manipulat-
ed, acted upon, and fashioned; and beyond this sanctuary of models, they also fashion, manipulate, and act upon the world. This is its significance and historical agency of models that I want to explore.

I will begin by defining my terms. A model is a thing that has an analogue, real or imaginary, to which it refers but from which it must differ in significant, measurable ways, in complexity, scale, economics, material, function, and the like.

Another term that bears a heavy burden is agent. In both philosophy and common discourse, the terms agent and agency are embedded in very complex concepts of human morality, personal integrity and intentionality, and individual autonomy. In chemistry and business, the meaning of agent is less burdened and closer to its etymological roots. Agent is derived from its Latin root, agere, which means to lead or set in motion. In chemistry, the agent is merely a substance, but it is one that has a physical, chemical, or medicinal effect on proximate things.

In treating models as agents, I am, as in chemistry, naming nonhuman entities: spatial objects that have an effect on their environments without ascribing to them an inkling of consciousness or intentionality. A model agent differs from a chemical agent insofar as its effects on its setting are much less predictable than in science. The model agent is also like a business agent: it may be a sign tasked by its principal—archi-
tect, patron, or owner; although if and how those tasks will be carried out can never be contractually binding. That is, an archi-
tect may intend a model, like a building, to behave in certain ways on her behalf, but, as you all know so well from studio critiques, as well as from construction, the structure’s actual performance in the world is never fully controlled. Like all agents, human, chemical, or business, model agents can be strong or weak, insular as their weakness or strength can be defined by their relationship to analogues. The power of architectural models lies in their relationship to their prototypes.

A “strong” model acts as a dominant subject that determines its “weak” object. Weak model agents act like copies, and a copy is always subordinate to its archite-
types—it is the nature of copies. In contrast to human and chemical or business agents, model agents exert their agency in part by oscillating between their weak and strong potentials.

November 6

TOD WILLIAMS AND BILLIE TSIESEN

William B. and Charlotte Shepard Davenport Visiting Professors

“A Deliberate Architecture”

TW What are our beliefs? It sounds like a religious question. Billie and I have worked hard to agree on certain things: number one, that we are producing architecture. It is our passion, and we believe that the founda-
tional function of architecture is service, to be of use.

Tw: What many people will equate service with being sincere, and I don’t think that is true. When you answer a need, you can also transcend it with your response. Architecture has the potential to be an incredibly noble way to live.

TW: Being of use is also a great way to be quietly powerful, to move slowly. This really comes more from Billie than from me. We are definitely in a world that seems to move increasingly faster, and we have decided that it is better for us to move as slowly as possible, which is frustrating to many people.

BT We have two key words here, belong and connect, because we have a slight disagreement on which one we should use.

TW I want to feel like our work is connective in every way—that it belongs not only to the past but also the present. If it really belongs to the past and the present, it should have some traction in the future.

Not all buildings last. But our belief is that we want to do work that lasts, that outlives us, so we take very seriously the tasks that we make, seeing them as children.

BT In India the site for a technology campus for Tata had a large是一个competing building that was removed and we attempted to restore the other existing buildings using our Indian architects and their adjacent build-
ings. We kept as many of the trees as possi-
ble so that the buildings dodge the trees. The longer of the fingers of the building we are building is that running from top to bottom, which is the administration building. So making sure the buildings will be lower than the canopy of the trees so the courtsyards are actually roofed, with very large oculi that bring the light down.

November 13

GREGG PASQUARELLI

Myriam Bellazoug Memorial Lecture

“Design Risk: Design Reward”

This talk is long overdue but not easy. As a profession, we must discuss the central crisis for most decisions about designing and making our world—money and risk. We need the Avengers. We need the ability to have multiple talented people to come together to try and solve these incredibly complex problems.

We had a set of rules to break—like, don’t build in your own city, at least not until you are good enough that you can get away with it. SHoP is working on some towers that are more than 1,200 feet tall: one in downtown Brooklyn, which will be the tallest in the borough, and two in Manhattan.

The next rule we are breaking is: Don’t try to work with developers too much or you will get into big trouble—you are sleeping with the enemy, it is a slippery slope to hell, it is a really tricky process, and your ideas will be compromised. The first time we were able to do that was with the Porter House. We found the site, negotiated an air-rights trans-
fer, put the deal together, and invested in the building to get it built with the developer. We found that as soon as we were at risk with our client, we had more design freedom than we ever had before because they saw the relationship in a completely different way.

But, finally, what value do you create? We have to rethink the way we work as architects within the industry. Two ideas—it’s like Newton’s third law: the more you go in the direction of the technical, financial, and politi-
cal side of things, the more freedom you have to go in the opposite direction to push design ideas and make things happen.

Another rule to break is: Don’t get involved in means and methods. We have always felt that if you are going to get buildings built, taking risks and pushing the envelope, you better know how that building goes together or it is going to get VE’d out as soon as possible. We like to use technology to celebrate humanity, not to celebrate technology.

The last rule to break: Don’t try to do it all. I think developing a software called Envelopes. With it, you will be able to look up any site, and it will give you all the zoning information and tell you what you can do, all the bonuses, and within sixty seconds it will mass your building for you. We believe software like this will help everyone get more commissions in the future.

By acting on the ferocity of our convic-
tions, we seek to recast the role of architects as those who reveal the coherence in our circumstances and, through their collective impetus, reveal the lurking beauty in the bedlam of our world. But we have to prove that Newton was correct and have equal and opposite reactions. We need to be both/and. We need to take the risks and break the rules.

November 20

JOHN PATKAU

Norman R. Foster Visiting Professor

“Work Play”

The title, “Work Play,” reflects a strong duality of our practice, a tension between the extremes in terms of both their intentions and their circumstances. The research component of the work we do is a very serious endeavor in the office, where building projects are characterized by ongoing research and design. On the other hand, our world. But we have to prove that Newton was correct and have equal and opposite reactions. We need to be both/and. We need to take the risks and break the rules.

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November 20
Among the wide array of design subjects in last fall’s advanced studios, many were sited in New Haven or involved projects related to Yale initiatives, from a museum of musical instruments on Yale’s campus and a church, to the revitalization of New Haven’s industrial waterfront. Other studio projects were located in Boston, Cuzco, Helsinki, London, and China. The following are some of the highlights.

Ted Williams and Billie Tsien

Davniche Architecture Partners Ted Williams and Billie Tsien, along with Andrew Benner (’03), built on Yale’s legacy in Peru and the development of the Yale International Center for the Study of Machu Picchu and Incan Culture, in Casa Concha, Cuzco to ask the students to design an academy in Cuzco. The organization that it would house would promote research on contemporary Andean and Andean socioeconic issues as well as sponsoring an educational exchange with the local community. The students were asked to design a small facility for visiting scholars and students, classrooms and workshop spaces to train teachers, a school for local youth, a space for farming in collaboration with the Yale Sustainable Food Project, and space for educational programs to enhance the quality of the site and provide computer literacy.

Students traveled to the Peruvian highlands, tracking the deep section from the coastal shools to the Andean terraces and the edge of the Amazonian cloud forests. Focusing on Cuzco as an opportunity to connect an ancient city with contemporary urban concerns and opportunities, the students tested the potential of temporal experience as well as an architecture that can be used to embody and cultivate Cuzco’s character in light of the confluence of global trade and tourism and a desire for authenticity.

The students were challenged with building into a tall and steep urban site, finding ways to dig into and step down the hills, often using the roof as a fifth facade within the terraces. Some used their buildings to provide green space and parks that climb over the structure. Others placed communal and public programs in a stone base that deftly negotiated the steeply sloped site. One student lifted the education programs and private spaces for visiting scholars above the main volume with the spaces below punctuated by light wells.

With sensitivity to the context, students engaged the qualities of the massive stone walls of the pre-Columbian-Persian architecture by placing intimate spaces within them or by contrasting the stone with white stucco and wood window screens, painted blue to resonate with Cuzco’s colonial buildings. Connecting the site to its surroundings became a major focus within the studio as students created a new streetscape, with passages slicing into the site to connect the academy to the surrounding neighborhood. One student focused on internal spaces to organize the disparate constituencies that share the building around three courtyards, where rain flows down to a stream that crosses the site. The jury—from Andrea Barclay, Taitaian Bilbao, Jean Pierre Crouse, Martin Finic, Joel Sanders, and Annabelle Selldorf—were fully engaged in the approaches to the site and culture as they critiqued the work.

Peter Eisenman

Peter Eisenman, Charles Ghawthemy Professor of Practice, and Mirosława Brooks (’12) led a studio that investigated what might be considered the problem of irrationality within the formalist tradition of rationality. The students paired up to design a new Catholic church, adjacent to New Haven’s State Street train station, taking inspiration from the pre-Enlightenment era of sacred architecture. During the studio’s travel week in Italy, Davenport Visiting Professor Pier Vittorio Aureli took them to see early Christian churches in Bologna, Ravenna, Rimini, and Modena.

The initial urban analysis of New Haven, a town founded by Puritans as a theocracy, the students focused on designing the church, located at the collision of two overlaid urban grids. The challenge was to deploy aspects of “unreason” within the hope that the result would not resemble a suburban church, but must be an avatar through which students could arrive at an understanding of the nature of architecture as a discipline.

One project—a matte building eroded by seemingly irrational formal voids—could be seen as a formal and political critique of the contemporary church in which the normative city, represented by the grid structure, was positioned against the sacred city, or the figural. Another team responded to the studio brief by replacing an interior central nave of an early Christian basilica within an exterior urban void, which radically reformulated church typology on an urban scale. The diptych configuration of the two partial figures was particularly interesting because it proposed an alternate planmetric configuration to the typical symmetrical church plan. In response to the studio’s visit to St. Cataldo Cemetery in Modena, another group of students presented a variation on a courtyard typology, placed above the exist- ing train station, the autonomous, static form of the cloister was put into tension with the natural temperature of the train station, challenging the idea of ground as a stable datum in architecture. At the final review, students presented their projects to Ionanna Angelidou (Ph.D ’18), Anya Bokov (Ph.D ’17), Harry Cobb, Peggy Deamer, Sean Griffiths, Sam Jacob, Caroline O’Donnell, Ellis Woodman, and Guido Zuliani.

Alan Organichs and Lisa Gray

Alan Organichs (’98) and Lisa Gray (B.A. ’82, M.Arch ’97), the Louis I. Kahn Visiting Assistant Professors, explored the potential of new timber technologies and contemporary high-performance wood in architecture for new development surrounding Ball Island, on the Mill River in New Haven, Connecticut. The site of the abandoned English Station Power Plant, in the former industrial area, has great potential for new industrial development and now hosts experimental wind-power projects.

Through the design of four urban building types and their associated structures and enclosure systems, students tested the capacity of wood, as an ancient building material, to produce beautiful and innovative architecture. A research trip to Finland and Austria to tour historical and contemporary mass-timber architecture and innovative manufacturing facilities specializing in wood construction, provided inspiration for the semester’s work.

Each student undertook the detailed design of their individual project while considering the context of urban culture and infrastructure on the vast site. Each building type—manufacturing-recreational (long span), live-work housing (mid- and high-rise repetitive span), vehicular and service infrastructure (dynamic high loading), and market space (open flexible structure)—was tested as an architectural solution within a shaded, studio-wide master plan for a mixed-use industrial and residential zone.

Students produced projects that operated at a range of scales and addressed a multitude of issues, including sensitivity to the ecological characteristics and vulnerabilities of a coastal riparian site; responsive and appropriate urban place-making; structural feasibility using contemporary timber construction technologies; building-envelope performance and site orientation. Each student designed a project on a different part of the site, and all the projects had connections between one another and were carefully knit into a newly envisioned neighborhood plan. The students presented their projects to a jury of Sandra Barclay, Peggy Deamer, Kyle Dudel (’10), Pekka Heikkinen, Håkan Jungholm, Tim Love, Joeb Moore (M.E.D. ’91), John Patkau, Eero Purunen (Ph.D ’11), Milton Puryear, and Susie Rodriguez. The studio projects and the research will be published and, later this year, presented to officials at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory, and the Binational Softwood Lumber Council.

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John Patkau with Tim Newton

John Patkau and Tim Newton (’77) investigated architecture as the spatial and formal outcome of a process of material construction for a Yale Collection of Musical Instru- ments museum. Currently, only ten percent of the collection is displayed due to lack of space. The provocation of the studio was to design a museum building that would be accessible to the Yale community and the broader public and be described by the streets of College, Temple, Wall, and Elm. It included community facilities, rehearsal rooms, and performance spaces in a 50,000-square-foot structure.

The students first analyzed the site as they investigated previous studies and the experiential, expressive, and physical characteristics of different building materi- als. After developing a block master plan within which they proposed a museum site for their building project, and a trip to Stutt- gart, Bregenz, and Zurich to see projects by UNStudio, Frei Otto, Peter Zumthor, Le Corbusier, Shigeru Ban, and Christian Kerez, as well as various materials laborato- ries, the students developed their projects at three scales, an exercise that would inform the spatial and structural potential of the building.

The students’ projects were extremely varied in their approach, reflecting the diversity of material/constructional strategies situated within many site strategies, but also a diversity of museum exhibit strate- gies. Individual projects ranged from lyrical landscape-based proposals incorporating both tectonic and stereotomic building forms, reinterpretations of the courtyard as the fundamental organizational type at Yale, and almost archaic mass-masonry spatial excavations to clusters of highly sculptural steel dia-grid volumes situated in student juxtaposition to the historicist context of Cross Campus.

The projects were presented to a jury of Michelle Addington, Cynthia Davidson, Alex Felson, Kurt Forster, Kenneth Frampton, Lisa Gray (B.A. ’82, M.Arch ’97), Pekka Heikkinen, Joeb Moore (M.E.D. ’91), Alan Organichs (’98), Suny Schibs (Ph.D. ’17), and Mark Simon (’72).

Alain Plattuc and Andrei Harwell

For last fall’s China Studio—now in its fifteenth year and the fourth in collabora- tion with the Tsinghua University School of Architecture, in Beijing—Alan Plattus and Andrei Harwell (’06) focused on an active, 170-hectare industrial area on the banks of the Hai River, situated east of the historic core of Tianjin and west of the new Binhai Central Business District (CBD), now under construction. Adjacent to a stop on the new high-speed rail line, the area, which is less than an hour away from central Tianjin and...
Beijing’s South Station, eventually will link to the new CBD. While the site is still industrial, it has been rezoned as “urban” land slated for redevelopment. In order to propose critical design research that exposed both sides of the project as a “mind map” based on one of the points articulated by the stakeholders. They asked to revisit the original competition as a way to propose critical design research that exposed both sides of the project.

Students began the studio with a series of analytical and design exercises to spark thinking on the nature of cities and city halls as civic buildings. Working in teams of two, the students engaged with them in an effort to engage with the role of the building problems that the post-professional studio required to make a physical renovation of the city hall on the same site. They were not asked to revisit the original competition as a basis for thinking about a contemporary city hall on the same site. They were not required to make a physical renovation but, rather, tackle some of the fundamental problems that the post-professional studio looks to engage with: the role of the building as it might be developed highly personal graphic languages and still others for museums and schools. The students used the work of John Hejduk, Aldo Rossi, and Piranesi, among others, to combine and recombine methods, motifs, and languages into one project. The students presented this work, along with the mind-map installation, at midterm.

To develop their proposal, students engaged in new hybrid forms of representation that fused the rich history of architectural drawing with digital rendering. They developed highly personal graphic languages through which emerged their visions for three physical architectural models for Vauxhall. The students used the work of John Hejduk, Aldo Rossi, and Piranesi, among others, to combine and recombine methods, motifs, and languages into one project. The students presented this work, along with the mind-map installation, at midterm.

After creating master plans to activate the underground waterfront site, adjacent to a nineteenth-century park and arts district, the students decided to expand the site boundary and represent the site as the summit of a local hub. A third group proposed a site development that combined the museum with the rebuilt city hall on the same site—thus making it climatically hospitable to Helsinki’s short winter and long summer days.

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Sunil Baid, associate professor (adjunct), was honored for career achievement in performing arts and architecture at the 2014 Annual Gala of the Society of Indo-American Engineers and Architects. His New York–based architecture firm, SUMO, with partner Yolande Daniels, broke ground on two Japanese projects in December: a new 25,000-square-foot university dormitory for international students, in Chiba, and the renovation of a 1970s university cafeteria, in Saitama. Other recent projects include a renovation of the Wakefield Branch Library, the third project the firm has been awarded through the City of New York’s design excellence program. In November, Baid lectured on his work at the University of Minnesota.

Kent Bloomer, professor (adjunct), with his firm New Haven-based Broth Studio, designed and fabricated a large ornament program for the new Slover Library, in Norfolk, Virginia, designed by Newman Architects. The project included the renovation of the historic Seaboard building, to which he contributed a large program of ornamentation on the atrium ceiling, main façade, outdoor loggia, and children’s library. The building was dedicated on January 6, 2015.

Karla Brantley, lecturer, gave a lecture at the 2014 Arch&Teaching at the University of Arkansas symposium on architectural photography in November on the work of Robert Damora (B.Arch ’55). At the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Amsterdam, she was invited to present her papers on “The Ethics of Urban Religious Architecture” in an October lecture. She was also invited by the Lubar Institute for the Study of the Abraham and Sarah Religions, University of Wisconsin-Madison, to speak at the event “The Holy in a Pluralistic World: Religion and Public Life,” in Madison, Wisconsin, November 13. Brantley has recently published in CLOG: World Trade Center, Pidgin Magazine, 18: Ethnicity, and Faith & Form.

Tumer Brooks (B.A. ’95 and M.Arch ’97), professor (adjunct), with his firm Tumer Brooks Architect, celebrated the opening of the Cold Spring School Community Building, in New York, on September 15. Jackson, students, and other current work includes a theater and arts building for the Burungy Farm County Day School, a small progressive school in Alexandria, Virginia, slated to start construction in spring 2015; the design for a house, at Lake Placid, New York; and a project for homeless housing in New Haven.

Peggy Deamer, professor, presented a keynote address at the “Industries of Architecture” conference in Newcastle, England, on November 13. She also gave a lecture at the University of Newcastle’s School of Architecture and the Built Environment. In October, she participated in the workshop “Labor Leeds,” conducted by Autodesk at Office of Metropolitan Architecture, in Leeds. She also lectured at the Architecture Biennale in Venice. Deamer contributed the chapter “Office Management” to the publication’s exhibition publication, Agenda. She also delivered two talks at Penn Design on architectural work and the architect. Deamer was a professor she founded, the Architective Lobby.

Keller Easterling, professor, had her book Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space published by Verso in November 2014. This past fall she gave talks about the book at University of Houston; DPA Madrid; the US Pavilion at the Venice Biennale; ETH Bern Switzerland; The Institute for Architecture and Technology, Copenhagen; Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York; MIT; the Judd Foundation, New York; the Montreal Biennale; ECA, Edinburgh; AA Night School Book Club, the Bartlett School of Architecture, and London School of Economics, all in London. The following essays were published this fall: “Disutility” in Joseph Grima, ed. SOM: An Index of Radical Dometics (Lars Muller); “The Display” in Mark Belanger, ed. Hal Foster, Design Magazine: Wet Matters (GSAPP/MIT Press); “The Manage- ment of Ashleys” in MIT’s Undergraduate Journal of Architecture (MIT Press); “Shadow States,” in Jack Self and Shumi Bose eds., Real Estates: Life without Debt (Debord and Lefebvre “Launch,” in Yale’s Perspectives 47; Money (MIT Press).

Alexander Felson, assistant professor and director of the Urban Ecology and Design Lab, received a National Science Foundation grant to study active-wage heat rejection via green-wall technology. In addition, the lab completed the Guiford Coastal Resilience Plan and is continuing to develop a resilience framework for Bridgeport, Connecticut. Working with the Ecological Society of America, Felson developed a large-scale land-planning project that integrates ecological research along the American River Parkway in West Sacramento, California, and it is developing a similar project for a centennial celebration of the Garden City movement.

Martin Finio, critic, with his New York-based firm, Christoff-Finio Architecture, was featured in the December 2014 issue of Architectural Digest in an article written by Paul Goldberger about a recently completed house. The firm also received New York City’s 2014 Design Award for its renovation of a four-story glass-and-tempered-pool house in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. He and his partner, Taryn Christoff, will be lecturing in February, in Essex, Connecticut, as part of the Centerbrook Architects Lecture Series.

Mark Foster Gage (’01), professor, of New York City-based Gage Architects, was a featured speaker at the AIA Council on Architecture for Veterans at the event, “Creating Accessible Housing: Hope in the Face of Homelessness.” He was also invited to present his work at the TED affiliated “INK” symposium on architectural photography in Mumbai, India; and delivered his Keynote Address “The Holy in a Pluralistic World: Religion and Public Life,” at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in Madison, Wisconsin, November 13.

Dolores Hayden, professor, gave the keynote address “Domestic Revolution: A New England Scandal from 1868” at the conference “New England and the World,” at Boston University’s New England and American Studies Program. She organized and chaired a panel at the 2014 Urban History Association meeting “Los Angeles Projects: Collaborations in Public History, Environmental History, and Urban Humanities.” Her biographical essay “Alice Constance Gray” will be included in the archived on women architects, organized for the Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation by Columbia University professors Mary McLeod and Victoria Rosner.


Leen Klier, Yale’s inaugural Robert A. M. Stern Visiting Professor, is currently at work on phase three of the Poundbury master plan in Dorset, England. He is also collaborating with Estudio Urbano on a master plan for the Paseo Cayala district in Guatemala City.


Alan Organschi (’88), critic, will serve on the jury for the U.S. Tall Wood Building Prize Competition, an international design-build challenge organized by the United States Department of Agriculture, the Binalonal Softwood Lumber Council, and the Softwood Lumber Board. He was also a juror for the National Wood Design Awards in the fall. His research on dense urban construction in wood, “Timber City: Architectural Speculation in a Black Market,” will be published along with his work of his firm Gray Organschi Architecture in the upcoming book Timber in the City. The firm, with Elizabeth Gray (B.A. ’82, M.Arch ’87), received a New York City Public Design Commission Award for Excellence in Design for their Joseph A. Verdino Jr. Grandstand at the South Shore Little League on Staten Island. A new classroom building for New Haven’s Common Ground High School and the Henry David Thoreau Bridge, at the Thoreau Parkway in Washington, Connecticut, are under construction.

Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen (M.E.D.’94), associate professor, moderated a panel discussion on Alvar Aalto at the Vitra Design Museum, in Weil am Rhein, Germany, in September, as part of the opening ceremonies of the exhibition Alvar Aalto: The Second Nature.
for which she served as academic adviser. She also wrote three essays for the catalog: "Symbolic Imagery: Alvar Aalto’s Encounters with Modern Art," "Alvar Aalto and the New Nordic," and an "Interview with Kenneth Frampton." Pelkonen gave the talk "Architecture’s Humanist Turn: Milan, 1951" at the international workshop "The Space of Display," at the Swiss Institute for Art Research, in Zurich. Her recent articles include "Sobre la Realidad de las Formas" or "On the Actuality of Forms," for Chilean magazine Materia 06 (fall 2014), and "Reordering Reality While Playing: On Architecture and Creativity," for Swiss magazine Architexxe (October 2014).

Nina Rapaport, director of publications, will have her book, Vertical Urban Factory published with Actar in the spring. The eponymous exhibition will be displayed at EPI’s Archizoom, in Lausanne, from March to May 2015. In fall 2014, a condensed version of the show was exhibited at London’s King’s Cross, where she also participated in a discussion with architectural critic James Paulson and was on a panel about London’s urban manufacturing. Docomomo New York/Tri-State’s new journal, Mod featured her co-authored article “Greening the Glass Box.” In January, she was on a panel discussion organized by Open House New York and the NYC Economic Development Corporation. And, in Madrid, she is delivering a talk at the American University. She is also a moderator for the panel "Sobre la Realidad de las Formas" or "On the Actuality of Forms," for Chilean magazine Materia 06 (fall 2014), and "Reordering Reality While Playing: On Architecture and Creativity," for Swiss magazine Architexxe (October 2014).

Eisenman Receives Topaz

Peter Eisenman, Charles Gwathmey Professor in Practice, has been named the 2015 recipient of the Topaz Medalion for Excellence in Architectural Education, the most prestigious award for architectural education in the United States. Professor Eisenman has had a long and significant teaching career concurrent to his architectural research and practice based in New York. His dedication to students and their development is commend¬ed through this award. As Tod Williams, Davenport Visiting Professor, emphasizes, "Peter is a charismatic and engaged profes¬sor. Both when he taught me and now, he has mesmerizing energy that, when it catches a student, it is impossible to shake. Now, I see him as the elder statesman at Yale, and think, he has always been the same—his energy has not slipped a bit." As professor Alan Plattus notes, "Teaching has always been an integral part of Peter’s conception of his role as an architect. While—at the stage that he is at in his career—many of his contemporaries play, at best, a cameo role in the studio and the classroom, Peter is still deeply commit¬ted to teaching and treats his students as colleagues in his unrelenting search for archi¬tectural ideas."

Yale students have benefited from Eisenman’s perspective on architectural discourse through drawing, theory, and advanced studio courses beginning in spring 1980, when he had his first appointment, as the William B. and Charlotte Shepherd Davenport Visiting Professor. At the time, he was directing the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, which he founded in 1967. After teaching at Harvard, Princeton, Ohio State, and The Cooper Union, he returned to Yale in spring 1999, when he taught alongside Philip Johnson as the Eero Saarinen Visiting Professor. In fall of 2001, Eisenman became the Louis I. Kahn Visiting Professor, and in 2010 he became the inaugural Charles Gwath¬mey Professor in Practice. Some recent students have come to call his coursework “the 1-2-3” program: beginning with Formal Analysis, an M.Arch I first-year core¬cum¬mum course; followed by Diagramatic Analysis: Criticality After the Index, an elective often taken during the second year; and finally, the option to participate in an advanced design studio. As Daisy Ames (’13) comments, "Peter’s dedication to the discipline of architecture shows in his relentless commitment to teaching. He encourages his students to investigate architecture and produce work based on rigorous discussions. The students learn to express and support their ideas thoroughly, and most important, architecturally. My strongest projects, analyses, drawings, and thoughts were products of Peter’s insight and direction."

Work of Eisenman’s students featured prominently in the 2012 International Archi¬tecture Biennale in Venice. In 2012-13, Eisen¬man worked with students and Matt Roman (’09) on Offi and Virtue, an exhibition at Yale’s Architecture Gallery that presented his own analysis of Andrea Palladio Roman notes. "Most architects of my generation know only stories of Colin Rowe, John Hejduk, and other ‘monsters’ of architectural education, many of whom share the Topaz distinction. Naturally, their work and pedagogical influ¬ence still resonate today. But the standard bearer against whom we all continue to measure our own commitment, curiosity, and passion, as teachers and architects, is Peter. I would argue, that even more so than the extraordinary effects of his buildings, projects, and texts, Peter’s lasting legacy will be his absolute devotion, at every level, to his students and to the belief that education alone, in all aspects of life, keeps our minds agile and our hearts young."

Michael Winstanley ('83) and his firm, Michael Winstanley Architects & Planners (MWAP), recently completed the master plan for the纸质Baha’i House of Worship in Louisville, Kentucky, including the renovation of the 1921 James Gamble Rogers’ Multipurpose Crusher House, a newly designed residential hall for Boyce College. The project manager was Leung Hong ('34). The firm is currently completing the renovation and restoration of Daniel Burnham’s 1907 Union Station in Washington, D.C. After the building assessments, the project manager, the new street level café, and restoration began, involving major plaster, architectural metal, and glass craftsmanship, led by the MWAP team.

Noriko Dan ('84) delivered the lecture “Symbolic Thoughts of Architecture” at the HKU Shanghai Study Center in November. The talk suggested mediation as the only contemporary notion that can regard all the conflicts of the city and the natural environment as positive energy, turning chaos into a more fruitful symbiosis.

Marion Weiss ('84) and her firm, Weiss/Manfredi, won the 2015 AIA Honor Award for the Krishna P. Singh Center for落叶 Plastics, in New Canaan, Connecticut. Three of the firm’s projects, the Novartis Visitor Reception Building, the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Building in New York City, and the 46-foot-tall artwork was donated by the Wiesner Group to create the sculpture titled “An Earth Is a Memory, Earth is a Metropolis.” Huge is teaching at Yale in spring 2015.

Glover Linne ('03) has been named a Moore Ruble Yudell. Michael Kocoloski ('96) is a partner at OMA in August 2014 and is based in Hong Kong. After joining the Rotterdam office in 2007 he became an associate in 2009. 2009, he established OMA/AMO’s partnership in the Asia Pacific region and is developing projects in China, Southeast Asia, and Australia. He oversaw the design and construction of the Shenzhen Stock Exchange, completed in 2013. Other projects include the conceptual master plan for Hong Kong’s West Kowloon Cultural District, an office tower in Kuala Lumpur, a residential project on the Peak in Hong Kong, a cultural resort and a broadcasting facility in Indonesia, and AMO’s revitalization projects in developments. In Hong Kong and China, where he teaches in the master’s of architecture program.
New Haven City-Wide Open Studios

In October four School of Architecture students unveled three new site-specific installations at the Goffe Street Armony, in New Haven, as part of Artspace’s annual City-Wide Open Studios. The installations were among twelve commissioned pieces displayed, in addition to work by more than two hundred regional artists. Artspace is a nonprofit dedicated to showcasing emerging artists and building new audiences for contemporary art around New Haven.

Michael Cohen’s “Euboea Towers,” a series of rammed-earth rectangular prisms on the armony’s north lawn that explored the ancient technique as a counterpoint to the building’s brick facade. The piece is the latest in a series of rammed-earth structures he has designed and built in New Orleans. Jonathan Sun’s “116” created “Light Column II,” a thirty-five-foot-tall hanging column made of thin foil that passes through the central void of a staircase intended to heighten the experience of the stairwell by both contrasting and emphasizing the existing characteristics of the space. It is supported by tension instead of compression and is without a structural function.

Project Journal

The journal Project was initiated in 2012 and is edited by Alte Kiefer, Daniel Markiewicz, Jonah Rowen, and Kenneth Zellman out of Yale. Produced twice yearly, Project focuses on architects who engage in debate and critical evaluation in the field and serves as a platform for developing and disseminating critical positions in contemporary architecture. Issue 4 will be available in February.

Design Briefs

Foreform

Two recent Yale alumni, Amy Miele (’13) and Caitlin Guckee-Kanter Taylor (’13), won the Holon Foundation’s top 2014 award in North America for their Foreform project, a floodwater monitoring system for Las Vegas conceived in Keller Easterling’s spring 2013 advanced studio. A customizable urban surface calibrated to capture and channel floodwater, Foreform provides a scalable solution for water capture and storage systems in arid cities and offers a perspective on how future urban infrastructure can be resilient and adaptable in the face of climate uncertainty. The basic unit of Foreform is derived from the skin of a lizard, but it is updated at the scale of civil engineering infrastructure and uses comparable technology. Conceived as a porous concrete surface poured with fabric formwork that is capable of rapid saturation and slow release, it reframes water as a value resource rather than a liability.

Las Vegas loses 74,000 megaplas per 60,000 acre-feet per year of rainfall, to the shallow aquifer in the form of urban runoff, to the shallow aquifer in the form of urban runoff, to the 60,000 acre-feet per year of rainfall, to the valuable resource rather than a liability.

Concrete surface poured in place with fabric engineering infrastructure and uses comparable technology. Conceived as a porous concrete surface poured with fabric formwork that is capable of rapid saturation and slow release, it reframes water as a value resource rather than a liability.

The Mound of Vendôme

History, according to Napoléon Bonaparte, is a set of agreed upon lies. The exhibition, The Mound of Vendôme, continues the New Haven tradition of “carnivorous drill,” which shares the same space between the building’s brick facade. The narrow space between was created “Against the dawn of modernism, an exploration of the ancient technique as a counterpoint to the building’s brick facade. The piece is the latest in a series of rammed-earth structures he has designed and built in New Orleans. Jonathan Sun’s “116” created “Light Column II,” a thirty-five-foot-tall hanging column made of thin foil that passes through the central void of a staircase intended to heighten the experience of the stairwell by both contrasting and emphasizing the existing characteristics of the space. It is supported by tension instead of compression and is without a structural function.

The question of how to reimagine new uses for New York City Housing Authority’s (NYCHA) 20.3 million square feet of parking spaces was put forward by the Institute of Public Architecture last fall. The project, “9 x 18”—the dimensions of a parking space—was awarded to fellow Miriam D. (’10) and Miriam Peterson (’10), of the New York City-based studio Petronio Rich Office, with urban designer Sagi Golan. The team analyzed ways to challenge New York City’s building code to create new potentials for affordable housing and amenities, a focus of Mayor Bill de Blasio.

Their project conducted detailed analyses to see how the city’s current laws and regulations prohibit proposals that could regrow the building code to create new possibilities for affordable housing and amenities. The focus of Mayor Bill de Blasio.

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3. 11x18, parking spaces in comparison to housing units in New York City, Nathan Rich (’10), Miriam Peterson (’10), and Roman Golon, 2014.

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1. Foreform, Amy Miele (’13) and Caitlin Guckee-Kanter Taylor (’13).
