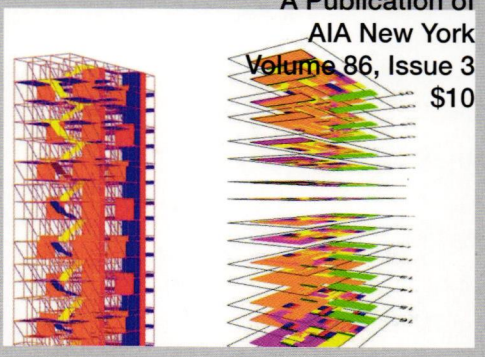
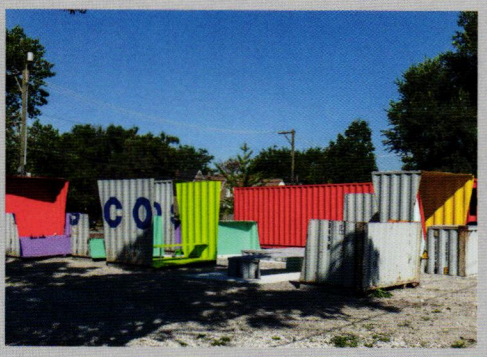
Oculus

Summer 2024

A Publication of
AIA New York
Volume 86, Issue 3
$10

FUTURE





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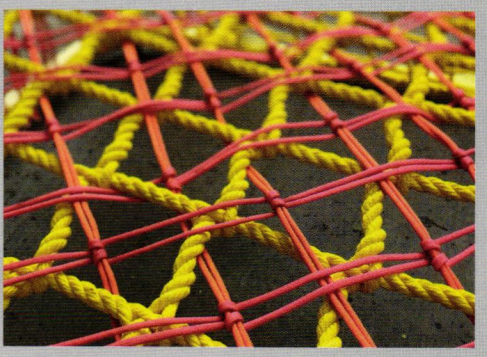
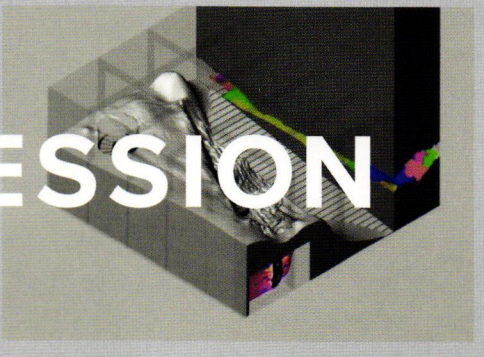
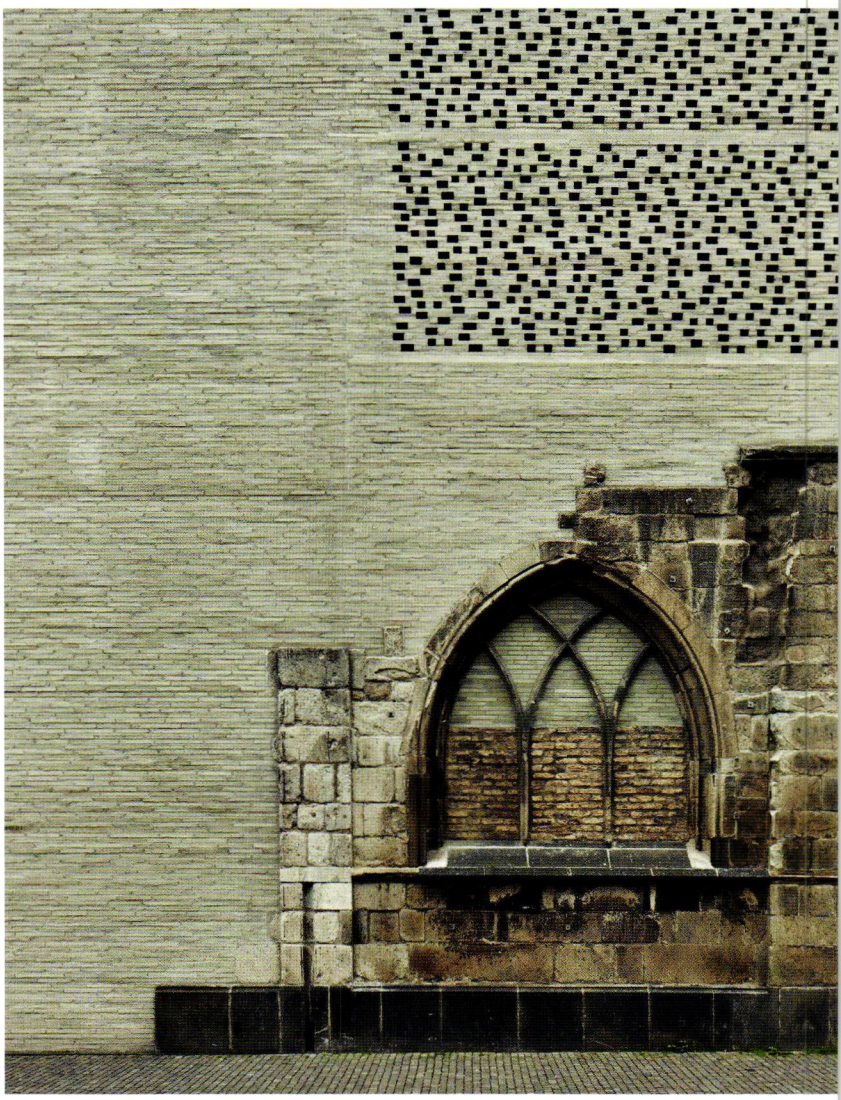


PROFESSION



180 East 88th Street, designed and built by DDG, is one of the many buildings in New York made with Petersen bricks.

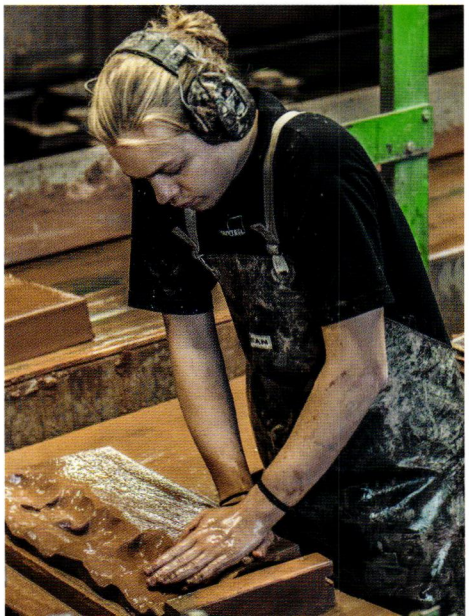
Petersen Tegl developed Kolumba along with architect Peter Zumthor for the Kolumba Museum, which opened in 2008.



Petersen Tegl was founded in 1791, mainly serving Danish clients for a couple of centuries before Christian A. Petersen, the seventh generation of the family, turned the company into one of the top brick specialists in the world. More than half of production consists of handmade bricks, which are exported all over the world, including to the USA. More than seventy buildings in New York alone are made with Petersen bricks.

PETERSEN TEGL

SINCE 1791



Felix Thomsen, belonging to the 9th generation of the Petersen Tegl family, producing Kolumba bricks.

This space was designed by Kesha Franklin of Halden Interiors exclusively for ABC Stone.

All featured furniture is available through Desiron.
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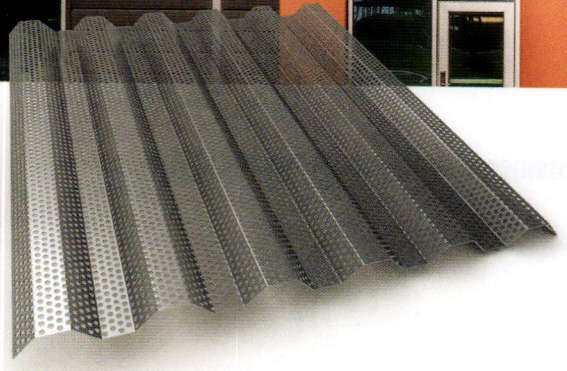
Dramatic Entrance



Perforated metal layer spotlights entryway

"Perforated 7.2 metal panels surrounding the entrance emphasizes the building's height and adds a bit of visual drama."

-Matt Cortez, president/CEO, TESSERE

View the case study and video

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Wichita State University Innovation Campus, Building #7 Installer: Mahaney Group Architect: TESSERE Profiles: Reveal panels, perforated 7.2 panels Colors: Graphite, aluminum

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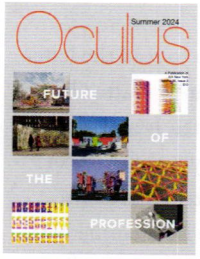
Ornamental Metal Institute of New York

www.metalsinconstruction.org

FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION



Cover: Clockwise from top left: Tesseract, by Sandra Manninger's New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) School of Architecture & Design students Yashraj Singh Chauhan, Arefin Chisty, and Meraj Nasir; *Ugly Beauties*, a public artwork by artist Curry Hackett; *Grids + Griots* by Sekou Cooke Studio was installed at the fourth edition of the Chicago Architecture Biennale; Architensions' steel-framed *Playground* was installed at the 2022 California music festival Coachella; *Soft Fits* in Toronto by WIP Collaborative (Sera Ghadaki, Abby Coover, Lindsay Harkema, Elsa Ponce); another floor plan drawing from Tesseract; UrbanBots, a project by NYIT students Karan Patel, Mike Saad, and Jacob Sam.
Top: Transdisciplinary designer, artist, and educator Curry Hackett's *Dandelion*. Hackett uses artificial intelligence to "imagine Black abundance in the near future or the present," as he told Bloomberg in September 2023.

Cover: Courtesy NYIT; © Cameron Blaylock; © Nathan Keay; © Lance Gerber, Courtesy Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival; Courtesy WIP Collaborative; Courtesy NYIT; This page: Courtesy of Curry Hackett

Features

Departments

Belonging Together: AIANY's Journey Through Midterm

BY AIANY PRESIDENT **GREGORY T. SWITZER**, AIA, NOMA, NCARB

As I approach the midpoint of my term as president of AIA New York Chapter, I am deeply humbled and excited by the impact that my presidential theme, Belonging and Beyond, has had on the programming and conversations throughout our Chapter. I owe a debt of gratitude to numerous Chapter committees and individuals who have brought life to my call to focus on crucial aspects of human well-being that improve physical and social-emotional health and resilience by deepening our connections with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences.

Thank you to:

- The AIANY Historic Buildings Committee and AIANY Planning and Urban Design Committees for your presentation, Legacies of Redlining: Preservation and Development in Manhattan. I look forward to your next sessions and supplemental tours.
- The AIANY Chapter Cultural Facilities Committee for the program series Belonging + Beyond: The Future of Public Space and Art (the first presentation in a series of four). Ann Marie Baranowski, FAIA, your vision for this series was simply brilliant!
- The AIANY Interiors Committee for the 14th edition of Speed Presentations, which called for project entries that make significant contributions to the well-being of communities and individuals through the transformative power of design.

  Thank you, Stephan Jaklitsch, FAIA, and Barbara Weinreich, Assoc. AIA, for aligning your program with the Belonging theme.

Beyond the work of the committees, at the core of my efforts is an open working group unpacking my Presidential Focus for 2024: Community Engagement and Belonging. This group has met three times to date for collective visioning and strategy development. Our discernment conversations led us to two through lines, which we believe situate architects and other design professionals within larger landscape shifts toward generative planning, process, and output norms that are community-situated and reflect community priorities:

- Design practices and standards around community engagement can and must be established and normalized to change the status quo dynamics of exclusion, harm, and mistrust.
- Belonging—feeling "recognized by and connected to" a space or community—can be nurtured if architects have the intention, mindset (self-awareness), practices, and tools to authentically and effectively engage community members.

From these shared points of understanding, we will be developing specific priorities for AIANY over the next two years:

- Priority 1. Support practitioner learning, mindset, and practice shifts.
- Priority 2. Advocate for funding and reforming community engagement/ partnership processes.

Our discussions will continue this month regarding which activities and actors should be central to these pursuits. Your curiosity and ideas are absolutely welcome. It is with great excitement that I share this progress and, in the weeks to come, you can expect details about what is coming into focus for this fall and how to get involved.

Finally, I invite you to read the letter on the facing page jointly crafted by AIA Bronx, AIA Staten Island, AIA Queens, AIA Brooklyn, and AIANY. It encapsulates our desire to remove the barriers that have isolated the NYC chapters for so long. We believe all architects in NYC should have the same access, privileges, and depth of member engagement. We encourage everyone to help us move beyond the siloed ways of our past and to support the efforts of all five chapters. This is the only way we can thrive and, most importantly, feel as though we all belong.

I look forward to continuing our year of curiosity, growth, discernment, and impact.

Gregory T. Switzer, AIA, NOMA, NCARB
2024 AIANY President

Courtesy of Gregory T. Switzer

Cultivating Belonging: Creating a Supportive NYC AIA Environment

BY AIA BOROUGH PRESIDENTS **SARAH DRAKE, AIA**, **SARAH JAZAYERI, AIA**, **STANLEY KREBUSHEVSKI, AIA**, **GREGORY T. SWITZER, AIA**, AND **JACQUELINE VELEZ, AIA**,

It is with great enthusiasm and a profound sense of unity that we come together to address you, our esteemed colleagues, on a matter close to our hearts: the notion of *belonging* within our local AIA chapters. As architects, designers, and allied professionals, we share a common thread that binds us—a commitment to excellence, innovation, and the betterment of our communities through the built environment.

Over the past year and a half, the presidents of AIA Queens, AIA Bronx, AIA Staten Island, AIA Brooklyn, and AIA New York have embarked on a journey of collaboration and camaraderie. In our regular meetings, we have deliberated tirelessly on how we can transcend the boundaries of our boroughs and join together as a unified force—a force capable of catalyzing positive change and fostering a stronger sense of community within the AIA family.

In these discussions, one resounding truth has emerged: the imperative of enhancing membership engagement and experiences through cross-chapter communication and programming. With a collective membership of nearly 7,000 individuals, we recognize the immense potential we possess to effect meaningful change and shape the future of our profession in New York City.

Our commitment is unwavering. We pledge to work tirelessly to support and uplift one another, to champion sustainability in architecture, to nurture the growth of emerging professionals, and to forge interborough collaborations that transcend geographic and historic divides. Together, we aspire to empower each and every member of our community to reach unprecedented heights of success and fulfillment in their endeavors.

We have deliberated tirelessly on how we can transcend the boundaries of our boroughs and join together as a unified force—a force capable of catalyzing positive change and fostering a stronger sense of community within the AIA family.

Moreover, we remain acutely aware of the diverse tapestry of practices that comprise the fabric of our local membership. We stand united in our resolve to tailor our collaborative efforts and perspectives to cater to this diversity, while simultaneously celebrating the unique identities that define us as individual chapters.

Today, we extend an earnest invitation to each and every one of you to join us in this objective. Let us connect, share, and support one another as we embark on this collective journey towards a more cohesive and supportive AIA presence here in New York City. Together, we are one AIA—one family bound by a common purpose and a shared vision.

In closing, let us remember the words of Helen Keller, who famously said, "Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much." Let us heed these words as we unite our strengths, talents, and passions in pursuit of a brighter, more inclusive future for the NYC AIA community.

With heartfelt regards,

Sarah Drake, AIA
President, AIA Brooklyn

Sara Jazayeri, AIA
President, AIA Bronx

Stanley Krebushevski, AIA
President, AIA Staten Island

Gregory T. Switzer, AIA
President, AIANY

Jacqueline Velez, AIA
President, AIA Queens

Headshots courtesy of chapter presidents

New Systems, Perennial Questions

BY *OCULUS* EDITOR-IN-CHIEF **JENNIFER KRICHELS**

In a recent *Here & Now* interview on NPR by Scott Tong with Boston's Berklee College of Music professor Ben Camp, the immediacy of generative artificial intelligence (AI) was in full effect. At one point in the broadcast conversation, Camp suggested a few parameters ("a song about public radio in a musical style associated with Boston") and Udio, an AI music generator, produced a song that was squarely within the specified style. I saw a similar party trick repeated at an outdoor high school concert, when a weather delay necessitated an unplanned intermission and the emcee conjured, in a matter of seconds, another AI-generated musical interlude for the audience.

I mention these blips, on their face unrelated to architecture, because this is the context, or part of it, in which we approached this issue considering the future of the architecture profession. We are all interacting with generative AI more and more, and whether within music, art, or the built environment, these new systems are raising similar questions across the board for creators and audiences. As artist and architecture educator Curry Hackett told writer Beth Broome in this issue, "AI tools are simultaneously prompting age-old questions of authorship in architecture, while setting up possibilities for more collective and interdisciplinary models of labor and production." Broome interviewed nine architecture educators, and ultimately their responses to her questions about AI's role in curricula today may leave many of us with more questions than answers about how these tools will affect the practice of architecture, as increasing numbers of AI-proficient architects enter the profession.

As tantalizing as it is to follow the yellow-brick AI road, it is also important to think pragmatically about the many steps leading up to any pathway in the profession.

As tantalizing as it is to follow the yellow-brick AI road, it is also important to think pragmatically about the many steps leading up to any pathway in the profession. As Stephen Zacks discusses in his reporting for this issue, NCARB has been rolling out its initiative to enable architects to become licensed without a degree from an accredited architecture school. Plenty of debate has ensued about whether this is the best means by which to create a diverse and equitable working environment for architects, and—whatever stance you take—I am sure these interviews will shed light on the complexities of the questions at hand.

In addition to examining the internal pressures and systems in flux for architects, we also look at how global external factors are shaping the future of architectural practice. Firms and individuals are "seeking out projects that align with their values, as gender equity, decolonization, and decarbonization have become pressing challenges," writes Anthony Paletta in his examination of a shift away from traditional models. Surely, the appointment of a major technology company executive, Evelyn Lee, FAIA, NOMA, as the 2025 AIA president-elect, points to a future where firms large and small are aware of the need to diversify what it means to operate in the world as an architect.

We thank everyone who took the time to talk with our writers for this issue, and though our current understanding of the future of the architecture profession may seem outmoded even a year from now, we hope the questions raised here can be perpetually useful.

Jennifer Krichels, Editor-in-Chief
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On View

AT THE CENTER

Spacializing Reproductive Justice

Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Place
Through September 23

Center for Architecture
centerforarchitecture.org

A view of the exhibition, featuring, at left, *Away, At Home* by Chi Chi Wakabayashi, a student at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. The project proposes a clinic offering temporary housing and social support services to provide comfort for those who have to travel to access care. From the studio Reproductive Justice Network, taught by Bryony Roberts, 2022.

In the U.S., reproductive rights have always been restricted by race, gender, sexuality, and class inequalities—particularly for Black, Brown, and Indigenous women; trans men and nonbinary individuals; adolescents; immigrants; people with disabilities; and those with low or insecure income. Systemic racism, as well as the political influence of religious groups, has long shaped reproductive healthcare access in the U.S.

"Spatializing Reproductive Justice" at the Center for Architecture addresses the spatial, legal, and social logistics of reproductive healthcare access in the U.S. after the repeal of Roe v. Wade. The exhibition arrives at a time when increasing legal restrictions have deepened inequities, threatening the lives of millions across the country. Curated by Lori A. Brown, FAIA, Lindsay Harkema, *(continued on page 10)*

Contributors to This Issue

BETH BROOME ("The New Frontier") is the former managing editor of *Architectural Record* and a writer based in Brooklyn.

MARC NORMAN ("Lit Review: A Rage in Harlem: June Jordan and Architecture") is the Larry & Klara Silverstein Chair in Real Estate Development & Investment and associate dean of the Schack Institute of Real Estate at NYU. He founded the consulting firm Ideas and Action, and has over 25 years of experience in community development and finance. Currently, Norman consults with organizations throughout the U.S. and the world on issues related to the built environment.

ANTHONY PALETTA ("Models for Improvement") is a contributor to *The Wall Street Journal*, *Metropolis*, *The Architect's Newspaper*, *Architectural Record*, *Financial Times*, and other publications. He lives in Brooklyn.

STEPHEN ZACKS ("Schools of Thought") is an advocacy journalist, architecture critic, urbanist, and project organizer based in New York City.

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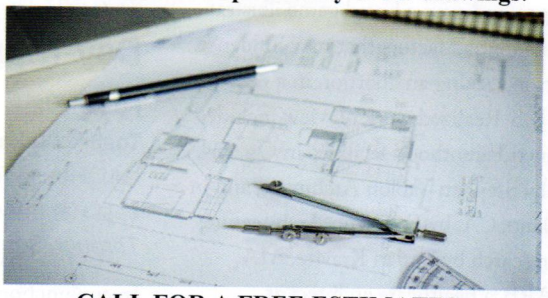
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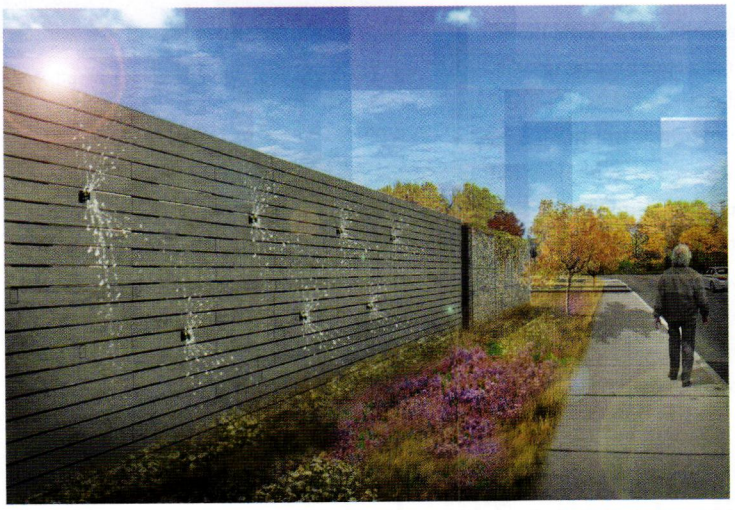
(continued from page 9) Bryony Roberts, and FLUFFFF Studio, "Spatializing" aims to foster a dialogue among designers, healthcare providers, advocates, and students to explore how architects and designers can respond to and support reproductive justice in the U.S.

The exhibition originated from parallel architecture studios taught in the fall of 2022 by Brown at Syracuse University, Harkema at The City College of New York, and Roberts at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. The exhibit showcases speculative student research and design work from these courses, selected independent student projects from other institutions, contemporary built projects from around the world, and a body of research investigating how the intersecting and compounding factors of race, class, and gender impact an individual's access to care.

"Spatializing Reproductive Justice" presents not only designs for reproductive healthcare clinics, but also ideas for how architects can imagine new hybrids of healthcare, housing, childcare, infrastructure, and education to support autonomy and agency as people decide their own reproductive futures. Comprising most of the exhibition, student work includes research on alternative networks of care, types of birth control, sensory-material collages, and even a board game illustrating the myriad factors that may influence a person seeking an abortion in a post-Roe U.S. Realized work on view includes Planned Parenthood facilities in Queens, NY, by Stephen Yablon Architects, and in Oakland, CA, by Fougeron Architecture; and research by Jordan Kravitz, AIA, NCARB, a healthcare architect at Stantec, on laws dictating specific abortion facility regulations in 13 states. Following its installation at the Center, the exhibition will be hosted at other academic and cultural institutions across the country, incorporating additional student and professional works as it travels.

The Editors



Top: *Care Receiver Experiential Collage* by Valeska Abarca, Nathaly Castillo, and Mauricio Guidos, students of The City College of New York's Spitzer School of Architecture, from the studio National Care: Abortion Access, Reproductive Justice on Federal Land, taught by Lindsay Harkema, 2022. Above: The Alabama Women's Wellness Center in Huntsville, Alabama, designed by Lori A. Brown, assisted by Patricia Cafferky. A buffer between protesters and the clinic's parking entrance area was created by a wall that responds to the different pressures around the site.

BEYOND THE CENTER

Day Trips

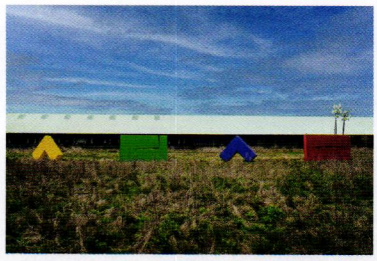
Full Circle:
Toshiko Takaezu and Friends
LongHouse Reserve,
East Hampton, NY
Through September 6

In conjunction with the retrospective at the Noguchi Museum, LongHouse presents pieces that its founder, Jack Lenor Larsen, acquired or was gifted from his friend, Toshiko Takaezu, one of America's most influential ceramic artists. Larsen regarded her as a kindred spirit since their meeting at Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1953.

Tall Timber:
The Future of Cities in Wood
The Skyscraper Museum
39 Battery Place
Through August 31

An emerging system of building materials called "mass timber" is being used in ways that avoid the "carbon cost" of traditional high-rise construction in concrete and steel. This exhibition examines tall buildings that have been recently constructed utilizing mass timber, and investigates its role in creating a more sustainable, low-carbon future for our cities and our planet.

Top: Courtesy of The City College of New York; Bottom: Image courtesy of Lori A. Brown

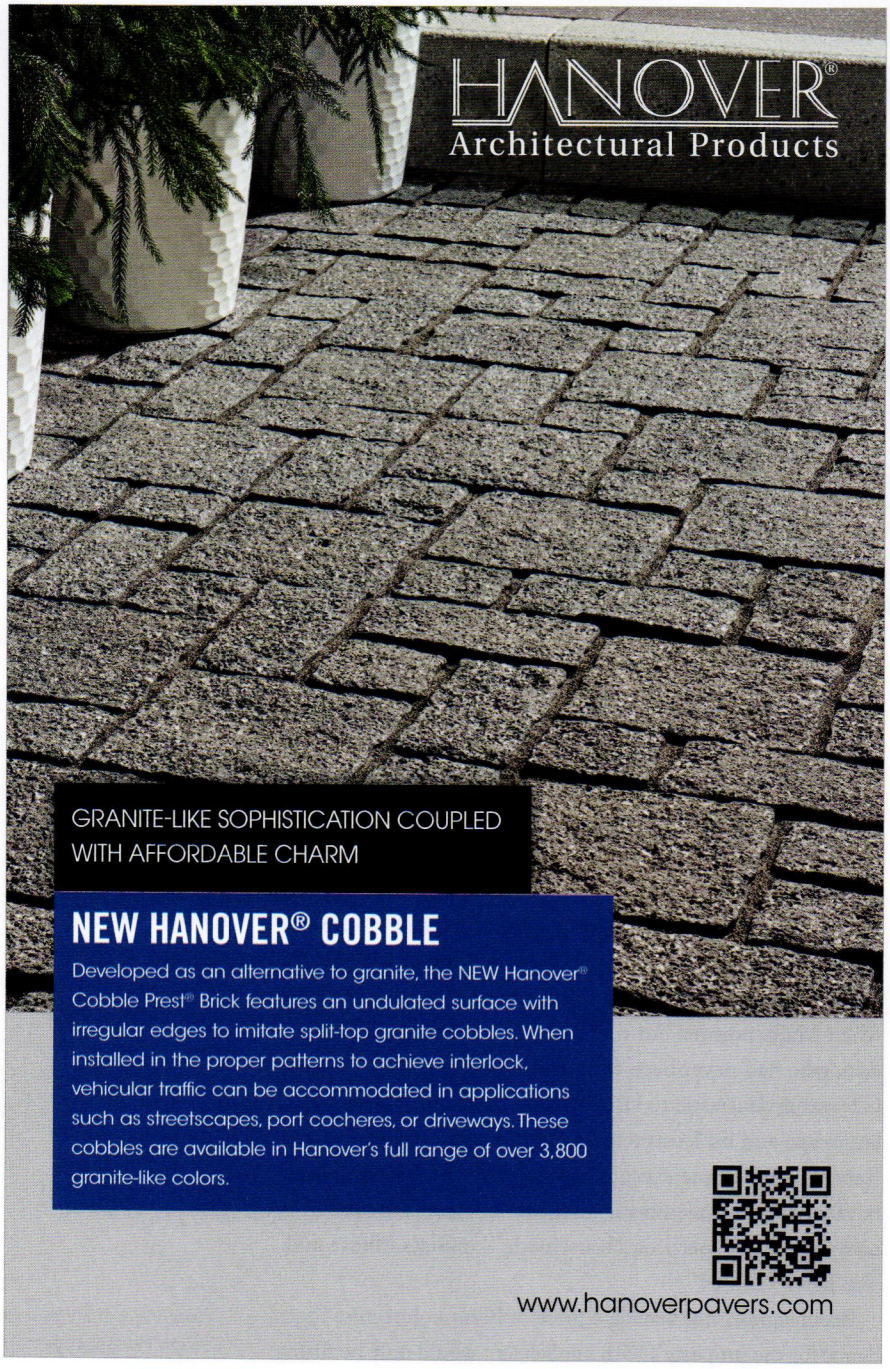


Carmen Herrera:
Estructuras Monumentales
Parrish Art Museum
Water Mill, NY
Through December 8

On display in the museum's South Meadow are four large-scale sculptures in red, blue, yellow, and green by artist Carmen Herrera (American, b. Cuba, 1915–2022). The four works installed here are part of Herrera's series *Estructuras*, which she initially envisioned as sketches and paintings in the 1960s. It was only in the final 15 years of the artist's life that she was able to realize her vision for these as monumental sculptures. The *Estructuras* series at the Parrish provides an opportunity to view the acrylic and aluminum works the way Herrera imagined them.

SO – IL \ WCMA:
Building a New Museum
Williams College Museum of Art
Williamstown, MA
Through December 22

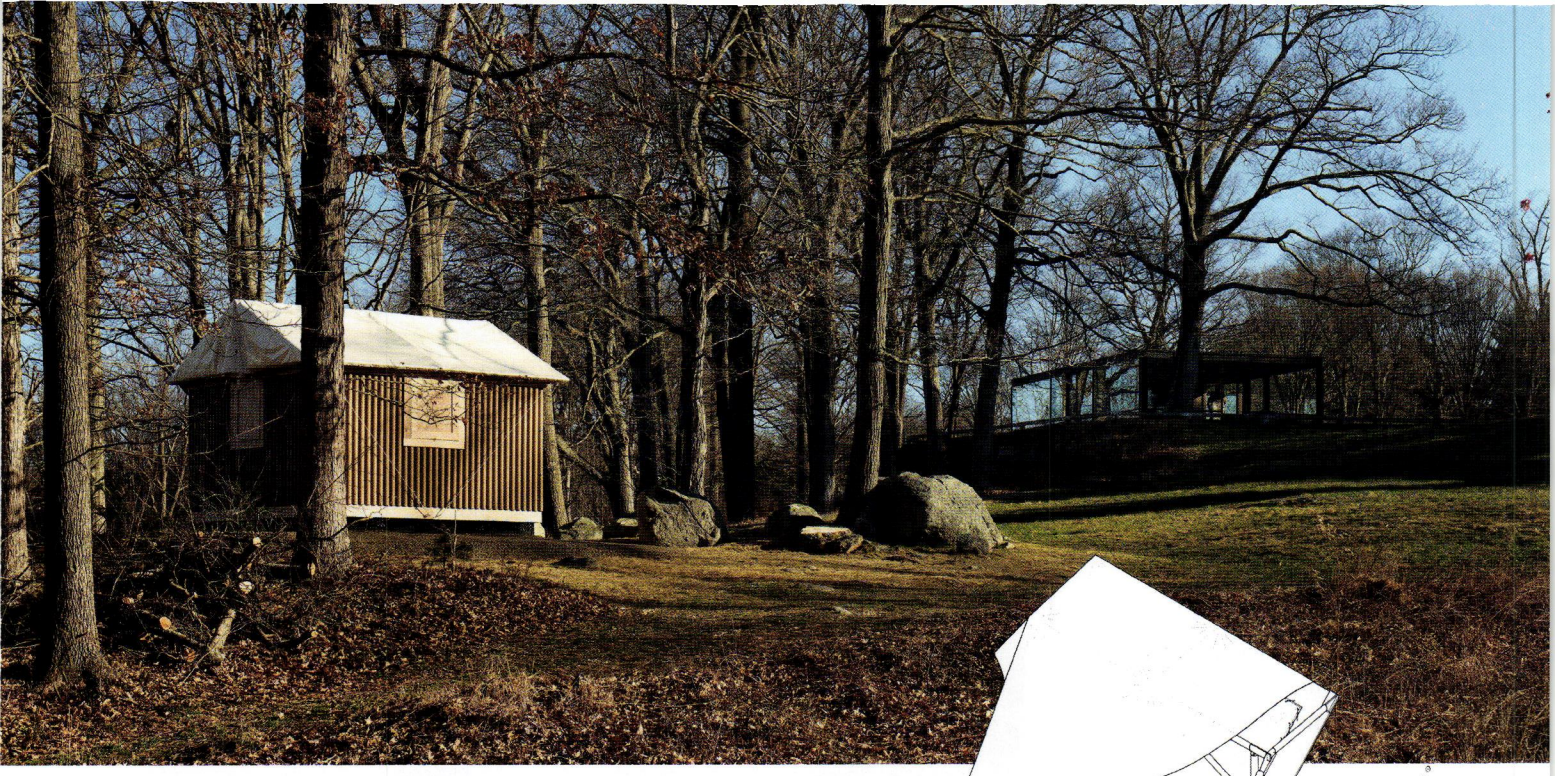
After years of planning, the Williams College Museum of Art has partnered with SO – IL to create a state-of-the-art building as the museum's first purpose-built home since it opened in 1926 in what had previously been the college's library. Organized by the design team and the museum, the exhibition showcases plans and renderings of the building design. It provides a sense of what goes into the design of a complex and ambitious project and an opportunity to consider what it means to make a campus art museum for the future.

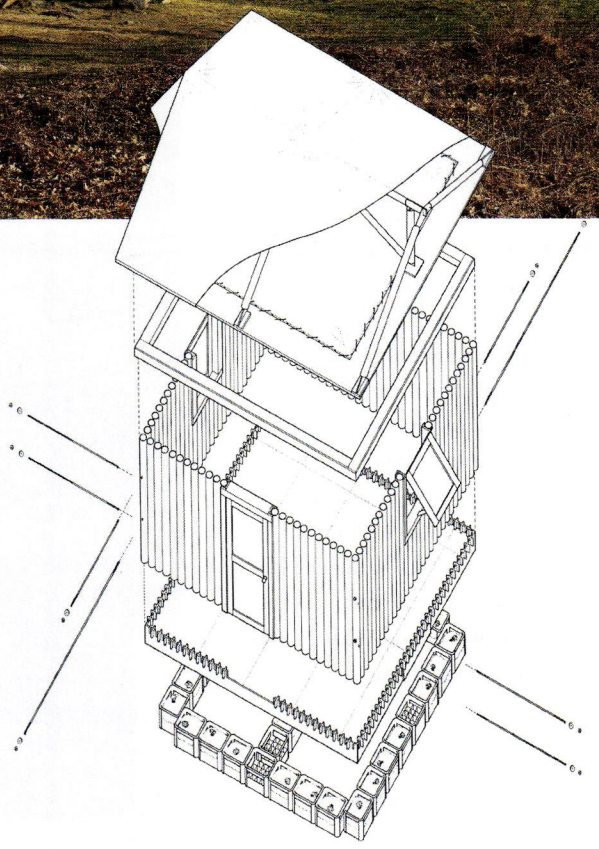


Osman Khan:
Road to Hybridabad
MASS MoCA
North Adams, MA
Opens August 24

Osman Khan rereads the magical and fantastical figures found in folktales and lore, with a particular focus on those from South Asia, the Middle East, and other Muslim and immigrant traditions. Khan interprets these figures through contemporary technologies and concerns, including an animatronic djinn, drone-operated flying carpets, a wall-destroying sound system/cannon, and a storytelling Scheherezade AI. This sprawling and wryly funny exhibition encourages a reconsideration of the narratives around identity, difference, and power reflected and recounted in the tales we tell ourselves. ■

Photo © Gary Mamay





Shigeru Ban's Paper Log House at The Glass House

BY **JENNIFER KRICHELS**

Shigeru Ban's first visit to Philip Johnson's Glass House was a stroke of serendipity. Ban was on an excursion with Dean Maltz, a managing partner of Shigeru Ban Architects (SBA), when Maltz pointed out that The Glass House was nearby. Ban, who had never been to the historic site in New Canaan, CT, was enthusiastic to visit. During their tour of the 49-acre landscape and its 14 structures, the pair met with Kirsten Reoch, who became executive director at The Glass House in 2023. Maltz remembers, "I said to Kirsten, 'Wouldn't it be nice to have a Paper Log House with The Glass House and The Brick House?'"

Reoch agreed that having a piece of Ban's architecture in residence for the property's 75th anniversary would only be fitting. The Japanese architect, who won the Pritzker Prize in 2014, has been designing paper tube structures to support disaster relief efforts around the world since 1994 (though his experiments with the material began in 1985). Ban sees paper tubes as an ideal structural material due to their wide availability, economy, and ease of assembly.

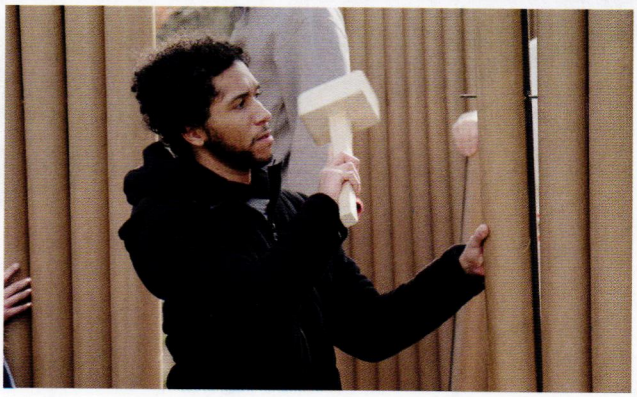
Now, his Paper Log House sits just downhill from The Glass House, nodding to some of Johnson's own architectural experiments dotting the landscape. The 13.5-foot-square shelter is constructed on a platform of 39 plastic milk crates, with a structure of 156 paper tubes, plywood, and a canvas-like roof membrane. A unique shutter design allows the view to be opened up or obscured, depending on preference and weather.

Top: View of Shigeru Ban's Paper Log House in proximity to the iconic Glass House; above: An exploded axonometric drawing of the house.

(To site the house, the architects were able to reuse a compacted gravel pad that had been put in place by stone carver Mark Mennin for the property's 2023 exhibition.) While Paper Log Houses used in disaster-hit areas are constructed by locals or volunteers on the ground, Ban and Maltz recruited students from their alma mater, The Cooper Union, to build this project. As part of the university's building technology course, students began fabricating Paper Log House components at their Manhattan campus in February 2024. After a five-week preconstruction period, the components were trucked to New Canaan and assembled by 17 students, faculty members, and SBA staff in 15 hours over two bitterly cold days in March.

Photo: Michael Biondo; drawing: Courtesy of Shigeru Ban Architects and Voluntary Architects' Network (VAN)

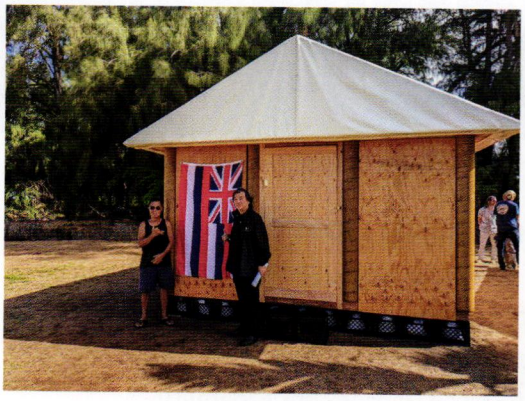


Clockwise from top left: Students inserting preassembled sections of paper tube walls into crenelated base panels along the perimeter of the floor; threading nylon rope through a metal angle attached to the underside of the roof coping to tie down the waterproof tent membrane; driving a threaded rod through predrilled holes in the paper tubes to hold the individual parts in place; installing the Paper Log House's roof structure, which is composed of paper tubes and plywood joints.

For Johnson, the bucolic property was meant for inspiration and experimentation—to show how informed architectural works can be applied to the wider world. "So I would think he would be very happy to have this on this property," said Maltz during a springtime visit to the grounds. "In today's world we have so much natural disaster, due to climate change, and a need to help others. This is the period of architecture we're in, with young students embracing this work."

The project will be on display through December 15, 2024. An accompanying exhibition and time-lapse video documenting the students' fabrication and assemblage of The Paper Log House is also on view in Johnson's 1995 building on the property, Da Monsta. ■




VAN–Voluntary Architects' Network is an NGO through which Ban provides humanitarian relief projects, often in the form of paper tube structures, in response to a wide array of disasters, including hurricanes, earthquakes, and wars. Two recent projects are a prototype of a Paper Log House in Maui as a potential solution for replacing homes lost in the 2023 wildfires on the island (left), and an expansion of a hospital in Lviv, Ukraine, to meet the needs of citizens displaced by the war there (right).

Top: video stills from Hudson Lines; Right: © Shigeru Ban Architects, VAN

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FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION

There is no crystal ball to tell us the future of the architecture profession. But, in this issue, we explore the questions practitioners are asking about what working as an architect will look like in the coming years and even decades: How are schools and governing bodies proposing to make accreditation more inclusive? What effect is artificial intelligence having on architecture school studios? How are young, emerging firms reinventing models for traditional practice to benefit their employees and clients alike? And, as more architects seek work outside of traditional firms, what perspectives can they lend to other industries as well as their own?

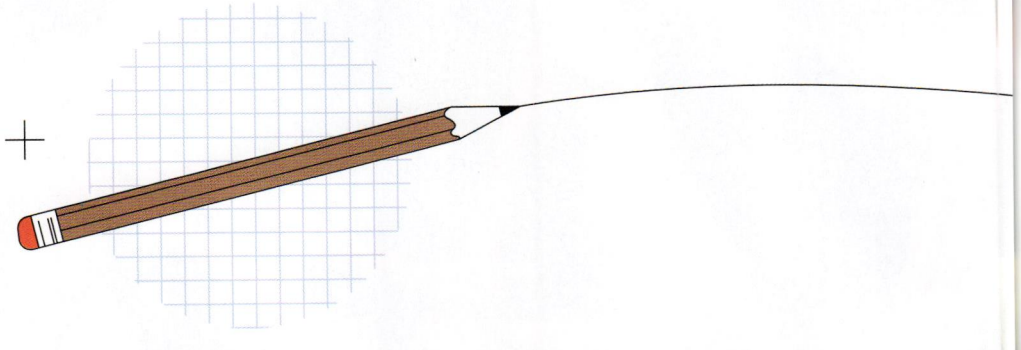
Soft Fits, a site-specific installation by Brooklyn's WIP Collaborative, creates a playful lounge-scape for people of all ages to hang out, explore, and connect in the heart of downtown Toronto.

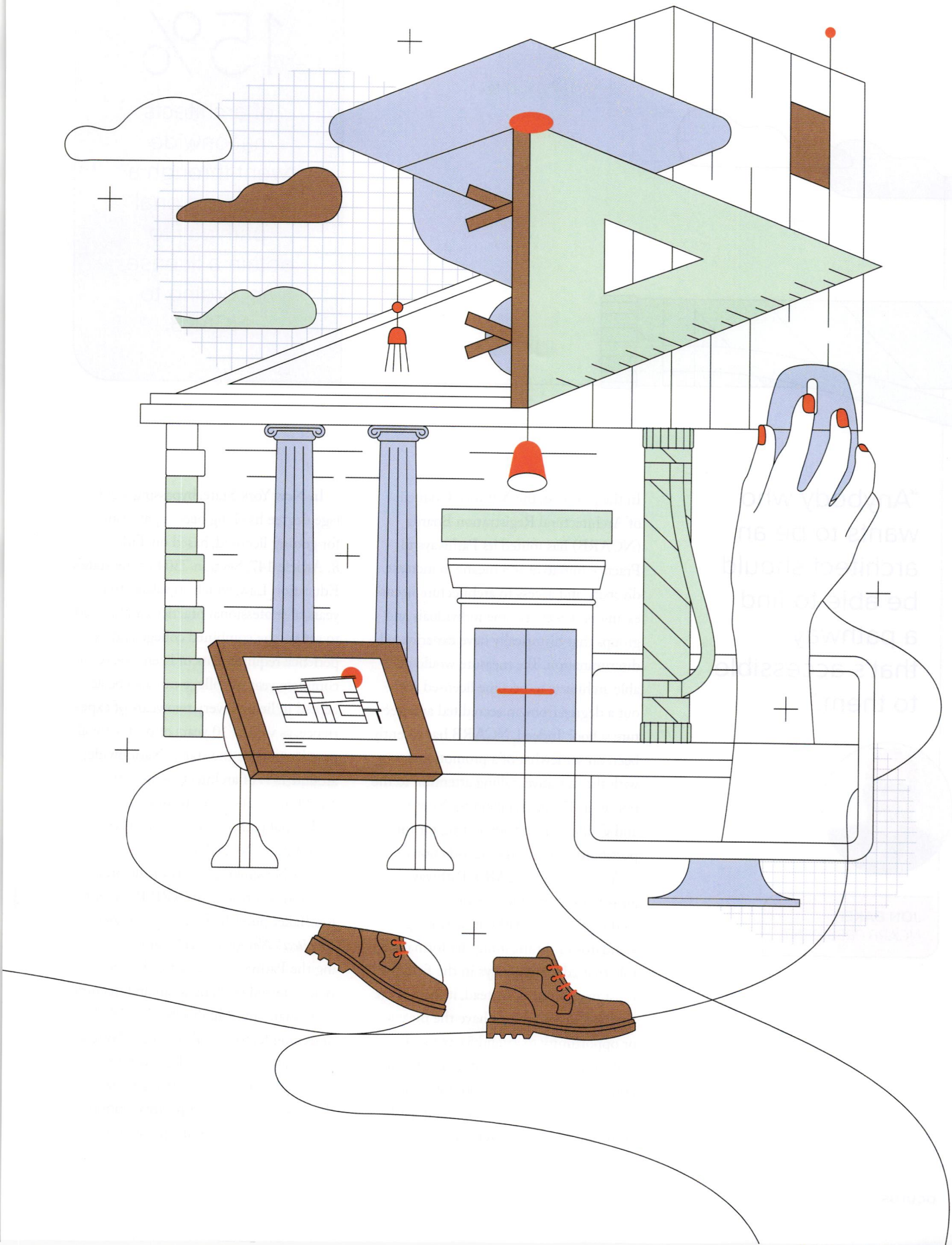
WIP Collaborative

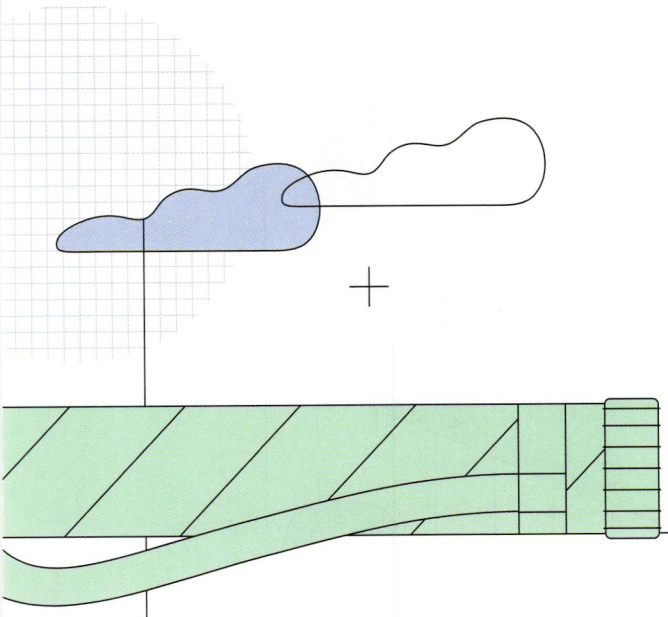
SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

BY **STEPHEN ZACKS**

Is on-the-job experience without an accredited college degree a legitimate alternative for emerging architects?







15%

of architects nationwide went through a nontraditional pathway to obtain a license, according to NCARB.

"Anybody who wants to be an architect should be able to find a pathway that's accessible to them."

JON BAKER, NCARB PRESIDENT

In the past year, the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) has touted its Pathways to Practice initiative as a means to increase diversity and access to architecture licenses among lower-income individuals and groups that historically have experienced discrimination. The measure would enable architects to become licensed without a degree from an accredited architecture school. Indeed, NCARB has recently been on somewhat of a promotional tour with the initiative, calling attention to the option in 17 states, including New York and California, and advocating for the possibility within other jurisdictions.

According to NCARB, Pathways aims to diversify and broaden access to the profession without sacrificing standards or diminishing the formative role that education plays in the field for most practitioners. Instead, it focuses on "individuals who don't have the means or opportunity to attend 5+ years of college, or whose approaches to learning and application of skills do not fit into a traditional accredited education path," according to press materials.

In New York State, bypassing a college degree has long been a pathway for getting licensed, based on Title 8, Article 147, Section 7304 of the state's Education Law, which stipulates that 12 years of professional practice can be used to satisfy the combined college and experience requirements of licensure. (One complete year of college can also be accepted in lieu of every two years of experience, as well as 10 years of professional practice outside the state.) Nationwide, around 15% of architects—more than 18,000 in total—went through a nontraditional pathway to obtain a license, according to NCARB.

Last November, as part of the organization's outreach, NCARB President Jon Baker published an op-ed in *The Architect's Newspaper (AN)* discussing the Pathways to Practice initiative. Baker started working as an architectural draftsman out of high school in 1973, designing factory-built modular homes in a small office in San Bernardino, California. He believes strongly that these alternatives are a positive option, opening up access for people without

Headshots courtesy of respective subjects

Monti and Zell argued that rather than produce greater inclusion, a large increase in the number of architects who hadn't attended an accredited university would, over time, "create two classes of architectural professionals and undercut the relevance of the profession to society."

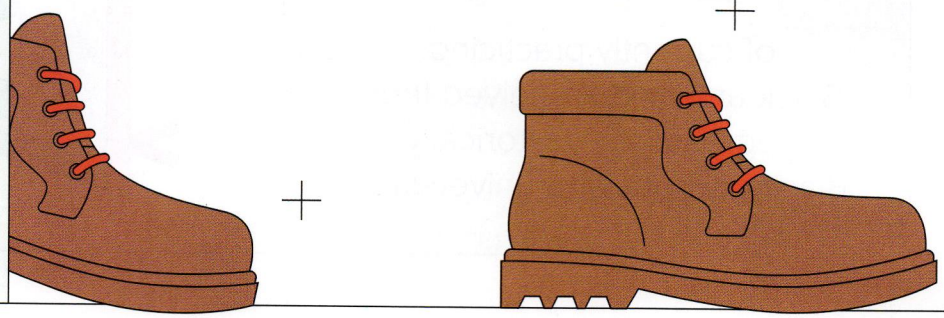
MICHAEL J. MONTI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE SCHOOLS OF ARCHITECTURE (ACSA), AND **MO ZELL**, ACSA PRESIDENT AND INTERIM DEAN OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, MILWAUKEE

the means to afford higher education. He cites his modest background and the difficulty of working and paying for school simultaneously. Baker eventually enrolled at California Polytechnic State University for one-and-a-half years before giving up and returning to practice without a degree.

"Anybody who wants to be an architect should be able to find a pathway that's accessible to them," Baker said in an interview for *Oculus*. "If we open up these pathways, a lot of underrepresented individuals and groups will be able to find a way into the profession and help us broaden the perspective of what we do and how we do it."

The November essay set off a lively debate and spurred a series of rebuttals in *AN*. Among them, Michael J. Monti, executive director of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), and Mo Zell, ACSA president and interim dean of art and architecture at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, jointly authored a letter to *AN* defending the importance of architecture school. Monti and Zell argued that rather than produce greater inclusion, a large increase in the number of architects who hadn't attended an accredited university would, over time, "create two classes of architectural professionals and undercut the relevance of the profession to society." Instead of offering greater access for groups who have been historically discriminated against, they contended, members of these groups would be less likely to be hired without a degree, or would ultimately obtain lower salaries, diminishing their opportunities relative to others in the field. "Although that pathway is open to all people regardless of race, gender, or country of origin, it does not account for the longstanding history of harm and disenfranchisement that women and people of color still experience today," they reminded readers.

Baker says NCARB is not trying to diminish the importance of architectural education, but recognizing that there are real income-based limitations to getting into the profession. "This is not meant to dismantle the education system or undermine the degree programs in any form or fashion," he says. "This is just to provide a pathway for individuals who want to be architects but are not able to access those programs because of all the limitations that keep them out. It also recognizes that a lot of students go through very expensive programs and end up with a lot of student debt on top of not being able to get the starting salaries they'd like when they get out of school." Based on NCARB's current data, approximately



70% of architects who have pursued a nontraditional path are white and 30% are people of color. For comparison, 19% of architects identify as a person of color. NCARB does not gather data on economic status.

Meanwhile, some educators say the solution to the cost of higher education is to put more money into tuition, particularly for students with race and income barriers. Andrew Chin, dean and associate professor at the Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University School of Architecture & Engineering Technology, cites the fact that 30% of currently practicing Black architects received their degrees from historically Black colleges and universities as evidence that supporting educational access is fundamentally important to diversity within the profession. "If the goal is increasing the number of people of color in the discipline, then this may be a question that educational institutions need to address," Chin says. "I don't think the solution is waiving the educational requirement—that isn't how you make education cheaper."

Yet alternatives to a six-year accredited degree are being embraced in some measure by many, including AIA New York Chapter President Gregory Switzer. Switzer acknowledges that other options are worth having for many reasons. "Alternative paths are very important for some," he says. "Obviously, through the traditional route there are so many barriers to access: the financial components, the architectural education process, the licensure process, and the salaries that architects get when they first get out of school. These barriers make it very difficult for aspiring architects to support themselves—and even harder when they also have to take care of themselves and pay for multiple examinations and study."

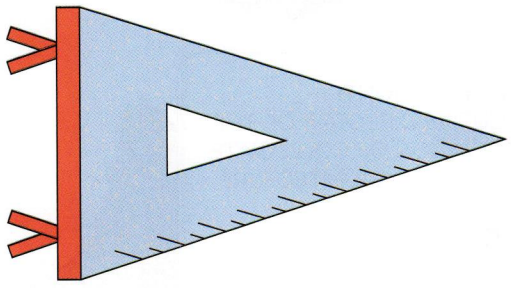
A less frequently discussed strategy that NCARB's Pathways to Practice has encouraged is to take advantage of

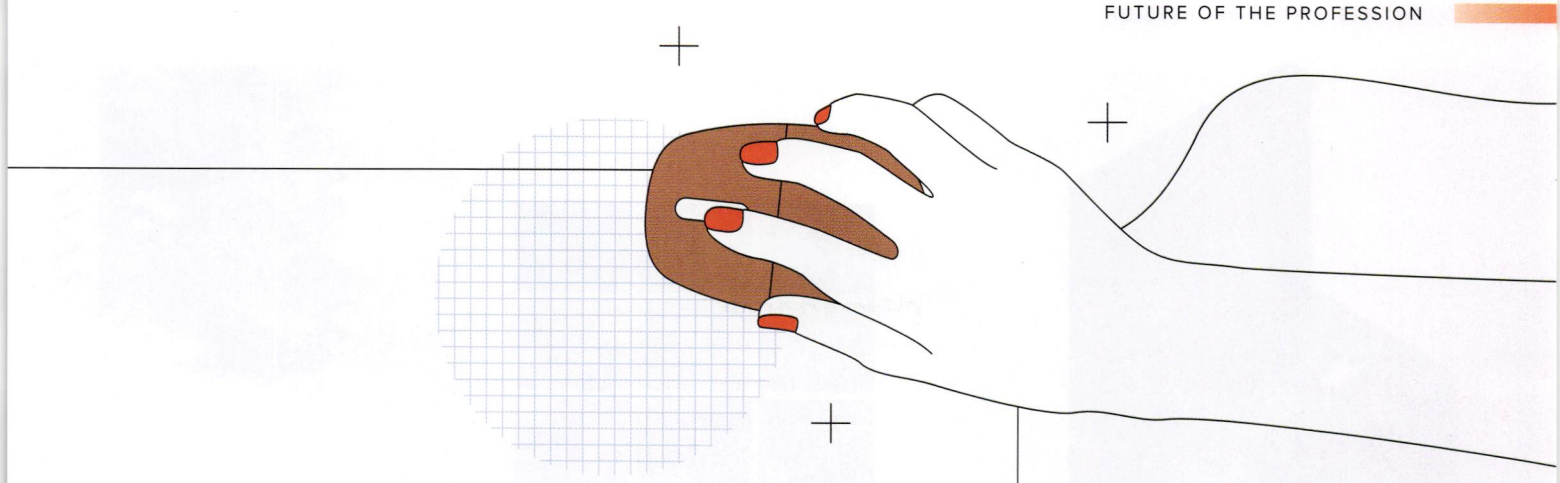
"If the goal is increasing the number of people of color in the discipline, then this may be a question that educational institutions need to address. I don't think the solution is waiving the educational requirement—that isn't how you make education cheaper."

ANDREW CHIN,
DEAN AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT THE FLORIDA AGRICULTURAL & MECHANICAL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

30%

of currently practicing Black architects received their degrees from historically Black colleges and universities





unaccredited, less-expensive community colleges that offer architecture coursework. But those credits don't always transfer into university credits or satisfy the requirements of state licensing laws. "The Pathways to Practice initiative is our recommendation to all licensing boards: that they consider how they might update their regulations and statutes and accept within their jurisdiction the idea of multiple pathways, so that candidates who can only afford to go to a four-year school that's not accredited, or to a community college for two years, can also have a pathway to licensure based on an experience pathway," says Baker.

But skipping right to practical experience isn't an easy answer, either, given that many firms are not equipped to mentor young professionals and guide them to licensure. "Many architects don't land that perfect job that supports them during the licensure process," says Switzer. "They may be working in architecture firms but not gaining the experience they need to pass that hurdle to get licensed."

By the same token, many architecture schools don't equip graduates with the practical skills they need at the end of degree programs. "It would be helpful if schools could broaden and inform the curriculum at four- and five-year universities so the students learn the fundamental basics of practice alongside their focus on design so they have both when they come out of school," Baker says. "The premise is that someone coming from an accredited school is a better architect than someone not, but there is no evidence of that. In fact, the most talented people I've worked with over the years learned the profession in practice, and the people who struggle most in this profession only have education behind them and not a lot of practical experience."

In that sense, the best way of thinking about the problem of expanding access may be to systematically, directly address equity and inclusion by offering well-rounded educational and practical opportunities at all levels of one's schooling and career. ■

"The premise is that someone coming from an accredited school is a better architect than someone not, but there is no evidence of that. In fact, the most talented people I've worked with over the years learned the profession in practice, and the people who struggle most in this profession only have education behind them and not a lot of practical experience."

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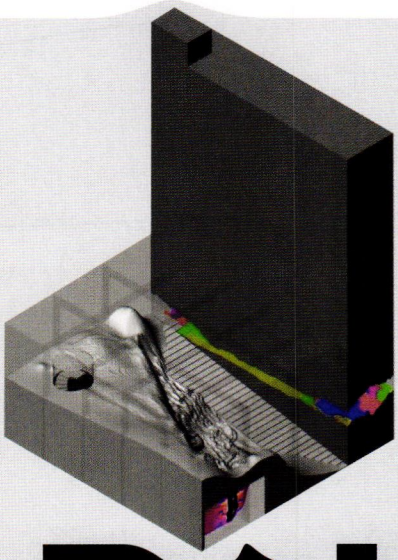
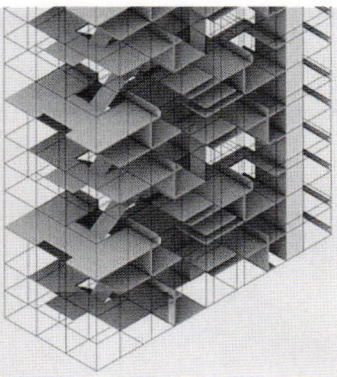
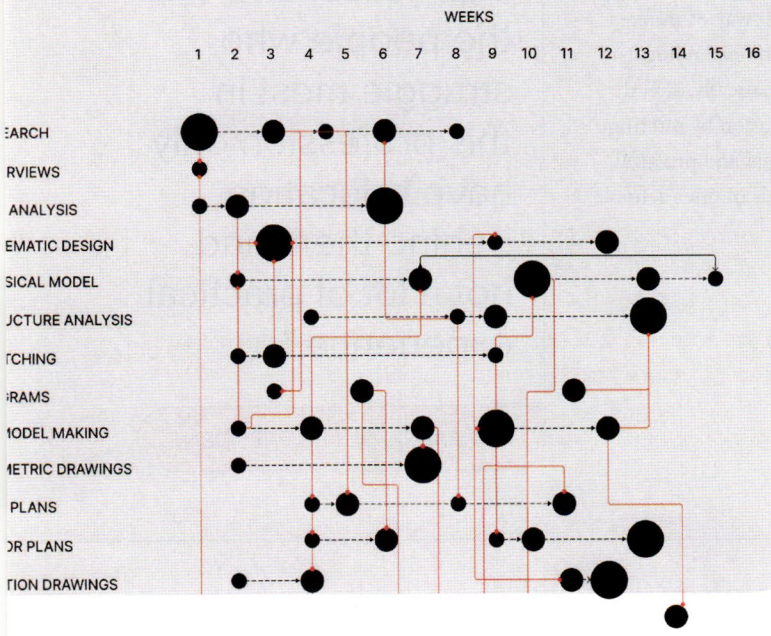


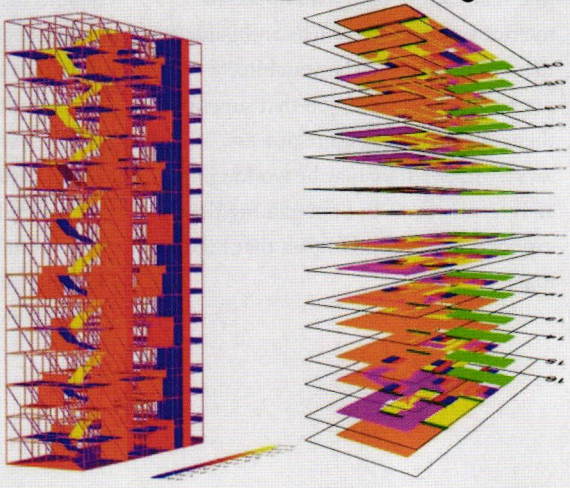


THE NEW FRONTIER

What an AI-infused education looks like today, and what it could mean for architects tomorrow.

BY **BETH BROOME**





Be sure to check out more of Beth Broome's interviews with educators online at aiany.org/membership/oculus-magazine/current-issue

Left: *Ugly Beauties*, public artwork by artist Curry Hackett, was installed this spring at The Plaza at 300 Ashland in Downtown Brooklyn. The panoramic display of AI-generated images of Black people was juxtaposed with the various native and invasive plant species—so-called "weeds"—that flourish in New York City, prompting viewers to consider society's perception of beauty and belonging.

Over the last couple of years, artificial intelligence (AI) has crept into countless aspects of our personal and professional lives—a crawl that seems to be accelerating toward a sprint. While the implications for the practice of architecture remain largely unknown, there is general agreement that the shift will be profound. Attempting to read the tea leaves to get a sense of where things might be headed for tomorrow's practitioners, *Oculus* reached out to educators to learn how they're incorporating generative AI into their curricula, and how they're preparing students for the uncharted road ahead. Here is what they had to say.

Opposite, clockwise from top left: UrbanBots, a project by New York Institute of Technology's School of Architecture & Design students Karan Patel, Mike Saad, and Jacob Sam. In Sandra Manninger's class, the students developed their own 3D-generative AI models, creating actual 3D geometry from images. This represents a crucial advancement in seamlessly integrating generative AI technology into the design process; a project by Yale School of Architecture student Anastasiia Shkolna; Tesseract, by Manninger's NYIT students Yashraj Singh Chauhan, Arefin Chisty, and Meraj Nasir, generated around 200 split-level floor plans because no existing dataset included this information. Without this data, a generative AI model would not be able to produce split-level designs; a project by Yale School of Architecture Student Fuad Khazam.

Top photo by Cameron Blaylock; Headshots courtesy of respective subjects

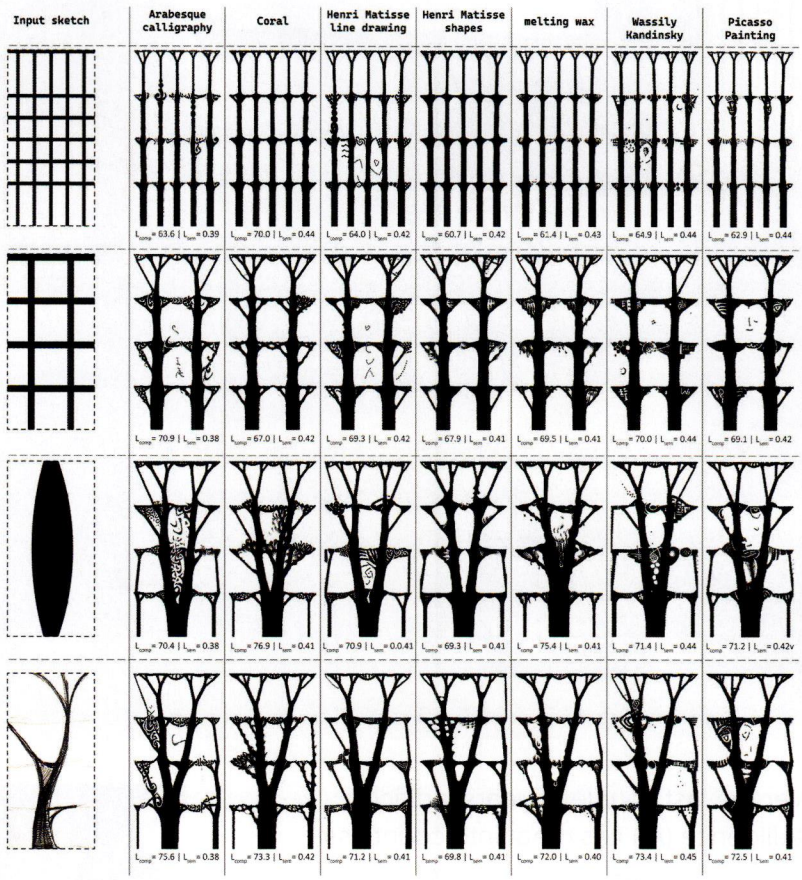
Curry J. Hackett

Educator, Principal of Wayside Studio

AI tools are simultaneously prompting age-old questions of authorship in architecture, while setting up possibilities for more collective and interdisciplinary models of labor and production. These are fundamental challenges to the authority of the current state of architecture education. I worry that the academy will be too slow in responding to these questions in efforts to maintain a status quo—a status quo that, incidentally, is increasingly becoming irrelevant because of AI. These tools are moving quicker than many realize, and I hope that educators, students, and administrators will start to think weirder and more wildly about what an AI-infused design education can look like.

In 2022, I stepped away from teaching architecture to attend grad school in the same year that ChatGPT was launched. As I eye my return to teaching later this year, I've realized that the education landscape has (necessarily) changed dramatically in ways I think will amplify existing cultural differences between Gen X/Boomer faculty and their Gen Z students. AI has invited students to adopt completely different habits of producing and consuming media that, without thoughtful guidelines on AI tool usage and citation norms, could lead to work that is academically tired at best, or indifferent to harmful at worst.

Using the program CLIP (the engine behind many of the or large language model-based, or LLM, generative AI tools available today), Mueller and collaborators built an AI system that generates structurally optimized building frames that also respond to text prompts ("melting wax," "Picasso painting," etc.).



My critical thinking in this area is more aligned with how we can best use these techniques to joyfully and effectively amplify our creative potential, to promote diverse and contextualized outcomes, and to connect with our grand challenges around carbon emissions and materials scarcity.

Caitlin T. Mueller

Director, Digital Structures; Associate Professor, Building Technology Program, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

I have been co-teaching (with machine-learning engineer Renaud Danhaive) a class on "Creative Machine Learning for Design" since 2019, which mostly predated modern generative AI models available in readily consumable formats. Our approach then, which I still believe is the most relevant to technically adventurous creative designers, was to teach a modular framework, in which the ingredients of AI—dataset curation, models of design representation, generative modeling and latent spaces, instantaneous simulation prediction, and composable multimodal goals (semantic prompts, image inputs, and physics-based objectives)—can be explored and remixed creatively to curate new human-driven processes for design.

Critique of AI is tightly wound to specific technologies, which change incredibly quickly. So I have learned not to hang critiques on whether or not certain models or tools "work." My critical thinking in this area is more aligned with how we can best use these techniques to joyfully and effectively amplify our creative potential, to promote diverse and contextualized outcomes, and to connect with our grand challenges around carbon emissions and materials scarcity. Most of these questions are about pushing AI to more meaningfully engage with our three-dimensional, human-populated, materialized world.

I am concerned with demystifying these technologies and promoting interpretable and explainable AI models, so we can use them with a greater, shared human-computer understanding. As in fully human collaborations, I find that empathy and insights into the thinking of creative partners are critical to productive and innovative design outcomes. The current popular generative AI models conceal their training data and are therefore in many ways impenetrable as interlocutors. I am interested in promoting curiosity-driven approaches that wonder why AI models generate what they do, rather than treating them solely as solution machines.

By design, the basics of using black-box generative AI are as straightforward as using Google search, so I expect this will be a skill anyone can readily master. However, integrating these tools with human expertise in fields like architectural design remains a more open question. I believe those who can develop hybrid workflows that integrate AI tools into more flexible and personalized creative processes (e.g., operating between sketching, physical modeling, CAD, AI, etc.) will have the most impact in practice.

Image courtesy Caitlin T. Mueller

Hyon Woo Scott Chung

Part-time faculty, School of Constructed Environments, The New School, Parsons

Simply introducing AI isn't enough. The key is to create a layered learning process with varying levels of engagement. My specific approach focuses on examining the creative cycle that occurs when human and AI-generated designs interact. Critique plays a central role in this process, allowing students to refine both the conceptual and visual aspects of their work. In addition, the academy can play a key role in promoting ethical considerations in the use of AI. We discuss potential biases in AI algorithms and the importance of selecting training data that reflects diversity and avoids perpetuating stereotypes.

To address the tendency of students to view AI-generated visuals as the final product, neglecting the design process, I incorporate exercises that emphasize critical analysis and iteration. Students learn to filter through a vast number of AI outputs, selecting and refining the most promising ones. We also focus on developing strong editorial skills to curate a cohesive design narrative. Another challenge is the potential for information overload from the sheer volume of AI-generated images. To mitigate this, we explore strategies for setting specific design goals before engaging with AI tools. This ensures the AI outputs remain relevant and focused on the project at hand.

Ultimately, architects and designers who can harness the power of AI while maintaining strong design judgment and critical thinking skills will be most valuable in this evolving landscape.

It will be critical for the next generation of professionals to hone their skills in two key areas related to AI. First, they should develop the ability to creatively integrate AI tools into the design workflow. This could include using AI for tasks such as generating initial design ideas, optimizing building systems, or creating high-quality visualizations. Second, they should develop a strong critical eye for evaluating and editing AI output. Mastering these filtering and editing skills will ensure that AI functions as a design collaborator, enhancing the creative process rather than replacing human ingenuity. Ultimately, architects and designers who can harness the power of AI while maintaining strong design judgment and critical thinking skills will be most valuable in this evolving landscape.

For Zhang's fall 2023 studio, students Samuel Syrop, Nada Gatalo, and Max Coleman created hundreds of AI-generated images throughout the semester, embracing and exploiting the proliferation of images to visualize process-based landscapes.

Zihao Zhang

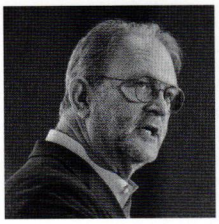
Assistant Professor and Interim Director, Landscape Architecture Program, Spitzer School of Architecture, The City College of New York

In design studios, I first started asking students to use Midjourney to generate images in 2022, when the program was released. In early 2023, I started a Discord server called "Midjourney Landscapes," on which students and my colleagues compared their prompts—prompt engineering. Initially, I asked students to include their prompts and generate iterations of images if they decided to use any AI tools. My goal was to cultivate AI literacy. Now that everyone has a pretty good understanding of these generative AIs, I no longer require prompts to be included. And I started to encourage students to push what AI can do to help their design process. In speculative studio projects, AI blends naturally into the pedagogy. It is about embracing and exploiting the proliferation of images to visualize process-based landscapes. We recently had a workshop with Landau Design, which developed Land Kit to incorporate generative pre-trained transformers (GPT) for generating planting design based on a few lines of prompts.

AI literacy is needed. Higher education needs to have AI 101 as an introductory survey course for all students. We assume everyone needs to know math, and now the same can be said about AI and basic computational thinking, since computation is part of contemporary culture. We all need to engage with this culture.

My hope is that specialized design technologists will be able to integrate AI into the design profession to revolutionize our current unsustainable, exploitative, and toxic business model. AI should not be used as an excuse to exploit design employees for more profit. Firms need to think about how not to perpetuate the current culture of exploitation with the help of AI but, rather, how to harness the AI revolution to change the culture.

Courtesy Zihao Zhang



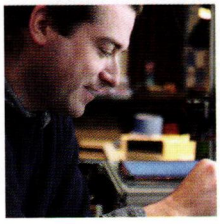
Phil Bernstein

Associate Dean and Professor Adjunct, Yale University School of Architecture

I have observed that when it comes to these kinds of disruptive technologies, it's very rarely the academy that generates the innovations—it's usually industry. The degree of understanding, implementation, and curricular energy is directly proportional to resources. The stuff we're able to do within the school of architecture to change the frame of reference is a function of what we understand and how well we can leverage existing platforms.

This year we're teaching two courses: a design course, "The Black Box: Architecture in an Age of Opacity," taught by senior critic Brennan Buck, and "Architecture and Machine Intelligence in Theory & Practice," which I am teaching with Sam Omans, a lecturer at Yale and the industry strategy manager for architecture at Autodesk. We are working on a course for next year that aims to make people literate in the platforms they are working on, understand where the landscape of tools is going, address questions about ethics and risks, understand the historical development of the technology and the relationship between AI and other means of architectural representation, and look at specific use cases—all under the larger umbrella of where architects have agency and how artificial intelligence affects their agency.

You can spend a lot of time teaching people the ins and outs of how to use Stable Diffusion, but by the end of the semester, the company will have released two more versions of the software, or it may be bankrupt. The problem here is putting a boat into a fast-moving river. We feel as if, pedagogically, we need to expose these folks to enough of the questions so they know what questions to keep asking when they get out into practice. Another important point: all our students have a computer we give them with all sorts of software. There are printers that print plastic, clay, and wood. There are laser cutters, CNC machines, and robots. There's a huge downshift when they get into an office—we have exposed them to technologies to make them more interesting, qualified, and thoughtful architects. Spending a lot of time obsessing about generative technologies and images is a waste of time and a diversion. We are teaching so that students will have an understanding of the technological direction that's happening in our industry. And we believe that's what we have to do with AI.



Richard Sarrach

Director of Interdisciplinary Technology; Adjunct Associate Professor, Pratt Institute Undergraduate School of Architecture

Our design studio, co-taught with professor Ajmal Aqtash from the Center of Experimental Structures (CES), is a joint effort between CES and Interdisciplinary Technology Lab (ITL) within the Pratt Institute School of Architecture and NVIDIA – OmniVerse, with a team led by Sebastian Misiurek, a design technologist and educator based in New York City. The premise of this studio is to explore "Collaborative Automation for the Construction of Higher Density Housing" for a NYC Housing Authority site. Specifically, we aim to identify potential benefits within the production process that can be unlocked to make higher quality housing more accessible and affordable. Our approach will involve using OmniVerse to develop a series of design options. Over the past three semesters, we have been deeply immersed in a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted role of simulation in various scales, ranging from the intricate details of fabrication to the complex processes of assembly. Our interest lies particularly in comprehending the nuances of assembly theory.

The advent of AI has ignited an unprecedented wave of enthusiasm among technophiles, breathing life into a subset of architecture students that was on the brink of extinction. It's also opening doors for those who excel in verbal and written articulation.

The advent of AI has ignited an unprecedented wave of enthusiasm among technophiles, breathing life into a subset of architecture students that was on the brink of extinction. It's also opening doors for those who excel in verbal and written articulation. Students are leveraging these tools to shape their narratives around architecture. They're constructing workflows that generate scripts, voice-overs, images, videos, and soundscapes, with fully developed three-dimensional worlds on the horizon. We're venturing into a more cinematic territory—hence more accessible to a broader audience.

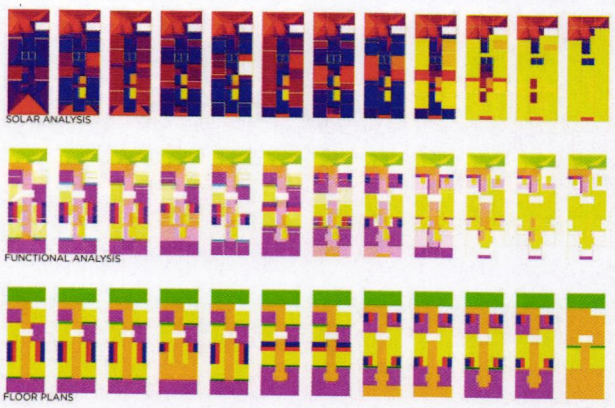
In past technological revolutions, academia led the way. However, due to economic pressures and opportunities, firms, contractors, and manufacturers have surged ahead. My concern is they've achieved an escape velocity that makes it challenging for academia and our students to keep pace. I propose a collaborative model, reminiscent of the mutually beneficial one seen at Pratt in the 1950s, that is now grounded by a comprehensive internet protocol and technology transfer policy.

Sandra Manninger

Associate Professor, Architecture, Computational Technologies, School of Architecture and Design, New York Institute of Technology

I have been integrating generative AI into elective courses and design studios, enabling students to explore it from various perspectives. In theory classes, we discuss its cultural impact on the field. In technology classes and design studios, we examine different models and their applications. We also evaluate existing generative AI products to determine their usefulness. Importantly, we create our own datasets and modify code to adapt the programs to these new datasets. For instance, students generated around 200 split-level floor plans because no existing dataset includes this information. Without this data, a generative AI model would not be able to produce split-level designs. Our students successfully developed a model that folded 3D data into 2D images to address this issue. Another student group developed its own 3D-generative AI models, creating actual 3D geometry from images. This represents a crucial advancement in seamlessly integrating generative AI technology into the design process. It marks an important transition from merely producing visualizations to generating geometry that can be incorporated into standard simulation and fabrication pipelines using conventional 3D modeling software.

Firms are seeking candidates who can leverage generative AI to enhance both efficiency and creativity in the design process. For instance, using AI to rapidly explore multiple design iterations allows for more informed decision-making early in the design phase. New hires will act as a bridge to these technologies, helping to evaluate and optimize existing tools for productivity. Moreover, firms expect new hires to be not only proficient in using these tools, but also innovative in applying them to solve complex design challenges. The ability to create custom datasets and adapt AI models to specific design requirements is particularly valued.



Students in Manninger's class generated around 200 split-level floor plans because no existing dataset included this information.

Stephen Gray

Associate Professor of Urban Design; Director of the Master of Architecture in Urban Design Program, Harvard University Graduate School of Design

While mindful of the various concerns, Harvard's urban design faculty recognizes the inevitability of AI in our future. In our core urban design studio, we introduce students to tools like Midjourney so they can learn to structure effective prompts that produce more controlled visual outputs. Regarding process, AI images become additive rather than substituting for other more foundational design principles and activities. To address some ethical and practical concerns, the urban design faculty highlight the importance of student creativity alongside AI utilization and emphasize an opportunities-based approach. A key opportunity for students involves their ability to integrate a greater volume of contextual complexity (community reports, newspaper articles, official studies, and other relevant content) within a very compressed design studio timeframe. Additionally, we emphasize the importance of critical thinking, engage students in discussions about the ethical implications of AI in design processes, and encourage them to consider the broader societal impacts of their work.

Graduates who have a basic familiarity with these tools will soon possess sought-after skills, especially as AI becomes more integrated into design workflows. For instance, in public design projects involving community engagement, residents typically share their desires and concerns, but they often do not participate in translating their inputs into design concepts. Here, AI tools could play a transformative role by generating images in real time based on community inputs, facilitating immediate feedback and collaboration between designers and the public. In this way, generative AI has the potential to be a power equalizer, bridging the gap between community engagement and design, a gap that has often left the public feeling disconnected. As such, part of my responsibility as Harvard's urban design program director is to anticipate the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving field and to prepare our students to be leaders in these industry innovations. ■

Image courtesy NYIT

Models for Improvement

A look at some of the ways—and reasons—the practice of architecture is taking new forms.

BY **ANTHONY PALETTA**

In 2024, architectural practices—and the practice of architecture—are being tweaked in a variety of directions, reinventing the profession in a number of ways. The proof is visible in a variety of subtle shifts and trends: The AIA has begun to admit non-architects to membership; many firms are combining architecture with other design work; unionization drives have altered compensation and culture within practices; and unexpected collaborations have transformed the work that is executed. Firms have also become far more active in taking on or seeking out projects that align with their values, as gender equity, decolonization, and decarbonization have become pressing challenges. Evelyn Lee, FAIA, NOMA, the 2025 AIA president-elect, is dramatic proof that an architect can help solve challenges outside of form-making and built work: She is the global head of workplace strategy and innovation at Slack Technologies, and has been a consistent advocate for rethinking traditional models in business and in architectural practice. Colleagues see Lee's appointment as a nod toward the profession's need to accelerate its thinking around technology and demonstrate how many aspects of life can be improved by architectural thinking. As chair of the AIA's Young Architects Forum, Lee also launched a Practice Innovation Lab in 2018, seeking to spark new ideas in firm organization.

Newer, smaller firms inevitably are at the forefront of nimble, future-oriented models for architectural practice, but may lack certain institutional knowledge and resources. According to the 2020 AIA Firm Survey report, 60% of its 19,000 member firms have five or fewer employees. Some chapters are intrinsically attentive to firms of this scale; others may not be. Matt Bremer, the 2023 president of AIA New York, launched the Small Firms, Big City initiative during his tenure in an effort to redress an absence of services to small firms. "Every large firm in the country has a significant office in New York, and therefore in AIANY, and while there is a lot of small firm representation, I found there really wasn't enough," he says.

"Medium-sized and large-sized firms are much more apt to harbor a lot of their intellectual and trade secrets," Bremer explains, "whereas smaller firms are always trying to figure these things out." His aim was simply to open up channels of communication for these smaller firms, creating an "open-sourced network hub for small firms to share ideas." Much of this information is extremely practical, touching on staffing, human resources, or payroll needs. Bremer, the founder of Architecture in Formation, notes he shares a bookkeeper with an interior design firm. There are also vital collaborative, creative possibilities in linking smaller offices.

WIP: Work in Progress | Women in Practice is one such example: a collaborative effort that enables participants to pursue larger projects that interest them when they have time on hand. Elsa Ponce, who heads her own design and architecture studio, helped launch WIP in 2020 with an inaugural streetscape project, Restorative Ground, in Hudson Square. Ponce, along with several other female design professionals, founded WIP with the goal of avoiding firm hierarchy, as an effort, she says, to "move away from the typically male, single-author, or single-genius creator model." WIP, she explains, is "horizontal—we are not a hierarchy, which is different from many architectural practices today." Involvement of the principals varies project by project, with two leads for each, and shifts depending on available time or interest.

Soft Fits in Toronto by WIP Collaborative (Sera Ghadaki, Abby Coover, Lindsay Harkema, Elsa Ponce) is a playful outdoor lounge, designed with teenagers in mind.

Photos: WIP Collaborative

Projects undertaken are also rooted in genuine interest, more than a need to keep a ledger balanced. "We are very inspired by the grassroots non-profit ethos of mutual action we observe while working with our clients," says Ponce. "They are more than clients; they are partners."

Verda Alexander, co-founder of the design company Studio O+A, and Maya Bird-Murphy, founder and executive director of Mobile Makers Chicago, founded the initiative **Alternative Practice** as an effort to document and disseminate models of different modes of practice. Their stated goal is the "collection of portraits that aims to detail how design professionals are reimagining practice itself to better address the inherent failures of our social, political, and environmental systems. Only by providing alternative paths to practice can these systems be re-designed." (They feature WIP in their list.)

The question of how firms might operate in a manner that isn't purely reactive—choosing only from clients that come along—has attracted increasing attention from an assortment of quarters. The podcast "I Would Prefer Not To," conceived and produced by MIT's Critical Broadcasting Lab and presented in collaboration with The Architectural League, shines a spotlight on architects' power to turn down work.

Along those lines, Alessandro Orsini, co-founder of **Architensions**, a hybrid building and research practice, and assistant professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation, organized a conference at the university in November 2023 called Rethinking Practice: Climate, Equity, Labor, seeking to "prompt models that allow architects to reclaim agency over the design processes, ethics, and the condition of labor under which architecture operates."

Orsini's prime concerns surround the "financial and political entanglement of the profession" from networks of material sourcing, systems of finance, labor and equity issues, and climate. He cited collaborative housing projects as a means to avoid

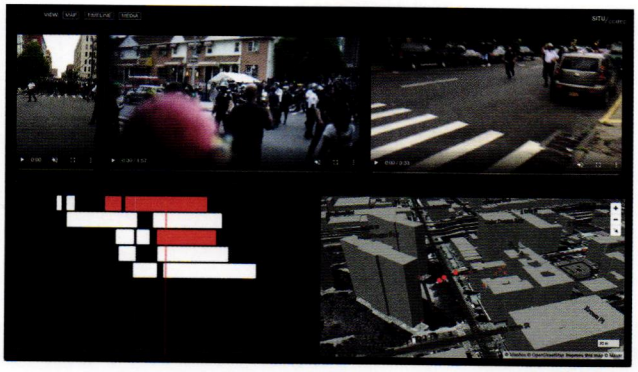
Architensions is working with local non-profits and community members in the small, Southern Italian town of San Ferdinando to engage community members in reimagining their public spaces.

This page: Courtesy Architensions; Facing, top: Courtesy Situ Research; Facing, right: Steve Kroodsma

typical channels of financing and a variety of smaller undertakings that "form new connections among workers, architects, clients, and the built environment." These are obviously harder to finance than projects for which a client turns up with a budget and may require a certain lean scale. Orsini noted that conference attendees concluded that an office might do best to remain small if it was to remain fixated on values. "Everybody acknowledged the fact that after a certain number of people, you're just feeding the office—you feel responsible for workers," he says.

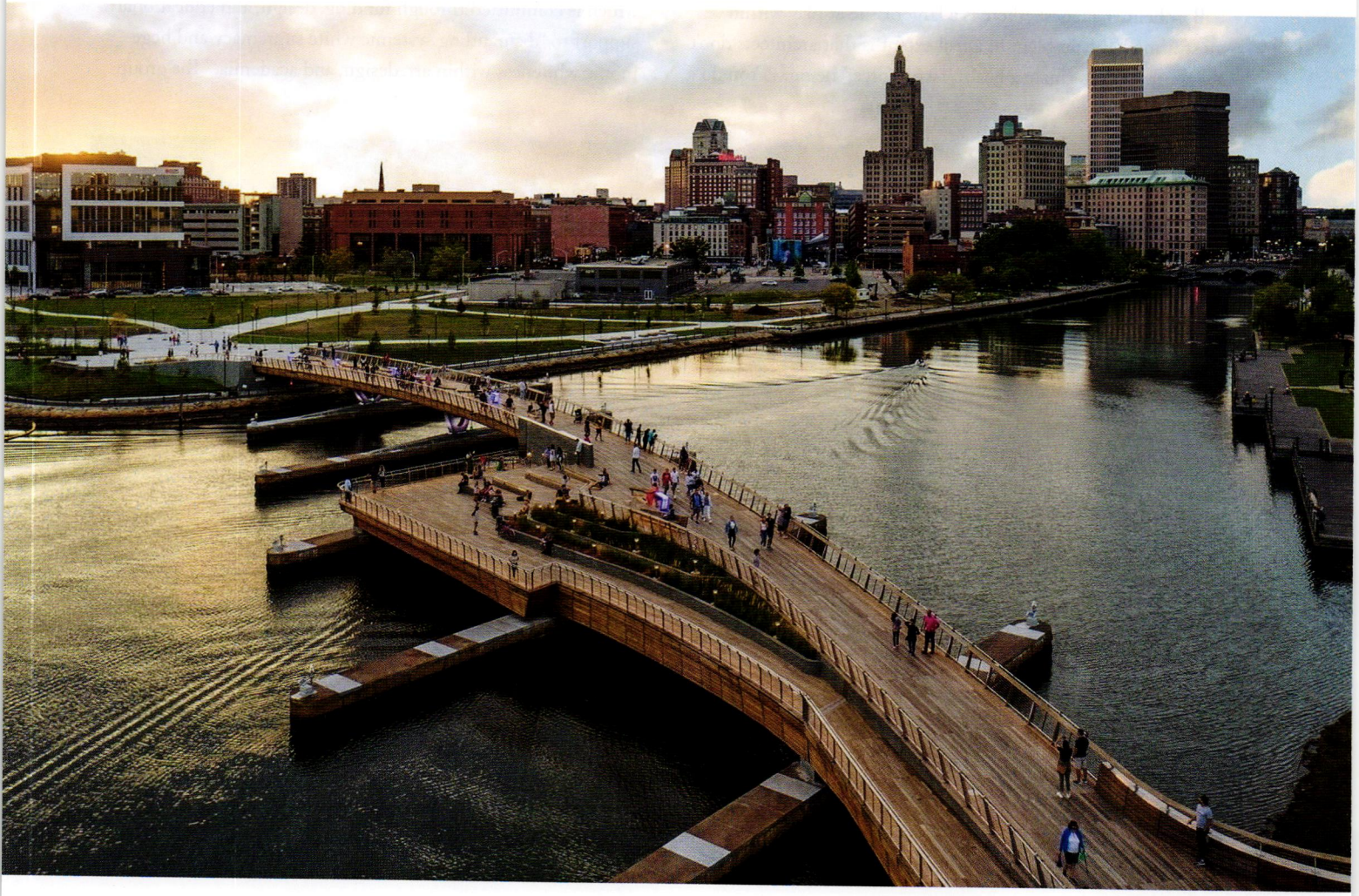
One obvious tweak in practice has been nascent unionization efforts. There are now two unionized firms in the U.S., both located in New York City: Bernheimer, which began contract negotiations in 2022, and Sage and Coombe, which did so in 2023. A few other unionization votes have failed in recent years.

Chris Beck, AIA, who helped organize the union at Bernheimer, notes that "the biggest change in the office is not what we care about, but *how* we go about addressing and implementing the things we care about. In this sense, the office has become much more democratic. Everyone at our office would say we have increased transparency around decision making, and people feel they have more buy-in."



Above: Codec, a collaborative tool for managing video evidence, from Situ Research. Below: For Rhode Island's Providence River Bridge, designed by INFORM Studio, Situ Fabrication worked closely with the designers to bring their concept to life, refining the project's sinuous new cladding system and custom structural connections.

Andrew Bernheimer, FAIA, his firm's founder, believes most elements of practice have not altered. He did explain some inaugural difficulty: There was no architectural union text to copy ("we couldn't use the firefighters' contract!" he says). Bernheimer's contract negotiations involved automatic cost-of-living salary



"Close to the Edge: The Birth of Hip-Hop Architecture," Sekou Cooke's exhibition at the Center for Architecture, in October 2018.

increases and more time off. These have not been, to his mind, a notable burden. "What I found was that these costs might lead to a defensible and acceptable change to our project fees," he says. "We're good at our job, so the client shouldn't mind if we charge a little more if we're still within the market rate."

Bernheimer suggests there is a larger issue at play within most firms. "The problem to a real extent is that architects don't charge enough to create a healthy workforce," he says. "You do a project that should take seven weeks in five weeks, therefore you have labor working unhealthy hours all the time." Noting that plenty of projects have union labor requirements for construction employees, he asks, "Why not architects?"

In other corners, the rigid definitions of what a practice should and should not do are loosening and broadening. Brooklyn's **SITU Studio** is an unusual example of a fabrication studio that grew into an architectural firm. Michael Brotherton, a partner there, says that "about five years ago, we reached a point where we realized we're a design practice," which is how the firm now styles itself. The team members are happy to embrace a diverse identity spanning building fabrication and research, and are pleased with cross-fertilization between these elements.

Another high-profile practitioner who trespasses traditional boundaries, Jamaican-born architect **Sekou Cooke** has become known for his Hip-Hop Architecture efforts, including a book and a children's camp, which seeks to act "as a catalyst to introduce underrepresented youth to architecture, urban planning, and design." Projects by Cooke's eponymous Syracuse-based studio freely span building, exhibitions, writing, and more. He is also a founding member of the Black Reconstruction Collective, which is committed through funding, design, and educational support to "dismantling systemic white supremacy and hegemonic whiteness within art, design, and academia." The group

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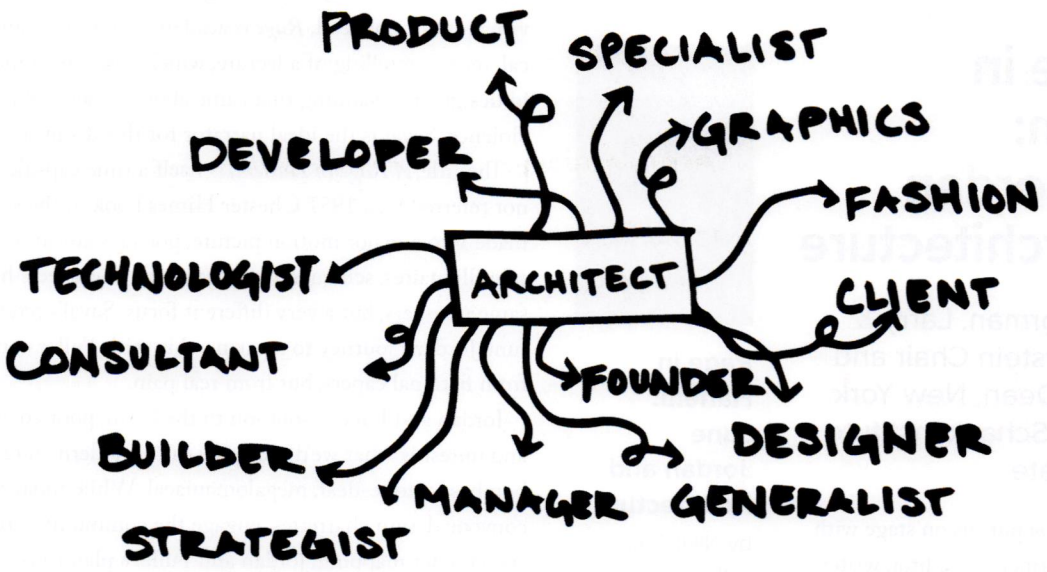
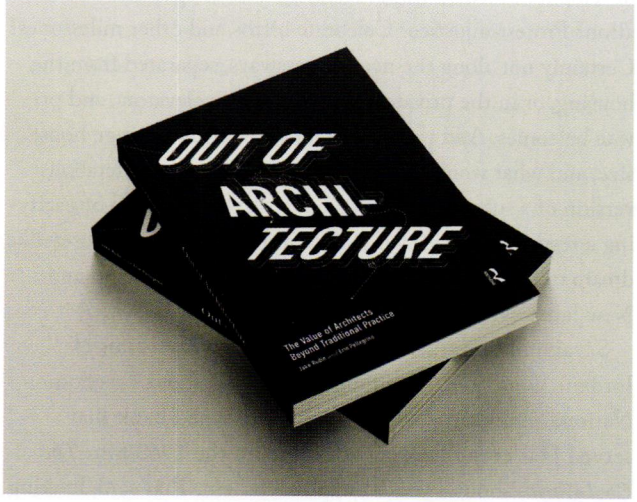


Out of Architecture founders Jake Rudin and Erin Pellegrino's 2022 book is both a call to reassess the architecture profession and its education, and a toolkit for graduates and working architects to untangle their skills, passions, and value from traditional architectural practice and consider alternate pathways.

most recently awarded its $10,000 annual prize to writer and activist Zoé Samudzi and to the interdisciplinary art practice Black Quantum Futurism, with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

With increasing cross-disciplinary collaboration happening at every level of architectural practice, the AIA has already opened its gates beyond accredited architects in offering Allied Memberships. "These professionals, such as engineers, builders, and city planners, are vital in our collective effort to solve problems through design," said Kevin Watkins, AIA's chief membership officer. They "help promote a more holistic and inclusive vision for the future of our industry."



Courtesy Out of Architecture

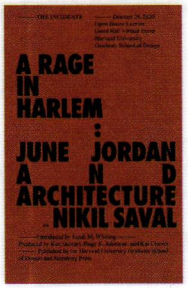
Conversely, the applicability of architectural education to a variety of other fields has become more valued. SITU's research arm has been active in a wide variety of forensic research. Forensics Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London, is a prominent research agency that has been turning architectural expertise to a variety of conflict, crisis, and disaster circumstances since 2010. And, in early 2024, *The New York Times* hired a graphics/multimedia editor with 3D-modeling experience.

There is also a growing sense that the practice of architecture need not entail work in a licensed firm. Harvard-educated designers Erin Pellegrino and Jake Rudin founded the career consulting firm **Out of Architecture** in 2018 in an effort to help guide others who have left the field or want to find meaningful careers in adjacent fields. "I think there's a huge identity crisis that is attached to becoming an architect," says Pellegrino. "The mindset is that the pathway of architecture is singular and linear, a traditional firm practice. We're not told that with your degree you can do all these other things." Rudin adds: "These alternative careers are multifarious, including tech startups in the architectural space, industrial design, furniture design, narrative design, video game design, workplace design, retail design, 3D modeling, and much more. Architects are incredible expert generalists—they can do almost anything." ■

Lit Review

A Rage in Harlem: June Jordan and Architecture

By Marc Norman, Larry & Klara Silverstein Chair and Associate Dean, New York University, Schack Institute of Real Estate



Rage in Harlem: June Jordan and Architecture
by Nikil Saval, with introduction by Sarah M. Whiting; produced by Ken Stewart, Paige K. Johnston, and Kat Chavez
Co-published by the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and Sternberg Press, 2024, 112pp.

A Rage in Harlem puts us on stage with Nikil Saval—former n+1 editor, writer, progressive activist, and then-candidate for Pennsylvania State Senate—and Sara Whiting, dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD). We are transported to deep COVID time, distanced and on Zoom. George Floyd's murder is fresh, masks and anxiety are everywhere, and the 2020 election is weeks away. Saval's talk on October 29, 2020—part of a virtual event series at the GSD—and the ensuing book tell the story of Black feminist writer June Jordan and her unlikely collaboration with R. Buckminster Fuller on a project called Skyrise for Harlem, a futuristic vision born from the aftermath of the 1964 Harlem riot.

While I at first found the book overly didactic in setting the stage and starting with a transcript of the 2020 talk, this introduction is fitting for what comes next: Saval's take on June Jordan's response to the killing of James Powell, an unarmed Black 15-year-old, who was shot by off-duty police officer Thomas Gilligan in front of Powell's friends and several other witnesses. Hundreds of students from Powell's school, and eventually an estimated 4,000 others, participated in violent demonstrations from July 16 to 22 of that year. As Mark Twain famously said, "History never repeats itself, but it does often rhyme."

I'd never thought of the concept of nested time capsules before, but about halfway through the book, I couldn't get the visual out of my head. *Rage* is academic, reflective, and rhetorical, more a retelling of a lecture, which describes a moment in design and planning that came about because of a story of violence. Saval is the ideal narrator for this disquisition.

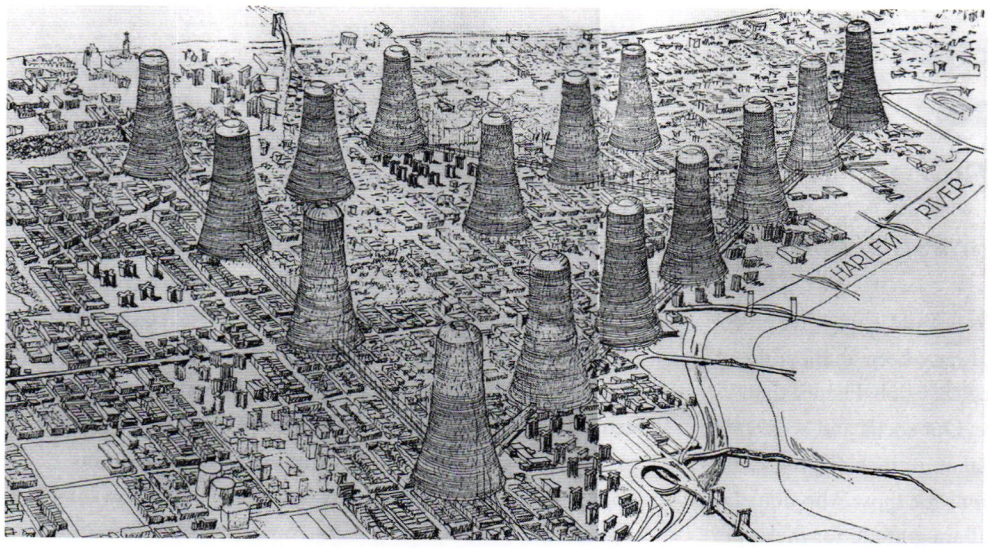
The title, *A Rage in Harlem*, is itself a time capsule. Though not referred to, a 1957 Chester Himes book of the same name, made into a major motion picture, portrays an earlier Harlem of millionaires, schemers, and dreamers. The streets have the same numbers, but a very different focus. Saval's retelling of June Jordan's journey to a partnership with Fuller comes not from fictional capers, but from real pain.

Jordan and Fuller's solution to the harm, poor conditions, and unrest is what we'd presently call a modernist, retro future: bombastic, tone-deaf, megalomaniacal. While today we'd convene design charrettes, engage the community, and conduct stakeholder mapping, Jordan and Fuller's plan runs highways through most of Black and Spanish Harlem, obliterates the grid, and puts everyone in what would appear to be nuclear cooling towers. This is the fix. The information is disseminated not at any of Harlem's many churches or public housing complexes, but in the pages of *Esquire* magazine. Neither Jordan nor Fuller grew up, lived, or worked in Harlem.

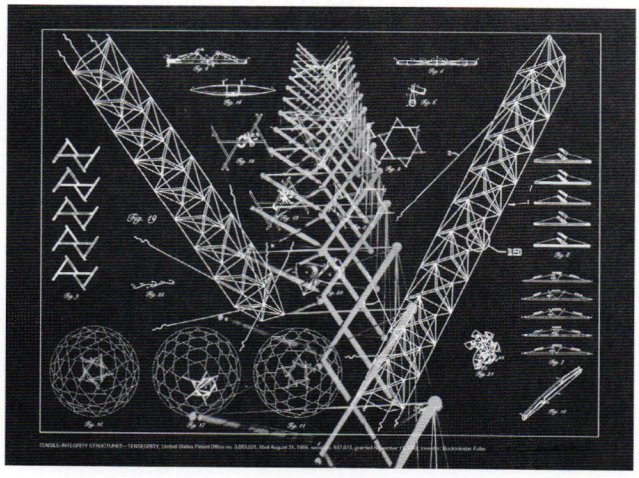
The book made me reflect during a lazy afternoon party at a friend's apartment in Lenox Terrace. From his balcony, my friend gave a mini tour and history lesson on his corner of Harlem, pointing out sites that were historic, tragic, joyful, and chaotic. He noted a mix of drug corners, venerable YMCAs, regal churches, and ballrooms, where songs, debates, and gunfire had rung out before and after the events that Skyrise sought to solve. The vista from this one vantage point alone put on vivid display the complexity that is and has been Harlem.

In reading *Rage* and contemplating even a speculative project, I was struck by the lack of context at the time of Jordan and Fuller's collaboration—and also in Saval's text. Amid this development, where would residents deliver speeches on liberation? Protest injustice? Celebrate births and other milestones? Certainly not along the new expressways, separated from the housing, or in the private car parks, private elevators, and private balconies. Add to this the doubling of the average house size, and what would seem to come into view is a Metabolist version of a suburban subdivision, with the intention of pacifying a restless populace while also fulfilling a Robert Moses-like dream of getting commuters between Long and Island and New Jersey without friction.

Saval understands this disconnect and reminds us of Jordan's bona fides, including her writing about Freedom National Bank, an African American-owned bank that served Harlem's Black community, and the 1963 film *The Cool World*, about a youth gang in Harlem. That said, looking



Images from the book including R. Buckminster Fuller's drawings of his and Jordan's housing scheme for Harlem.



back from today's current polarization, looming election cycle, racial animus, and Black Lives Matter backlash, it seems an oversight not to ponder what Jordan and Fuller's speculation might have wrought—particularly with the return, during the pandemic, of the doom-loop narratives. The plan put forth by Jordan and Fuller would make even the most hardened anti-urbanist or white supremacist blush. It is surprising, then, that Jordan and Fuller get a pass from Saval on their wholesale destruction of neighborhoods without consent. Interestingly, Saval, Whiting, and the audience that night cast their aspersions not toward Moses, Fuller, or Corbusier, but—you guessed it—toward Jane Jacobs.

With this turn, coming toward the end of the question-and-answer portion and also transcribed, is another untested layer: the academy's continuing worship of modernism and its current mood, which sorts out heroes and villains. What is interesting is what is unspoken or, as this is a transcript, unwritten: the fact that current practice in planning—and Saval's own ethos—leans toward the vogue for community land trusts, and empowerment and agency for the underrepresented. The contrasts with the process and results of Jordan's collaboration could not be further from best practices, but seem to be lauded and unquestioned nevertheless.

The book left me wondering about its intent. Is the point that Jordan's works get put in the canon with those of the big boys, despite the outcome being anathema to democratic, humane city-making? Or is it that a wider range of people, even poets, gave up on cities and felt that destruction was the only salvation? A benefit of Saval's work is that, in the end, Skyrise for Harlem seems like a frame around which the personalities, politics, and policies of the era can expand our understanding of how cities are dreamt of, made, and reshaped. What is clear is that bad planning didn't get in the way of good storytelling. ■

Note to the authors: Jordan lived in Queens, not Brooklyn. Also, the book implies that Esquire *editors decided not to credit Jordan for the design, but this conflicts with a 2020* New Yorker *article stating that Jordan herself omitted her own role in the process in the* Esquire *piece, and emphasized Fuller's.*

Editor's Note: A Rage in Harlem: June Jordan and Architecture *is the 10th title in The Incidents, a book series based on events at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Designed by ELLA.*

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Thinking about Utopias and Wakanda with references: https://www.architecturaldigest.com/video/watch/the-blueprint-show-expert-breaks-down-wakandas-architecture-in-black-panther

The Estate of R. Buckminster Fuller

Building Resilience Against Extreme Weather Events

BY **RANDY FERNANDO**, ASSOC. AIA

As a Sri-Lankan American who is both teaching and practicing in the field of architecture, I have been abundantly exposed to how the profession neglects global issues that we have the capacity to help solve. Our social and economic infrastructure and educational system in the U.S. provide us the ability to help facilitate solutions for those who don't have access to the same tools we have. I am grateful for the opportunity to have made it far enough to actually enter the field: In 2020, approximately 22% of architects in the United States identified as a racial or ethnic minority, according to data from NCARB's Record holders. Practicing architecture is a privilege that most minorities don't enjoy because of the constant uphill battle, but I always wonder how we can do more.

Take Sri Lanka as an example: There, climate change is a daily reality, and its effects are felt deeply and devastatingly. In recent years, the island nation has witnessed an alarming increase in the frequency and severity of floods and droughts. These natural disasters have left a trail of destruction, affecting millions. Communities are uprooted, agricultural lands are inundated, and critical infrastructures like roads and schools are devastated. This repetitive cycle of flooding creates a perpetual state of instability, undermining the country's efforts to address hunger and economic challenges. Known for its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, Sri Lanka now faces a crisis that poses not only environmental challenges, but also exacerbates hunger, economic instability, and political turmoil.

The Potential of Architecture

In the face of this escalating crisis, architecture and urban planning emerge as powerful tools. The right architectural strategies can significantly mitigate the impacts of flooding. Concepts like building on stilts, using flood-resistant materials, and designing flexible public spaces that can withstand water surges not only ensure safety, but also preserve the continuity of daily life during and after floods.

Though challenges abound, there are glimmers of hope. For instance, some Sri Lankan communities have started adopting elevated houses and community centers, which remain functional even during severe floods. These practical solutions, rooted in traditional knowledge and enhanced by modern technology, demonstrate the potential for architecture to offer tangible relief in crisis situations.

Challenges and Opportunities

Implementing these solutions on a wider scale in Sri Lanka requires overcoming significant hurdles, including limited funding, bureaucratic complexities, and the need for community buy-in. Yet, these challenges also open doors for innovative thinking, international collaboration, and the empowerment of local communities to take charge of their built environment. This situation calls for a collective response from architects, urban planners, policymakers, and, crucially, the communities themselves. There is a pressing need for designs that are not only environmentally resilient, but also culturally sensitive and economically feasible. The architectural community, especially those with ties to these countries in peril, must rise to this challenge, bringing diverse perspectives and innovative solutions to the table.

The crisis in Sri Lanka serves as a stark reminder of the broader implications of climate change and the vital role architecture can play in addressing them. As the world grapples with these unprecedented challenges, the need for resilient, sustainable, and inclusive architectural solutions has never been more urgent. It's time for the global architectural community to come together and turn these challenges into opportunities for building a more resilient future.

Often, the strategies we are able to experiment with, and create prototypes of, in the United States can easily be deployed in countries that are facing urgent situations. I can only hope that our focus can shift from how advanced technology can generate "eye-candy" geometries, as architectural spectacle, to how it can contribute to designs that are adaptable and deployable in various countries dealing with issues of climate change.

The architecture, engineering, and construction industries are responsible for over 40% of global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions. As architects and designers, we speak of how we are acting as climate warriors, yet we continue to build with massive amounts of concrete and steel. The profession agrees that we are meant to be problem-solvers and catalysts of change, so we must put our energy into being aware of the world's most vulnerable communities and working to help them. Effective solutions require collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches. We cannot achieve meaningful progress alone. ■

***Randy Fernando, Assoc. AIA**, is an adjunct instructor in the department of architecture at the University at Buffalo School of Architecture & Planning, a lecturer at Buffalo State University, and creative director of MOV.E, a design research practice focused on collaborative community initiatives. Fernando co-teaches UB's study abroad program in Costa Rica, a nine-week program that concentrates on tangible community service and climate resilience research.*

Why There Should Be City/County/State Architects

BY **ANDREW THOMPSON**, NOMA, AIA, LEED AP BD+C

At this year's AIA Leadership Summit in Washington D.C., President Kimberly Dowdell proposed to those in attendance from around the country that there should be a chief architect working for the government at the local or state level. In New York City, we have the Department of Design and Construction, the School Construction Authority, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. These agencies have teams of architects working on or managing projects, and each agency has a standard of design excellence that is expected for city or state projects.

Why the need for an architect in such a specialized position? Speaking from my experience as the Passaic County Architect in the State of New Jersey, I can attest there are significant benefits. Passaic County comprises 186 square miles, and contains county and administrative buildings, as well as historic and park structures—in short, there is always a job to be done. I work directly with and for the legislative body, in my case the county commissioners and county administrator. Counties incorporate townships, boroughs, and cities within their boundaries. Taxpayers also live within the county boundaries. The architect working directly for local government is, in a way, directly accountable to the taxpayers. Projects may get funded by bonds or grants, but, most of the time, matching funds are supplied indirectly through taxpayer money. The architect is accountable for planning the final design, managing the project, and ultimately ensuring there is a good outcome.

An architect working directly for the local or state government cannot do it all, however, due to the scope and magnitude of certain projects. We create our own Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for consulting services from other architects, engineers, and associated disciplines. We develop partnerships with consulting architects and work together on the design concept, programming, the public bidding process, construction administration, and close-out.

It can be hard for architects, even those from a large firm, to get a public agency to provide answers during the design or construction process, because they are viewed as a private entity. State, county, and city architects have more leverage with agencies because their client base—the taxpayers—is so extensive. When public utility companies or public agencies need to provide answers or complete important parts of a construction project, we can move that process along. If more architects worked directly for local government throughout the nation, both parties would better understand what needs to be done to move important civic projects forward efficiently. There would also be a greater understanding of when and where there are public agency staffing shortages, which can slow down the process in getting approvals and permits. Staffing availability can be worked into project schedules and, in a reciprocal nature, help save money for the project and the government entity.

It is understandable that architects want private work and associated fees to keep their firms growing and successful. They may want their projects featured in a magazine article—and win some design awards to boot. Architects employed in the public sector may not experience the spotlight, but they do have the satisfaction of knowing that when a project is done, it has been done right under their guidance. Moreover, architects working directly for local and state governments typically enjoy job and compensation security—though the political climate can impact job security. While an economic recession affects the private sector, an architect working directly for the public sector can be impacted if the political wind shifts legislators in power from one party to the next. Indeed, a state, county, or local architect can be at the mercy of the agenda of the new party in control. San Francisco has gotten it right by incorporating the position of city architect into the laws of the city. In addition, its city architect is also the deputy director of Public Works for Building Design and Construction.

If more architects worked directly for local government throughout the nation, both parties would better understand what needs to be done to move important civic projects forward efficiently.

Architects play a crucial role in designing buildings that serve the public. Working with local or state governments can be tough at times; bureaucracy affects everything, including budgets and the payment of invoices. The city, county, or state architect is the bridge to making our profession accountable to the public. ■

Andrew Thompson, NOMA, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, *is the Passaic County Architect in New Jersey, with projects ranging from historic preservation to building renovation. He has worked in the public sector with organizations including the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the City University of New York. Awarded AIA New Jersey Architect of the Year for 2021, Thompson is a member of the NOMA Council and the current president-elect for AIA New Jersey.*

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Call for Fall 2024 Op-Eds: Living in the City

For as many alluring and practical reasons there are to live in New York City, there are just as many (or more) aspects of city life that are difficult, imbalanced, or inequitable.

This issue of *Oculus* will focus on the ways in which architects are working to make the city a more livable place for citizens of all types—including themselves. In this issue, the editors encourage op-ed submissions that address aspects of improving life in the city through design. How can the profession work to mitigate the effects of disasters, adapt existing buildings to meet the housing crisis, and solve urban issues underlying some of the city's structural inequities or failures of infrastructure?

Please submit op-eds of approximately 800 words to editor@aiany.org by August 15.

Two Missions, One Shared Vision

BY **JESSE LAZAR**, ASSOC. AIA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AIANY/CENTER FOR ARCHITECTURE

Later this year, the AIA New York Chapter Board of Directors and the Center for Architecture Board of Trustees will officially roll out a new, joint strategic plan, charting the course of the next three to five years of our two institutions' shared future.

The strategic plan is a map for our board leaders, staff, partners, donors, constituents, and, most importantly, our members that reveals where we are going, what our key goals are, and how we'll achieve them together. That said, the dislocations of 2020 and the years following showed many organizations just how flexible they need to be. For this reason, we have taken care to emphasize the core values that animate our plans, rather than just focus on to-do lists, which will change and adapt as the city—and the world—presents our community with new and surprising challenges and opportunities. Still, we have plenty of to-dos!

One key insight that is driving our plan is the unique reciprocal model of the AIANY and Center for Architecture partnership. Although these organizations are distinct, the interaction between them makes them both more powerful. The shared vision? Together, we advance the value and practice of architecture to promote just and sustainable communities. The communities to which we refer range from our members, to the architecture and allied professional communities more broadly, and to all New Yorkers who live and work in designed environments.

Together, we advance the value and practice of architecture to promote just and sustainable communities.

Growing from this shared vision, the two organizations have their own complementary and mutually reinforcing missions:

The Center for Architecture engages local and international audiences with the value, impact, and wonder of architecture. We achieve this through exhibitions, educational experiences for students and families, public programs, and, increasingly, direct outreach and engagement with communities and constituencies around the city.

AIA New York cultivates an open, adept, and future-forward architectural community. We empower members to work at the apex of their abilities through critical exchange, access to professional resources, and advocacy on issues that advance positive change. As the Center reaches out to the public, we want the AIANY to marshal its energy to help make our members more influential and successful.

What changes might we expect in the coming years? At the Center, members can look forward to continued programmatic excellence, deeply researched exhibitions, vibrant public advocacy work, and expanded K–12 education offerings. The vision we are laying out is also reliant on our commitment to creating new partnerships with other communities, including the AIA chapters in Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island; our peer design organizations; and newer voices and groups, as we cultivate an environment of mutual learning and exchange.

AIANY has always been a membership organization that promotes practice, but now we understand that we have to become a listening and learning organization, too. By going deeper on partnerships and collaborations, and by embracing our integrated work with the Center, we can evolve to meet the needs and help realize the aspirations of a dynamic and changing professional community. We look forward to sharing the plan with you this fall!

Samuel Lahoz

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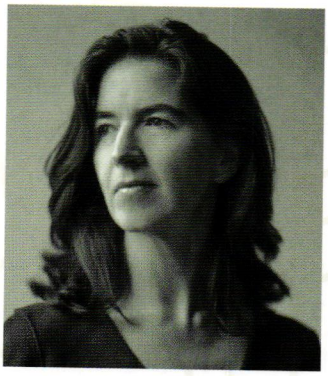
Architectural Record Announces Featured Speakers for Innovation Conference 2024

Architectural Record's **Innovation Conference** returns to New York City's Museum of Jewish Heritage on October 1st. Coinciding with the start of Archtober—the city's annual, month-long celebration of architecture—the conference provides a unique opportunity to engage with thought leaders, earn CEUs, and explore the latest advancements in building. New this year, the Women in Architecture Awards will co-locate with the Innovation Conference. This celebration of women's design leadership and a cocktail reception will follow the conference.



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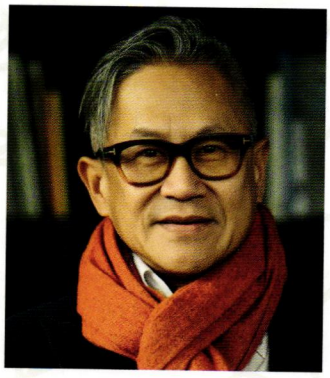

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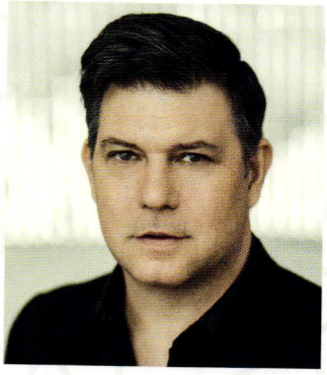

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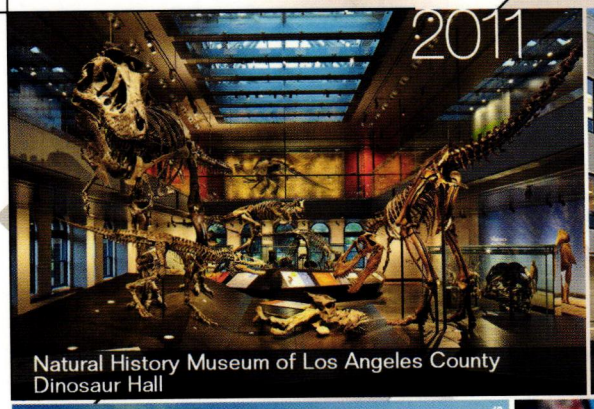

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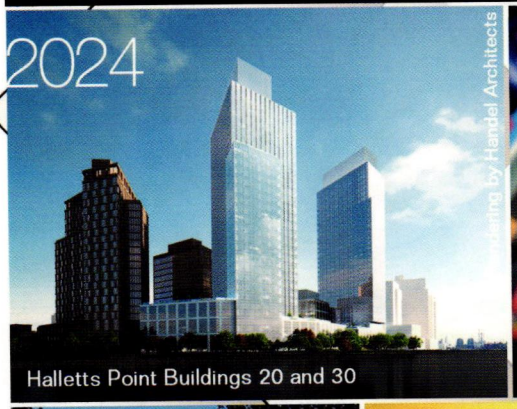

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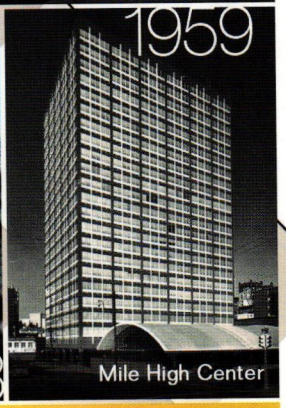

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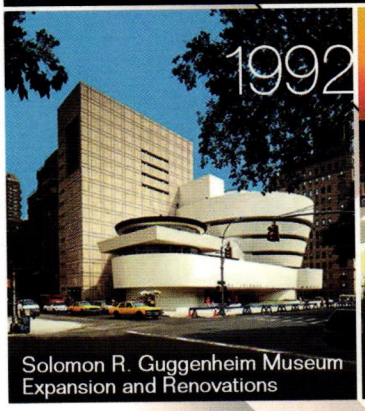

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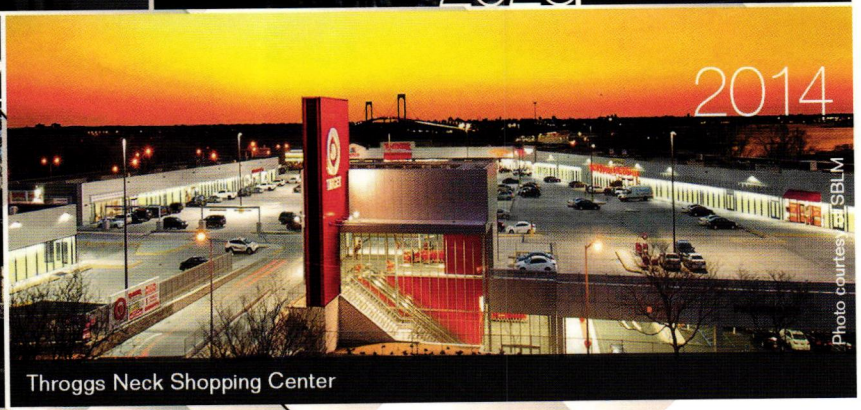

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