

# The Architect's Newspaper

April 2021

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Talking to the designers of the U.S. pavilion for the 2021 Venice Biennale [page 8](#)

Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal win the Pritzker [page 10](#)

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## ARCHITECTURE'S COLONIAL RECKONING

IN RECENT YEARS, CALLS TO “DECOLONIZE” ARCHITECTURE HAVE GAINED SUPPORT AMONG PRACTITIONERS AND ACADEMICS. BUT WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICAL TERMS IS AN OPEN QUESTION.

[Read on page 23.](#)

## SEVEN-GENERATION THINKING

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' TRADITIONS IN NORTH AMERICA EMPHASIZE FAITHFULNESS TO MATERIALS AND LONG-RANGE RESILIENCE. ENGINEERED TIMBER PRODUCTS, HARVESTED SUSTAINABLY, ARE HELPING PUT THOSE PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE. [Read on page 21.](#)



COURTESY TWO ROW ARCHITECT

## Studio Visit with Fala Atelier

Fala Atelier's collages precede them. The studio's founders explain the architectural concept that give meaning to the images.



FALA ATELIER



RICARDO LOUREIRO

You probably think you have Fala Atelier's number; whether you do or don't doesn't really matter to founders Ahmed Belkhodja, Filipe Magalhães, and Ana Luisa Soares. Since establishing the Porto, Portugal, design studio in 2013, the trio has cultivated a house style that could be described as methodical or precious. Methodical because the several dozen or so projects found on Fala's website—the exact count is hard to pin down, owing to an insistence on a numerical filing system whose purpose seems to have once been inflationary—

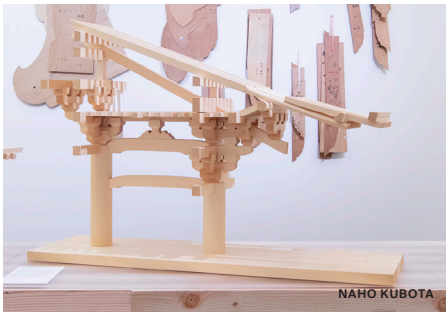
draw from the same well of signifiers: a millennial color palette, rounded mirrors, marble flooring (or a convincing substitute), marble veneer (or a convincing substitute), soothing geometries, lilt-ing sections, one-point perspectives, rooms the size of hallways, hallways the size of rooms. And precious, well, for all the reasons just elaborated.

But there's no getting around the fact that even before they cracked their 30s, Belkhodja, Magalhães, and Soares had already built extensively, if mostly within Porto. If this counts as precious, then younger [continued on page 18](#)

## Review: *When Practice Becomes Form: Carpentry Tools from Japan*

Japan Society | New York City | March 11 through July 11

Lumber harvested from the north side of a mountain should be used for the north side of a structure, and wood from trees on different mountains should never be used together, counsels Tsunekazu Nishioka in a treatise on temple construction passed down orally over many generations. Nishioka was a renowned *Tōryō*, or master carpenter, who restored many of Japan's most significant monuments in the 20th century, including the Hōryū-ji Temple, the world's oldest [continued on page 35](#)



NAHO KUBOTA



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# Things Are Opening, but Are They Happening?

At the end of March, news broke that New York State would open COVID-19 vaccinations to those over 30 years of age, an optimistic sign that herd immunity might be reached sooner than had been estimated. This was accompanied by an uptick in state cases. In truth, the rise was nationwide and, in the words of CDC director Dr. Rochelle Walensky, a sign of “impending doom” (a lugubrious phrase that journalists immediately seized on). Walensky urged prolonging caution, but as cities and states reopen everywhere around the country, it does not appear that many will heed her call.

Mid-March marked a year since the pandemic infiltrated and scrambled our domestic and working lives. For many architects (or those lucky enough to retain steady employment), the adjustment to remote work has been more or less seamless, almost suspiciously so. It’s meant countless hours spent in Zoom rooms, Google Hangouts, and Team meetings, when they were not picking up CEU credits tuning in to webinars and conferences. Productivity has held up—longer hours seem to be the trade-off one accepts when working from one’s bed—even when billings have gone down. (The AIA’s latest Architecture Billings Index reported its first positive figures since February 2020.)

Architectural culture, meanwhile, has been on an unbroken hiatus. Deprived of in-person openings and events, architects, curators, editors, and journalists have had to make do with the virtual echo chamber of Twitter, from which, surely, nothing good can come. The twice-postponed Venice Architecture Biennale looms large, but a third wave of COVID-19 cases in Western Europe imperils its chances at rebooting the global architecture scene. A preview of the U.S. Pavilion exhibition *American Framing* (page 8) details in words what can’t yet be captured in photos—at the time of writing, construction had stalled on the project’s centerpiece, a towering wood-frame portal that will presumably welcome visitors to the exhibitions within.

Within the press, writers and critics have been compelled to cover buildings sight unseen, by no means a new practice—a function of a hollowed-out media apparatus—but one that will likely seal criticism’s fate for good. That doesn’t rule out thoughtful appraisals of new projects; see, for instance, Emily Pugh’s take on Berlin’s long-delayed Humboldt Forum (page 14), which opened in December 2020 to a muted response.

Pugh, who works at the Getty, is a scholar of modernist postwar architecture on both sides of the Berlin Wall and brings a knowledge of the site on which the Forum sits that simply cannot be gleaned from press releases and wire news snippets.

Of course, places continue to open and reopen, even if *things* don’t quite seem to be happening. On the former point, see our revived Open column (page 6), which went dark last year following universally mandated lockdowns, or Henry Ng’s review of the Japan Society’s in-person exhibition about that nation’s carpentry traditions (page 37). On the latter point, read critic Kate Wagner’s plaint (page 38) about feeling antsy with nowhere to go or be. If architecture developed a political consciousness during the Trump years, it was the consequence of concerted actions on the part of designers, she argues. The project to politicize architecture has stalled in the wake of Biden’s inauguration, and Wagner hopes it’s not the end of what feels, or felt, like a very promising development.

The contents of this issue are loosely “international” in focus, as this month’s Studio Visit, with the young Portuguese architectural practice Fala Atelier (page 18) and a report on Brexit’s implications for practice (page 9) attest. Two features, however, pull back from the national framework both to reckon with the legacy of colonialism in North America and to recover Indigenous building practices lost to the processes of enclosure, disinvestment, de-skilling, and modernization. Writer Marianela D’Aprile examines the slogan “Decolonize architecture” (page 23) to sort through the fundamental social changes necessary to bring that about, while journalist Bill Millard looks to the ways Indigenous architects in Canada have taken up mass timber for their own ends (page 21).

The latter piece grew out of *AN*’s massively popular TimberCon event series, the first installment of which occurred in mid-March. Hundreds of AEC professionals huddled in a virtual portal to hear from timber leaders, including Alan Organschi, of Gray Organschi, and Lucas Epp, of the manufacturer Structurecraft. But it was a panel involving Brian Porter (Two Row Architect), Harriet Burdett-Moulton (formerly of Stantec), and Eladia Smoke (Smoke Architecture) that proved to be the highlight. We hope to continue the thread, and others like it, in the series’ next iteration in late October. Stay tuned.

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## Corrections

In the February/March 2021 issue, the article on the Center for Health & Wellbeing, designed by Duda Paine Architects, on page 28 stated that Florida Hospital was a partner on that project. However, Florida Hospital rebranded in 2019 and is now known as AdventHealth.

The same issue featured PD97 hardware by INOX on page 30 but listed the company’s website as inoxlock.com. It should have been inoxproducts.com.



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# 4 In Case You Missed It...

We corralled the top architecture and design stories buzzing about the internet.

**Resolution reached to save *Marabar* at National Geographic Society's headquarters**

The Cultural Landscape Foundation announced that a resolution had been reached to save *Marabar*, the 1984 site-specific installation by New York-based sculptor Elyn Zimmerman at the National Geographic Society's Washington, D.C., headquarters. The artwork is the focal point of the David Childs-designed modernist plaza.

**Architect of the Capitol details millions in damage to the "People's House"**

J. Brett Blanton, the current Architect of the Capitol, told members of the House Committee on Appropriations that repair and restoration costs for the U.S. Capitol complex after the mob incursion on January 6 have reached \$30 million and will likely climb if related security measures are extended.

**West 8 and DTAH reveal a spiffy Toronto waterfront revitalization**

The public agency that stewards Toronto's waterfront has tapped West 8 and local firm DTAH to transform a slice of formerly industrial shoreline previously part of Sidewalk Labs' Quayside smart neighborhood. When it opens, Parliament Slip will offer the chance to swim in a timber-decked pool complex, launch kayaks and canoes, and dine at a floating restaurant.

**Library Street Collective unveils new Snarkitecture-designed gallery in downtown Detroit**

Contemporary art gallery Library Street Collective has shared the first look at its newly completed, Snarkitecture-designed home in the historic L. B. King and Company Building in downtown Detroit. The gallery will be located off a lively alleyway known as the Belt.

**With federal aid secure, cities across the U.S. avoid public transit cuts**

The \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package, which was passed on March 11, set aside \$30.5 billion to help struggling public transit agencies remain above water. After a year of warnings about catastrophic cuts to transportation budgets, that is vital news.

**The Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building will reopen with blockbuster *FUTURES* show**

The Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building opened in 1881 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., as the first U.S. National Museum and introduced now-quintessential technologies to the public. The building will reopen for the Smithsonian's 175th anniversary with a survey of the future designed by Rockwell Group later this year.

**San Francisco International Airport's \$1 billion Terminal 3 expansion shelved indefinitely**

Though San Francisco International Airport has not pulled the plug on its \$1 billion Terminal 3 expansion and renovation, despite enduring a year of uncertainty, the T3 West project has been placed on indefinite hold. Led by Gensler, T3 West was expected to be the third and final renovation phase at the country's seventh busiest airport.

**Aileen Fuchs is the new executive director of National Building Museum**

The National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., announced that Aileen Fuchs has been selected by its board of trustees to lead the museum as its next president and executive director. Fuchs, who currently serves as president and CEO of the Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden in New York City, will assume her new duties May 5.



COURTESY ROCKWELL GROUP

**Los Angeles launches bold new ADU program to combat housing shortage**

The newly launched Accessory Dwelling Unit Standard Plan Program offers homeowners 20 preapproved designs for the increasingly popular typology, which many see as an alternative to costlier mid-rise apartment buildings. Administered by the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, the program is a bid to fast-track permits for these homes.

**Tokyo's iconic Nakano Sun Plaza concert hall and hotel will meet the wrecking ball**

Nakano Sun Plaza, a pyramidal concert venue and hotel tower that is one of the tallest and most idiosyncratic structures in Tokyo's Nakano ward, is set to be demolished and replaced with a 770-foot-tall mixed-use skyscraper. When completed circa 2028, the tower will be the eighth tallest in the city.

**Manhattan's McGraw-Hill Building lobby demolished after Landmarks Preservation Commission declines to intervene**

Preservationists fought to landmark the streamline moderne lobby of the McGraw-Hill Building, a 1931 art deco high-rise at 330 West 42nd Street in Manhattan. However, the lobby, originally designed by Raymond Hood and partially reimaged by Valerian Rybar in the 1980s, has now been almost completely demolished.

**Neri Oxman is building a massive new lab in Manhattan**

A massive life science hub is headed to 787 11th Avenue in Manhattan, an Albert Kahn-designed car showroom converted to offices by Rafael Viñoly Architects. The Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai has leased 165,000 square feet in the building, and designer/inventor Neri Oxman will build a 36,000-square-foot research and design lab there.



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## MoMA PS1 announces first New York retrospective of Niki de Saint Phalle

Feminist sculptor, filmmaker, painter, jewelry designer, and one-off perfumer Niki de Saint Phalle is the subject of a new exhibition at New York's MoMA PS1 in Long Island City, Queens. *Niki de Saint Phalle: Structures for Life* marks the artist's first major retrospective in the city where she spent her childhood and adolescence.

## Colorado's ultra-altitudinous Pikes Peak Summit Visitor Center will open this summer

GWWO Architects and Pikes Peak – America's Mountain have announced that the Pikes Peak Summit Visitor Center in Colorado—the highest-elevation construction project in the U.S. at 14,115 feet—will open following a design and construction period of over five years. The 38,000-square-foot hub will open its sky-high doors in late May or early June.

## Biden quashes Trump's "beautiful" neoclassical architecture executive order

As anticipated, President Joe Biden has revoked the Trump administration's December 21, 2020, Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture executive order, a modernist architecture–lambasting decree mandating that many new federal buildings be designed in the neoclassical style.

## New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission approves Project Commodore, SOM's supertall Midtown tower

New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission approved Project Commodore, a 1,646-foot-tall tower slated to replace the Grand Hyatt hotel in Manhattan's Midtown East at 175 Park Avenue, designed by SOM and developed by RXR Realty and TF Cornerstone.

## Ayers Saint Gross, Populous, CambridgeSeven will design new home for the Preakness Stakes in Baltimore

The state of Maryland selected Baltimore's Ayers Saint Gross to lead a team that will design a new home for the Preakness Stakes in Baltimore. Populous is listed as design architect and "equine specialist," and the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based CambridgeSeven Associates will serve as consultant for a horse racing museum.

## Lina Bo Bardi honored with Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement

Lina Bo Bardi, the late Italian-born Brazilian architect, writer, scenographer, and industrial designer, who tied her expressive modernism to the cultures and traditions of her adopted home, will receive the Special Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in memoriam at this year's Venice Architecture Biennale in May.

## Academy Museum of Motion Pictures announces new opening date and updated details

Cinephiles and Renzo Piano stans won't have to wait much longer to get their fix. The Academy Museum announced a revised opening date of September 30, which it said conforms with CDC safety guidelines during the pandemic.

## Baltimore's iconic Domino Sugars sign goes dark, is replaced with LED facsimile

One of Baltimore's brightest lights has gone dark temporarily. The iconic Domino Sugars sign, a giant orange neon landmark that has loomed over the city's Inner Harbor for seven decades, was turned off March 1 so contractors can replace it with an LED sign that mimics the look of neon.

## At long last, work on Herzog & de Meuron's M+ in Hong Kong is complete

Hong Kong's West Kowloon Cultural District announced that M+, the museum designed by Herzog & de Meuron in partnership with TFP Farrells and Arup, is complete. The nearly 700,000-square-foot facility will provide a permanent home for M+, the first global museum of contemporary visual culture in Asia.

## Diller Scofidio + Renfro's twisting London Centre for Music canceled

After failing to secure enough private funding, the Diller Scofidio + Renfro–designed London Centre for Music, previously planned for where the Museum of London now stands, has been canceled. The City of London has instead chosen to focus on upgrading the nearby Barbican Centre.

# Eavesdrop

## NFT OMG

News about nonfungible tokens (NFTs) has exploded over the past month, and while we at *The Architect's Newspaper* won't try to explain exactly what NFTs are, we can report that they have now become part of architecture. Artist Krista Kim sold Mars House, the first NFT digital house, for the equivalent of over \$500,000 in cryptocurrency last month.

But, as *Dezeen* reported, 3D-modeler Mateo Sanz Pedemonte, who created renderings of the house, is disputing whether he or Kim own full intellectual property rights to the house. Kim rejected Pedemonte's claims and asserted ownership of the copyright on the house. No word yet on what the neighbors think.

# Letters to the Editor

## Reunited and It Feels So Good

Congratulations and thank you on the magnificent article ("Up in the Air") about the restoration of the United States Air Force Academy. Although the building wasn't fully opened until two years after I graduated, memories of the reunion ceremonies held there still bring a lump to my throat. Magnificent architecture—on par

with Europe's best for its ability to inspire.

I had no idea that Ansel Adams and Eero Saarinen were involved in the design of what we [alumni] knew as "the permanent site." I am grateful to have learned more about the process that created my alma mater.

**Jerrod Mason, USAFA Class of '61**

## Twisting the Arm?

While the points Zach Mortice raises about architects being socially responsible are valid, I'm wondering how many architects would lose their practices if they were to only work on socially aware or responsive projects? Having served on a Planning and Zoning Commission for a period—albeit in a suburb of Dallas—I wonder if more effort in the way of changing city planning might not result in more owners being willing to develop projects that meet socially established goals as well? The cost of inhabiting new projects could be kept within the median income level of their respective neighborhoods, hopefully keeping it with-

in easy reach of the people that now live there. However, that might not be attractive to developers, and without them, nothing will happen to the property in question, and they will remain vacant. Still, it's my hope that the pressure applied from a permit and zoning perspective—that is, applied by city planners—could have more of an impact than that any architect ever could have.

**Chuck Kingsley Knickerbocker on "What We Talk About When We Talk About Architecture," written by Zach Mortice and published on archpaper.com on February 12, 2021**

## Not Anyone's CAD Monkeys

I look forward to reading Peggy Deamer's new book, *Architecture and Labor*. She is an exceptional thinker, writer, teacher and architect. As a principal of a 20-person architecture firm in Brooklyn, New York, I am constantly thinking about our collective well-being. But I read Kate Wagner's review of Deamer's book with incredulity, being so full of misconceptions and subjective generalizations, and had to believe they were meant as provocations. I have always believed that the practice of architecture and the construction of buildings are both equally honorable work. It is enormously satisfying to experience simpatico on a job site with a good contractor, in mutual respect and aiming toward a shared goal. But characterizing architecture as "drudgery," and architects not being great thinkers, aesthetes, or devoted to socially redeeming work is simply false, and does a great insult to the work we do in the world. While

it is true the schools don't, and probably can't, prepare students for all that's to come after graduating, there is a significant shift in academia now toward partnerships, internships, and real-world collaborations to help break down that divide.

I would invite Ms. Wagner to my office. My remarkable staff takes enormous pride in their work; they do not consider it drudgery and have genuinely creative roles in supportive and affordable housing projects and other socially redemptive work that we do together for New York's underserved communities. Is that labor? Yes, in the best sense it is.

**Jack Esterson AIA, principal, Think Architecture & Design, on Kate Wagner's review of *Architecture & Labor* (Routledge), published in the January 2021 print issue of *The Architect's Newspaper***



International

Qaumajuq at the Winnipeg Art Gallery



The Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG), the oldest public art gallery in Western Canada, re-opened its doors in late March with a new wing devoted to contemporary Inuit art. Designed by Los Angeles-based firm Michael Maltzan Architecture with local associate firm Cibinel Architecture, the \$55 million addition adds 40,000 square feet to the southern end of the original 120,000-square-foot gallery designed by local architect Gustavo da Roza in 1971.

The scalloped structure, which goes by the name Qaumajuq (meaning “it is bright, it is lit” in Inuktitut, one of the principal Inuit languages of Canada), is home to more than just WAG’s vast collection. Its mix of educational spaces, auditoriums, and artist studios was shaped by extensive consultation with the

Indigenous Advisory Circle, an advisory group of representatives from the four regions of the Inuit Nunangat homeland. But the stand-out feature is the Visible Vault in the center of the entrance hall. The three-story glass vault displays a portion of over 14,000 objects including carvings, prints, textiles, and new media. It bears the honorific Ilavut, or “our relatives” in Inuktitut. **Shane Reiner-Roth**

300 Memorial Boulevard  
Winnipeg, Canada

204-786-6641  
wag.ca/qaumajuq

Southwest

Buddy Holly Hall



As a teenager in the postwar years, Buddy Holly strummed his guitar in Lubbock, Texas, to dreams of becoming a rocker. The music Holly would make several years later—shot through with gospel and blues influences—definitively enshrined him as an icon of American culture. True to Texas style, the new Buddy Holly Hall of Performing Arts and Sciences commemorates its namesake’s immense impact through a giant performance venue—the largest in West Texas.

Designed by Diamond Schmitt Architects with Parkhill and MWM Architects, the new 218,000-square-foot complex offers performance space for the Lubbock Symphony Orchestra and Ballet Lubbock, as well as multi-purpose spaces and an outdoor amphitheater

for exploratory programming opportunities. The project sports sleek facades with glass and GFRC elements arranged in striations that recall the layered rock formations of Texas canyons. The story of the building envelope continues horizontally, arriving at a metal rainscreen feature wall depicting a gigantic Holly, guitar in hand. The wall is made of individual metal “guitar picks” that provide the opportunity for donor names to be etched in down the line. **Katie Angen**

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East

The Frick Madison



The Frick has opened its doors in the former Madison Avenue home of the Met Breuer and the Whitney Museum of American Art. The change of venue isn’t permanent, though. The institution is simply moving its galleries five blocks north while it renovates and significantly expands its palatial headquarters on East 70th Street as part of a long-planned revamp. Selldorf Architects and exhibition designer Stephen Saitas teamed up to plan out the museum’s offshoot.

The stacked concrete Madison Avenue structure, designed by Marcel Breuer in 1966, is obviously a very different environment from the Beaux Arts Frick mansion, which was designed by Thomas Hastings as

a home for Henry Clay Frick, an industrialist and art enthusiast. The Frick’s curators are trying their best to harmonize the collection, which ranges from Old Masters to 19th-century portraiture and landscapes, within a museum designed to display modern and contemporary art. The Frick Madison will remain open through 2023, when the Frick moves back to East 70th Street. **Jonathan Hilburg**

945 Madison Avenue  
New York City

212-288-0700  
frick.org/madison

Midwest

Art Preserve of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center



The Art Preserve, a \$40 million new museum designed by the Denver-based Tres Birds Workshop, will make its public debut this June just outside downtown Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

Serving as a satellite campus for Sheboygan’s John Michael Kohler Arts Center, the 56,000-square-foot, tri-level building contains galleries and visible storage space for the over 25,000 works held in the arts center’s expansive collection, which focuses on vernacular and self-taught artists. As its name implies, the complex is adjacent to a nature preserve and boasts sustainability credentials to match. However, the main attractions are the artist-built environments, more than 30 in number, that contextualize

works by outsiders such as Emery Blagdon and Lenore Tawney. Delayed since August 2020, the museum is technically open but on a limited basis as part of a special “pre-opening” beta-testing period that kicked off in January and will run through May 3.

**Matt Hickman**

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# Going with the Grain

***American Framing* pays tribute to a distinctly domestic architecture at the 17th Venice Architecture Biennale.**

Like blue jeans and roadside buildings shaped like ducks, wood-framed construction is a singularly American invention—accessible, improvisational, and, yes, rooted in expansionism. But the centuries-long ubiquity of wood framing in the United States has also led to a cultural blotting-out or blind spot, a softwood amnesia of sorts. It's an architecture so ordinary that it's often overlooked, forgotten, dismissed.

"Its commonness and regularity exude a particular cultural effect that's uniquely American," said Paul Preissner, commissioner and cocurator of *American Framing*, an exhibition exploring the "conditions and consequences" of wood-framed construction at the 17th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. "It's something that people can do on their own even if they have no experience and don't come from construction backgrounds. The ease of access to architecture also evaporates any of the mystery to it, or specialness, and therefore makes it seem outside of the world of discourse, in a sense."

*American Framing*, on view at the United States Pavilion beginning May 22 at the twice-postponed Venice Architecture Biennale, puts cheap, flimsy stick building at the center of that discourse, which skews, thematically, toward the weighty and substantial. The exhibition elevates humble, homegrown architectural ingenuity through newly commissioned photography by Daniel Shea and Chris Strong, site-responsive furniture designed by Ania Jaworska and Carrie Norman and Thomas Kelley of Norman Kelley, and scale models presented by students from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), where Preissner and exhibition cocurator Paul Andersen are both professors in the School of Architecture. Jaworska and Kelley are also professors at UIC.

Biennale visitors will be left with little doubt as to the theme of the U.S. Pavilion even before they step inside the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation-owned 1930 Palladian building at the Giardini della Biennale. For *American Framing*, Preissner and Andersen, who lead private architectural practices in Chicago and Denver, respectively, in addition to teaching at UIC, have designed a monumental installation that completes the front facade of the neoclassical pavilion. In true American form, the pavilion advertises exactly what can be found inside.

"Everybody will enter through a four-story wood-framed structure that creates a new facade across the front [of the pavilion]," explained Andersen about the houselike structure, which will remain unclad to showcase the timber skeleton. "You can go up to the second or third floor and look back out over the Giardini or down into the courtyard."

Populating the full-scale, open-air structure will be domestic furnishings like benches and rocking chairs, designed by Norman Kelley to "give it a scale and an occupation, whether it's the porch or the second floor," said Preissner, who noted that it's unclear whether visitors will be allowed to sit on or touch the installation furniture, owing to COVID-19 restrictions. (Jaworska's furniture, also built from dimensional lumber and designed in collaboration with UIC students, will be installed in the pavilion's courtyard.)

The pandemic has also prompted some slight circulatory tweaks to the pavilion, al-

though it didn't require major changes in the exhibition itself. "We just have to identify which set of doors are the entrance—and then there's a one-way path through the four galleries and the rotunda—and then one as the exit," explained Preissner, adding that *American Framing*'s student-researched and -designed building models representing historic projects, typological projects, and "weird experimental novelties" were in a sequence to begin with. "We had already been leaning toward a directional nature for the exhibition, so it didn't present any challenges when we were told we have one way in and one way out," he said.

Pandemic-related adjustments aside, the key participation of UIC students is one element that sets *American Framing* apart from exhibitions staged at the U.S. Pavilion during recent editions of the Venice Architecture Biennale.

While the 2000 exhibition ARCHitecture LABoratories was a collaborative effort between Columbia University and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), subsequent exhibitions have lacked intimate student involvement, according to the *American Framing* curators. (Coincidentally, frequent collaborators Preissner and Andersen were members of the student teams for Columbia and UCLA, respectively, although their paths did not cross directly until later.)

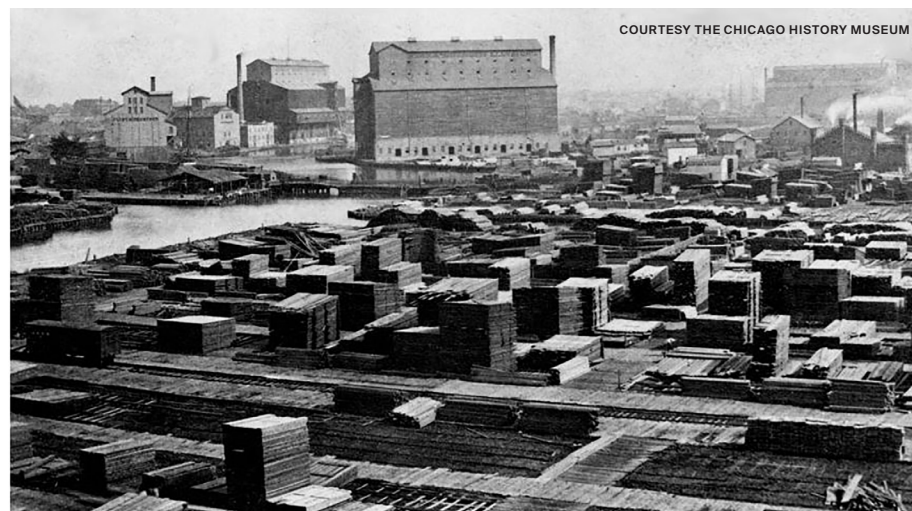
If there was student participation, research-based or otherwise, in exhibitions held over the past two decades, Preissner believes, "it was always done in service of the architects presenting their profile."

By contrast, he said, "our theme was to make it about architecture, not architects."

**Matt Hickman**



CHRIS STRONG/COURTESY THE PAVILION OF THE UNITED STATES AT THE 17TH INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION - LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA



COURTESY THE CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM



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**Top:** Paul Andersen (left) and Paul Preissner are the curators of the American Pavilion at the 17th edition of the Venice Architecture Biennale.

**Middle:** A view of a Chicago lumberyard, 1870

**Above:** The exhibition *American Framing* will explore the history and values of timber construction. Pictured: War housing construction, 1941



# Britain Beyond Europe

Brexit creates challenges for U.K. architects in Europe, but potential opportunities for U.S. architects.



INK DROP/VIA SHUTTERSTOCK

A rocky start to 2021 found the U.K. architectural profession grappling with the realities of an official exit from the E.U., amid an ongoing domestic economic slump compounded by a third national lockdown.

While the concurrence of Brexit and the pandemic has made distilling the individual impact of each challenging, the trade deal's likely effect on the construction industry has at least become clearer over the last three months. Florian Frotscher, associate principal at Woods Bagot, believes that changes due to Brexit may include "increased costs of importing raw materials [from Europe], likely to add to construction costs, which could impact client decisions to proceed with projects."

According to a joint statement from the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Architects Registration Board (ARB), "60 percent of construction materials used on UK projects are imported from Europe. New rules will therefore have a huge impact on the sector." And Brexit's shock waves could extend much further. The same statement said that "the EU is the second largest market for the export of UK architectural services worldwide, [and] 1 in 5 architects practicing in the UK originally qualified in the EU."

The failure of the British government to fully consider exported services (as opposed to goods) during Brexit negotiations has resulted in unilateral conditions that negatively affect U.K. architects seeking to work in the E.U. Architecture remains a significant player in the U.K.'s service sector, contributing "£1.5 billion to the UK economy through direct and indirect exports each year," according to RIBA's *Boosting the UK's Architectural Exports* 2018 policy note.

As of January, U.K. architects had lost automatic recognition of their qualifications in E.U. member states, except for the Republic of Ireland, where a mutual recognition agreement had already been reached. The U.K. government, on the other hand, will continue to recognize the qualifications of E.U. architects, though the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications no longer applies.

To maintain access to opportunities for work in the E.U., many practices are looking to plant their feet on the continent. Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, for example, has opened a Paris office, and Stanton Williams plans to register all its principals in France, but smaller practices may find this untenable. Teoman Ayas, founding partner

of MIMStudios, said: "While we try to make use of connections in Austria and in Turkey to collaborate on potential projects, at the moment we are not in a position to consider a satellite office. I fear that in the long run this reduced international collaboration within the workplace will lead to a certain cultural drought as well."

Larger practices are finding new bureaucratic hurdles, too. Frotscher said these include "a perception that shortlisting U.K. practices will require additional bureaucracy" and complicated VAT claim-back procedures that could either "be more time-consuming, leading to potential delays in cash flow, or in some cases no longer possible, adding costs to the project."

A diversified architectural services export market may provide a counter to these Brexit winds, however. RIBA's 2017 *Global Talent, Global Reach* report notes that £500 million in British architectural revenue came from international work in 2016, and more than 80 percent of British architectural exports serve markets in the Middle East, Asia, and North America.

Certain British firms confirmed the strength of this buffer. Responding to a *Dezeen* survey in January, directors at All-

ford Hall Monaghan Morris said: "To date, thankfully, [Brexit has had] no noticeable impact. The majority of our projects are in the U.K. and the U.S. and our clients for European projects (in the Republic of Ireland in particular) are international organisations." Thomas Patterson, director and founder of Lux Populi, said, "We have largely dropped marketing in the U.K. and the E.U., with a new focus on the Middle East and Africa, where business is booming."

And, while doors to the E.U. may have been shut, newfound autonomy has the U.K. government seeking to revamp the national architectural qualification system, including allowing the ARB the flexibility to recognize international qualifications it deems equivalent to U.K. standards. A consultation on proposed amendments to the Architects Act 1997 was held from November 2020 to January 2021, the forthcoming results of which may provide reciprocal professional recognition between the U.K. and non-E.U. nations like the U.S. Because of Brexit, international architects may soon gain easier access to the U.K. market, which may be music to stateside ears.

**Amrita Raja**



## Building Up, Not Tearing Down

Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal win the 2021 Pritzker Prize.

French architects and educators Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal have been named the winners of the 2021 Pritzker Architecture Prize. The duo, principals of Lacaton & Vassal Architectes, are the 49th and 50th Pritzker Prize laureates and the third and fourth French recipients of the prize since it was first awarded in 1979. Christian de Portzamparc won in 1994, and Jean Nouvel won in 2008.

While Lacaton and Vassal are now based in Paris, Lacaton is a native of Saint-Pardoux-la-Rivière, in southwestern France, and Vassal was born in Casablanca, Morocco. The two first met in the late 1970s as students at École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture et de Paysage de Bordeaux before embarking on divergent career paths,

with Lacaton earning her master's in urban planning from Bordeaux Montaigne University in 1984 and Vassal relocating to Niger to practice urban planning. It was in Niger's capital of Niamey that the pair came together to complete their first joint project, a straw hut built from locally sourced materials. While modest, this collaboration sparked a design ethos that continues today, one that champions affordable and readily available building materials and avoids destroying existing buildings in favor of adapting and adding to them.

"Transformation is the opportunity of doing more and better with what is already existing," Lacaton said in a statement. "The demolishing is a decision of easiness and short term. It is a waste of many things—

a waste of energy, a waste of material, and a waste of history. Moreover, it has a very negative social impact. For us, it is an act of violence."

Since founding their practice in 1987, Lacaton and Vassal have together completed over 30 projects across Europe and West Africa. While their collective work is diverse and includes private homes and buildings for educational and cultural institutions, they share a focus with other recent Pritzker Prize winners, including 2020 laureates Shelley McNamara and Yvonne Farrell of Dublin, Ireland-based Grafton Architects and the 2016 laureate and current chair of the Pritzker Architecture Prize Jury, Chile's Alejandro Aravena: Their best-known projects are in the realm of social housing. The

French duo's undertakings in this area spare timeworn public housing blocks from destruction and instead deploy inventive, relatively inexpensive architectural interventions that improve the quality of life for the people living there.

"Our work is about solving constraints and problems and finding spaces that can create uses, emotions, and feelings," Vassal said. "At the end of this process and all of this effort, there must be lightness and simplicity, when all that has been before was so complex."

Representative of this approach is La Tour Bois-le-Prêtre in Paris. Completed in 2011, the renovation project found the architects transforming a 1960s housing block by removing its concrete facade and expand-



LAURENT CHALET





**Top left:** The balcony at a 53-unit low-rise residential project by Lacaton & Vassal Architectes in Saint-Nazaire, France

**Top right:** A postrenovation flat at Grand Parc, a social housing complex in Bordeaux, France

**Bottom:** One of three housing blocks at Grand Parc transformed through whole-building modernization efforts focused on making units roomier, brighter, and healthier, with better views

ing the square footage of each of the 16-story building's 96 units through the creation of private semi-enclosed balconies or "winter gardens" that draw fresh air and natural light into the previously dreary apartments.

"Once constrained living rooms now extend into new terraces as flexible space, featuring large windows for unrestricted views of the city, thus reimagining not only the aesthetic of social housing, but also the intention and possibilities of such communities within the urban geography," explains the official Pritzker Prize announcement.

A similar approach was taken with the 2017 transformation of three buildings at the Grand Parc housing development in Bordeaux, France. That thoughtful over-

haul, which nearly doubled the size of some of the 530 apartments without displacing residents, resulted in a "dramatic visual reinvention of the social housing complex," the Pritzker committee said in a statement. Lacaton and Vassal executed the transformations of both La Tour Bois-le-Prêtre and Grand Parc in partnership with French architect Frédéric Druot. Another French architect, Christophe Hutin, also served as a collaborator on the latter project.

"We never see the existing as a problem. We look with positive eyes because there is an opportunity of doing more with what we already have," Lacaton said in a statement about giving old and oft-unloved buildings new life.

"We went to places where buildings

would have been demolished and we met people, families who were attached to their housing, even if the situation was not the best. They were most often opposed to the demolition because they wished to stay in their neighborhood. It's a question of kindness," added Vassal.

"This year, more than ever, we have felt that we are part of humankind as a whole," said Aravena in a statement. "Be it for health, political or social reasons, there is a need to build a sense of collectiveness. Like in any interconnected system, being fair to the environment, being fair to humanity, is being fair to the next generation. Lacaton and Vassal are radical in their delicacy and bold through their subtleness, balancing a

respectful yet straightforward approach to the built environment."

In October of last year, it was announced that Martha Thorne will step down from her Pritzker Prize executive director role later this month and be replaced by Paris-based curator Manuela Lucá-Dazio, who also served on the 2021 jury in an advisory capacity. Following her departure, Thorne will remain on board as an adviser through the 2021 Pritzker Prize ceremony. As of this writing, the ceremony date and location had not been announced. In 2020, it was held virtually, owing to the coronavirus pandemic, which could be the case again this year.

**MH**



# The Name Game

With its questionable honorific, SOM's Project Commodore threatens to overshadow Grand Central Terminal. But are concerns over its height (and girth) overblown?



Rendering of Project Commodore, next to Grand Central Terminal in New York City

Before climate change increased the average bottom-depth temperature of New York's Hudson River by upward of three degrees, much of the river was given to freezing in winter. And on one such occasion, in the 1830s, Cornelius Vanderbilt is said to have scampered out onto the frigid waterway by himself, hoping to grab one of his steamboats and yank it free after it had become locked in the ice. He succeeded—he usually did—and as usual, he was doing it by whatever means necessary. The Commodore, as he came to be known for his riparian exploits (and not, notably, for any actual military service), was the archetype of the 19th-century robber baron: Turning his shipping enterprise into a railroad empire, Vanderbilt amassed one of the great fortunes of the age through daring, treachery, and outright fraud.

It may be wondered why the developer combo of TF Cornerstone and RXR Realty decided to name their proposed 42nd Street mixed-use tower after such a notorious risk taker and universally acknowledged son of a bitch. At 83 stories, Project Commodore (a.k.a. 175 Park Avenue; the marketing handle is apparently tentative) is to be home to over 2 million square feet of offices, 10,000 square feet of retail, and a 500-key Hyatt hotel. Assuming all goes well, it is expected to open for business along about 2030, by which time, its backers have to hope, the city will be able to absorb a gargantuan influx of high-end commercial real estate—a gamble the old tycoon would probably appreciate, but one that seems especially dicey

given the incipient post-COVID glut in the market. At the same time, unless the builders are banking on a collective change of heart, they are also on a crash course with a cultural climate in which yet another overstuffed luxury complex, especially one dedicated to the memory of Cornelius Vanderbilt, is not likely to be anybody's idea of a hip urban destination. As it is, the whole undertaking seems to be standing on alarmingly thin ice.

The development's prospects for success may have been overlooked in the rush of opinions about its appearance, intensifying in recent weeks following the building's approval by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in late February. There's a reason for that: The tower, a project of the New York office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, is really, really big. If completed as designed, it will be second only to One World Trade Center among skyscrapers in New York City, taller still if measured by highest occupied floor, and unlike the erstwhile "Freedom Tower" (a lesson there about ill-fated naming conventions), or indeed most other recent major high-rises in Manhattan, Project Commodore does not boast a slender profile, with a height-to-width ratio of about 5.5:1 (compared with, for example, 24:1 for the nearly complete 111 West 57th Street). As seen in digital renderings, with its peacock-tail crown standing head and shoulders above the adjacent Chrysler Building, the proposed tower's presence on the skyline makes it look like a linebacker surrounded by ballerinas.

But again, that isn't what's drawn the most ire to date. The chief criticism has focused on what the building might do on the ground—namely to Grand Central, which it directly abuts. The House that Vanderbilt Built, over which the Commodore himself still presides in the form of a statue alongside the southern facade, will now be hemmed in by 175 Park on one side, the recently completed One Vanderbilt on the other, and the MetLife Building nearly on top of it, sparking concerns among preservationists that the once-imposing station will be greatly diminished. This is overblown: Grand Central has always been at its grandest as seen coming up Park Avenue; from that angle, Project Commodore will remain safely screened behind the old Bowery Savings Bank Building on the southeast corner of 42nd Street.

The building's thick trunk might not make such a bad addition to Manhattan's skyscraper forest. So many of the new towers that surround it are members of a worrisome, invasive species: ultrathin super-tall apartment houses, most of them empty, their floor-size units serving only to pad foreign buyers' asset portfolios. Project Commodore is hefty because it has to be, because it is intended to facilitate something like a productive function of urban life, to provide offices for people who live and work in New York. It's not heavy, just big boned, and its bigness could be seen as an announcement that the city can still build something besides investment vehicles in the sky.

That's provided, of course, that people want to occupy it. Across town, the pandemic economy has nearly laid waste to a different developer dream of ritzy boutiques and corporate workspace. Hudson Yards never quite caught on, its particular brand of shopping-mall chic jarringly out of sync with the city; now, the shuttered eateries and empty executive suites there will have to fill up again, and there will have to be demand for office space left over if 175 Park is to serve any useful purpose. Breathless predictions about working from home becoming more widespread will have to prove false, and the next decade will have to be very kind to New York in general.

From that perspective, the Commodore is a bold statement of optimism—though the name still rankles. Presumably, the developers were attempting to distance their building from its immediate forebear: The Grand Hyatt, which previously occupied the site, was an early project from a well-known local real estate magnate turned quasi-fascist U.S. president. He, likewise, had taken over the property in the late 1970s from a still older hotel, called the Commodore; the current ownership, in a misguided attempt at *damnatio memoriae*, ended up merely substituting one unsavory association for another. As it happens, however, there's good news and bad just a couple of blocks away, where the recent death of a famous luxury hotel (not a good augury in itself) at least frees up another, more politically appetizing namesake. Any takers for "Project Roosevelt"? **Ian Volner**



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# Uncritical Reconstruction

After several delays, the Humboldt Forum in Berlin is finally open. Its failure to inspire excitement illustrates the project's flawed premise of historical reconstruction.

The Humboldt Forum on Berlin's Museum Island opened in December 2020 to reactions that have so far alternated between sharp criticism and indifference. The ambivalence of its reception can be blamed, at least in part, on the fact that few people have been able to visit the building, due to ongoing pandemic-induced restrictions. However, when you look at images of the completed Forum, it becomes clear that the tepid response of the architectural and popular press cannot be blamed on COVID-19 alone. Put simply, the building is not an easily likable object.

That it fails to register as a city landmark, either new *or* old, has much to do with the project brief, which stipulates several design criteria. For instance, the three primary exposures in Italian architect Franco Stella's design are hyperfaithful re-creations of the baroque sandstone facades of the Berlin Palace, which once stood on the site. As one rounds the corners and moves toward the Spree, these elaborate ornamental forms morph abruptly into a crisp grid of finished concrete and recessed windows. The same bait and switch is repeated on the Forum's inner court, where three baroque portals protrude from the matrices of neo-modernist grids.

The stark juxtaposition of zombie baroque with new contemporary designs raises the question, is the Humboldt Forum a historical reconstruction or a modern reinterpretation of a historical structure? The answer, I would argue, is that the Humboldt Forum is both and neither—too similar to the original palace to qualify as a reinterpretation, but too different from the older structure to be considered a reconstruction. As such, the Forum provides a telling example of the challenges of historical reconstruction projects, as well as their limitations.

A historical reconstruction, particularly of a civic building like the Humboldt Forum, requires for its success a shared sense of history that is collectively acknowledged, if not embraced, by a public and that corresponds to a formal vocabulary that resonates with said public. For example, in restoring the Neues Museum, just a block or so away British architect David Chipperfield satisfyingly integrated his design with elements of the original building, by architect Friedrich August Stüler. It had been in ruins since World War II. Because Chipperfield was not asked to re-create the previous structure as it had been but rather to reenvision it for a newly reunified Germany, he could actively engage with the lega-

cy of Stüler's former master, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, whose Altes Museum (1825–30) stands just across the street, and with the entire complex of cultural buildings on the northern end of Museum Island. These are all institutions long familiar to Berliners and to Germans. Even if they have never visited these museums, they no doubt recognize many of the famous objects in their collections, such as the iconic Bust of Neferiti in the Neues Museum.

Before the so-called "palace debate" (Schlossdebatte) of the 1990s, the Berlin Palace had never enjoyed the same degree of familiarity or regard, among architectural historians nor the German public more broadly. The palace was established in the 1440s as a medieval fortress and subsequently renovated over the years, most extensively from the 1680s to 1710s, during the reign of the first king of Prussia, Frederick I, according to designs by Andreas Schlüter. Renovations were suspended upon Frederick's death, and aside from the construction of its dome in 1845, the structure stayed as it was, more or less, for the next several decades. However, for most of its existence, the palace was not open to the public, nor was it associated with particularly famous works of art. In general, Berlin's

architectural claims to fame are not buildings of the baroque period but the neoclassical works of Schinkel and the designs of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Erich Mendelsohn, Bruno Taut, and other architectural avant-gardes of the early 20th century. And while the palace is linked with the Prussian Hohenzollern dynasty, its significance in this regard was always eclipsed by the complex of parks and palaces in Potsdam, just outside Berlin (where most of the dynasty's rulers preferred to live).

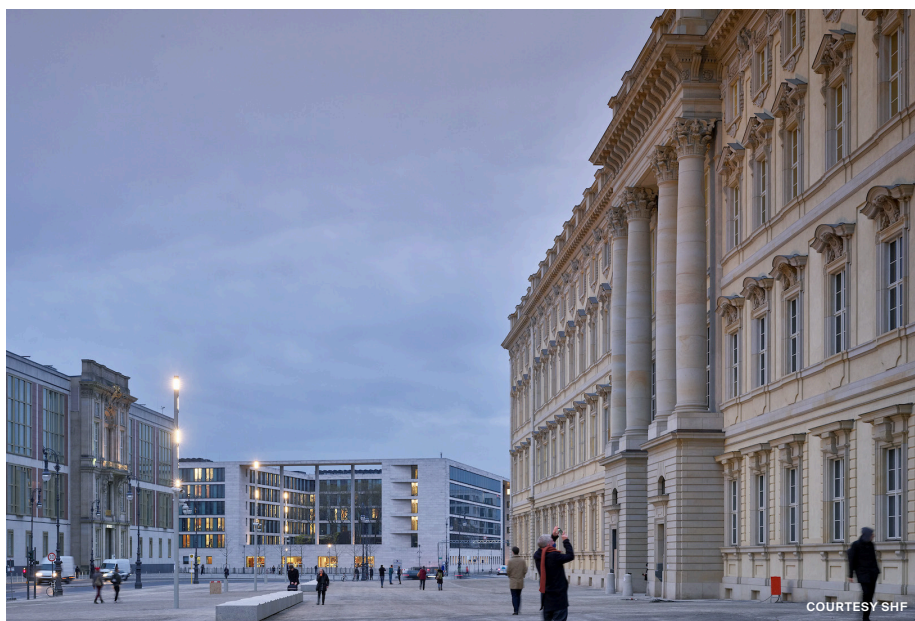
This is all to say that the Berlin Palace never inspired strong feelings in anyone; it was, in short, a background building, albeit a rather large and ornate one. Its meaning was malleable enough that when East Germany's ruling party decided to demolish the ruins of the palace, dismissing it as a relic of the Prussian monarchy, Gate IV from its north facade was preserved as the site where Karl Liebknecht declared Germany a free socialist republic in November 1918. Gate IV, now called the Liebknecht Gate, was incorporated by Roland Korn and Hans-Erich Bogatzky into their design of the East German State Council, built in 1964 on the other side of Palace Square (Schlossplatz). In preserving this bit of the Berlin Palace, the East German regime recognized that the gate's



ALEXANDER SCHIPPEL/COURTESY SHF



ALEXANDER SCHIPPEL/COURTESY SHF



COURTESY SHF

**Top left:** The Humboldt Forum in Berlin is a partial reconstruction of the Berlin Palace, a royal residence affiliated with the Prussian Hohenzollern dynasty. Demolished in the 1960s, the palace's baroque stylings were resurrected by the Italian architect Franco Stella.

**Bottom left:** Three of the building's exposures forensically recreate the palace's original sandstone facades (right), the only existing vestige of which is incorporated in the former East German State Council (far left) on the other side of Palace Square.

**Above:** Moving toward the Spree, the baroque envelope abruptly gives way to an austere modern wing. The strange, lopsided massing is the result of the project brief, which stressed the importance of reconstructing the palace to its erstwhile place.



baroque forms could serve as a reference to a shared past. Moreover, this was a past that had a distinct meaning in 1960s East Germany, regardless of whether East Germans themselves believed in the socialist ideals their government purported to endorse.

In any case, what slight relevance the Berlin Palace might have had to the German public would have evaporated by the time the decision was made to partially rebuild it, in 2003. At that point, the palace had been gone for over 50 years. One might argue that its past symbolism is not terribly germane at all, considering the new building is not a royal residence. Instead, the Humboldt Forum is a public cultural center, offering cafes, lecture halls, a movie theater, and restaurants, along with museum exhibition spaces. While such venues are a welcome addition to any city, their usefulness in Berlin, where the divided past created a double helping of cultural venues, is less apparent. It is particularly confounding when one remembers that the building the Forum replaces, the East German Palace of the Republic, which opened in 1976, was a similar type of architectural *mélange*, offering art and cultural exhibits, restaurants and cafes, large and small performances venues, and even a bowling alley.

It did not help supporters of the Humboldt Forum that its directors have consistently failed to articulate a clear sense of its mission. Instead, they seem to speak only in vague terms about public engagement or the values of the Enlightenment, as embodied by the project's namesakes, Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt. When one reads their description of the Humboldt Forum and its function, questions emerge: Why this building on this site? And why Berlin? What is this building meant to symbolize, exactly, and to whom?

The project's ambiguity is only compounded by the attempt to use re-created baroque forms to speak to a present-day public, even as the project as a whole seems increasingly out of step with that public. For example, the directors probably expected that their decision to highlight the collections of the Ethnographic Museum and Museum of Asian Art would address concerns of Eurocentrism. Instead, debates about looted or stolen objects and repatriation quickly ensued. This discourse grew throughout the 2010s, alongside and beyond the reconstructed palace, to encompass objects in a number of Berlin's museums, including the Nefertiti Bust.

Similarly, the decision to name the

building after the Humboldts might once have seemed a safe or at least neutral choice. But owing to the controversy about the provenance of the artworks that will be displayed in it, that instead functions as a reminder that many of the activities central to the project of the Enlightenment—scientific documentation, measurement, standardization, rationalization—are likewise central to the project of colonialism. Rather than resolving the complex issues related to colonial or racist legacies, or even offering a considered response to them, the Humboldt Forum succeeds mostly in providing ample evidence of just how entrenched they are. Moreover, the Forum demonstrates the limitations of an approach that attempts to honor, sustain, and fundamentally critique such legacies, all at the same time.

Considering the history of the Berlin Palace and the dubious premise of the Humboldt Forum project, it is hard to fault Franco Stella alone for the sense of muddled purpose the project seems to radiate. Already in 2008, there appeared to be a feeling among critics that the decision to rebuild the palace would turn out to be, in the words of *New York Times* critic Michael Kimmelman, a “grand blunder.” Regardless, the Forum's contemporary and baroque

forms both seem unconnected to the building's function, to the collections it exhibits, and to the natural scientist and linguist whose name it bears. Without the sense of a shared past or architectural symbolism, the Humboldt Forum is unlikely to emerge as a collectively embraced symbol.

On the other hand, the partially reconstructed, partially reinterpreted Berlin Palace may be the only building it was possible to erect on this site. After all, the original palace, and the Palace of the Republic, which stood there until 2007, were both demolished by governments that were unsatisfied with what each represented. Both governments sponsored building projects that, in their view, would more accurately reflect their respective Germany's political, social, and cultural values. While it is far too early to tell what the final judgment of the Humboldt Forum will be, considering its reception so far, one can't help but wonder if it is destined to meet the same fate. **Emily Pugh**



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**Left:** The foyer, or court, of the Humboldt Center is anchored by a towering digital wayfinding installation dubbed the Kosmograph.

**Above:** The project brief also stipulated that the three baroque portals carry into the Forum's interiors, which otherwise adopt the cool modernist idiom of the east-facing exterior facade.



## Positive Friction

Neumann Monson's 111 East Grand brings innovations in mass timber to the U.S. market.



111 East Grand is the first dowel-laminated timber structure in North America.

**Architect:** Neumann Monson Architects

**Structural engineer:** Raker Rhodes Engineering

**MEP engineer:** Baker Group

**Contractor:** Ryan Construction

**Mass timber engineering and construction:** StructureCraft

**DLT panels:** StructureCraft

**Glulam columns and beams:** Hasslacher Norica Timber

**ZALMAG panels:** Millennium Forms Flush Reveal Panel

**Natural-finish Accoya exterior column wraps:** Delta Millworks

**Southern yellow pine:** ACGI

**Douglas fir VG B&B Delta Black:** Delta Millworks

**Aluminum-clad wood windows:** Pella

**Storefront system:** Oldcastle

**Interior/exterior precast panels:** PDM

Standing handsomely on the east bank of the Des Moines River, 111 East Grand is a building of many firsts. It is the first speculative office building to be constructed in Des Moines in over a decade, the first mass timber building in Iowa's capital, and the first dowel-laminated timber (DLT) structure in North America.

Located in the rapidly changing East Village neighborhood, the 65,000-square-foot building, designed by Neumann Monson Architects (NMA), occupies a site two blocks from the river and includes a restaurant and retail on the ground floor with three floors of commercial space above. The building's north, east, and west elevations are clad in a rainscreen of black ZALMAG panels, whose variable finish catches the light and casts soft shadows across the facade. The main entrance on the northeast corner is marked by double-height Accoya modified wood-wrapped columns that hint at the warm timber structure within.

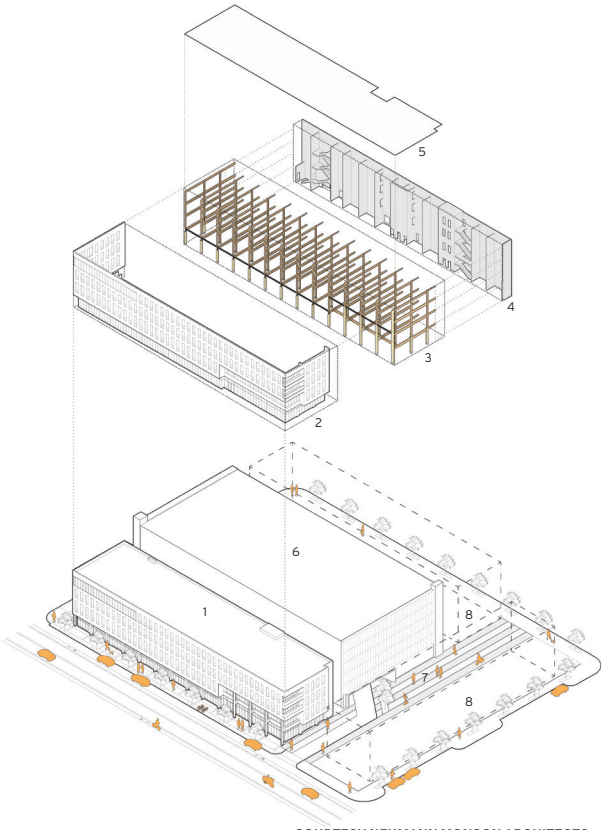
The architects and developers had a history of using integrated project delivery (IPD) together, which opened doors to pursuing mass timber on the project, according to NMA. This allowed for early cost-benefit exercises, with mass timber engineer and fabricator StructureCraft's expertise already in place during schematic design.

Mass timber's carbon sequestering potential and biophilic and aesthetic qualities also made it an attractive material choice. Over 40,000 cubic feet of timber were used in the building's structure, resulting in 284 tons of sequestered carbon and 1,042 tons of sequestered carbon dioxide—the equivalent of keeping 170 cars off the road for a year, according to NMA.

While mass timber is gaining traction in the United States, DLT's popularity across Europe has yet to translate across the Atlantic. DLT's advantages come from the friction joints between the hardwood dowels and softwood lumber that compose every panel. This joining system means DLT uses less glue than cross-laminated timber. A lack of nails makes the product more conducive to milling and routing compared with nail-laminated timber (NLT).

As part of the IPD process, "multiple mass timber suppliers were interviewed," said NMA principal Khalid Khan, "with the DLT supplier's [StructureCraft] approach to design best suited to the project team." He noted, "A site visit to T3 in Minneapolis, an NLT speculative office project [designed by Michael Green Architecture], helped the team to experience a similar system firsthand," and the supplier's substantial capital investment in DLT technology further increased confidence.

111 East Grand uses a hybrid structure that maximizes the benefits of off-site fabrication during a challenging Iowa winter. Glulam columns and beams and DLT slabs connect to a precast concrete core along the building's southern edge. A kit-of-parts approach, said NMA, meant the structure was erected in seven weeks, saving



COURTESY NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS





MIKE SINCLAIR

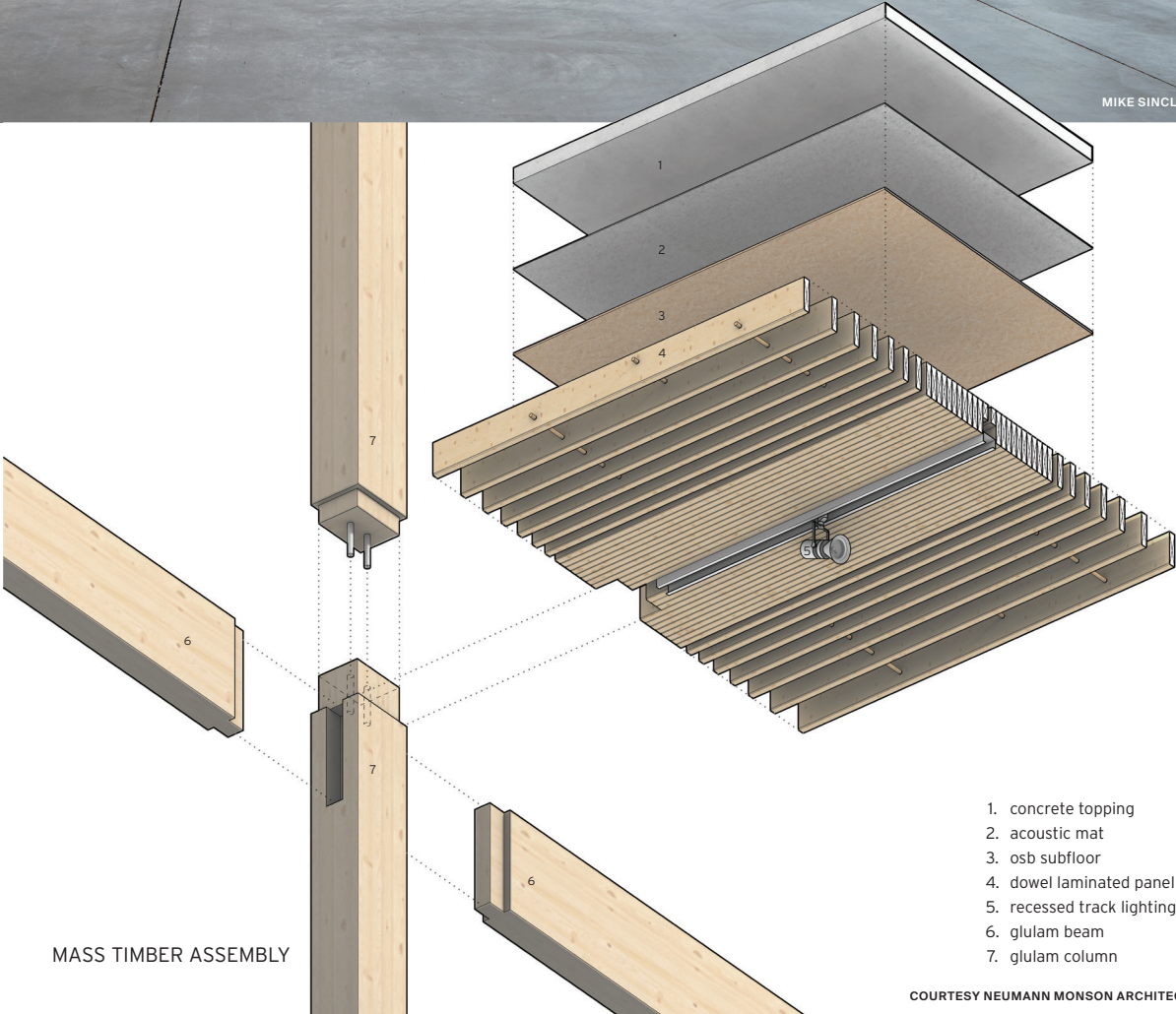
The layers in the laminated timber create a striated ceiling pattern.

six weeks in the construction program relative to typical steel or concrete construction. Building the structure in three phases allowed the construction crane to occupy the building footprint and eventually a staging area, eliminating the need for road closures. The building's 20-foot-by-20-foot grid, said Khan, optimizes the spanning capacity of two-by-eights on the floors and two-by-sixes on the roof to further reduce costs.

As with other mass timber slab systems, a DLT floor panel system requires a floor finish. NMA incorporated a concrete topping with an acoustic-mat sound-absorbing underlayer to create a durable surface as well as provide sound isolation between floors. The underside of the DLT slabs remains exposed as variegated ceilings with recessed track lighting integrated between panels.

With its “mostly wood” composition, competitive one-way spanning capacity, carbon sequestration potential, and warm tactility, DLT could herald the next generation of mass timber construction in the U.S., with 111 East Grand as its torchbearer. **Amrita Raja**

**Facing page:** An exploded axonometric diagram shows (1) the building, (2) the glass and zinc envelope, (3) the mass timber frame, (4) the precast concrete core, (5) the roof, (6) the existing parking ramp, (7) the pedestrian corridor, and (8) a future liner building.



- 1. concrete topping
- 2. acoustic mat
- 3. osb subfloor
- 4. dowel laminated panel
- 5. recessed track lighting
- 6. glulam beam
- 7. glulam column

COURTESY NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS



## Fala Atelier

**continued from cover** architects might hold their noses and take a page from the Fala playbook.

“The difference between us and our peers is there isn’t a brief or a budget that is beyond us,” said Magalhães. “We don’t have dream clients. What we have is a lot of people who have to solve very practical problems—building a house, renovating a house, stuff like this. The brief is an Excel sheet, the references come from Pinterest. Architecture is not a request. But we take up that challenge every time.”

Of course, a pragmatism framed in such unvarnished terms cannot help but conceal more—namely, in Fala’s case, ambition.

Besides, a client’s disavowal becomes a pretext for the private staging, and playing out, of games. On this matter Belkhodja acknowledges the legacy of Peter Eisenman—a recent house is centered on a single floating column—while also keeping the aging semiologist at bay. “Our work is process oriented, but it is not a process as a [series of] steps that [following Eisenman] turn the Dom-INO diagram into a parallelepiped,” he said. “Also, we don’t like buildings that feel like they’re going to collapse.”

The fact, or legend, that Fala’s process begins and ends with a digital collage has been reported in every article devoted to the studio’s work. Soares doesn’t deny the collage’s easy charm

but downplays its generative role. “It’s a production tool that helps us understand our work together,” she said, pointing to another such tool—the wireframe drawing, looking very 1982 (the year *TRON* hit screens)—that accomplishes the same task. “The wireframe is the completed project only using lines. It communicates the idea for our project, and for us, that comes first. The materiality is a means to an end.”

One such end, all three partners hope, is America. Belkhodja workshops a pitch: “The thing with fakeness has prepared us to build there. An American architecture can never be as real as fake.” By Samuel Medina



## 090 (Uneven House) 2019

Up until recently, urban infill and interior renovations have been Fala Atelier’s bread and butter. Which is to say, founders Ahmed Belkhodja, Filipe Magalhães, and Ana Luisa Soares have seen their fair share of challenging, awkward, and disadvantageous sites. On this particular lot, in Porto, Portugal, they were tasked with converting the ground floor and basement of a modest housing block into an apartment. The ground floor terminated in an illegal annex at the back that the trio promptly dismantled and reclaimed as an enclosed garden. They made a wedge between the patio and the building envelope to create an entrance to the lower level. Reflective glass and other sleights of hand give the impression that the rear facade is continuous, rather than split crosswise.





## 079 (Suspended House) 2020

Like many of Fala's projects, the Suspended House in Porto (the studio's home base) began as an inventory of quotidian programmatic needs. "Many times, the client will give us an Excel sheet, and that was the case here," said Magalhães. The house volume—narrow to a fault—had been predetermined by the municipal code, while the client made it clear that as little imagination should be paid to the interior organization as possible. "He said to us, 'I don't want architecture,'" Magalhães recalled. Thus commenced a game of subterfuge, with the designers dividing the four floors of the home into quadrants anchored by a central column. Of course, this single visible support is *anchored* from the top down, never touching the ground-floor slab. "It makes it very clear that that column, that totem—and not the house—is indeed the project," Magalhães explained.



## 082 (Warehouse Freixo) expected in 2021

An open-ended program can be a double-edged sword for an architect, as this conversion project proved. A trusted client of Fala's approached the studio to convert an old warehouse into a large house, granting the trio carte blanche and asking only for a small bedroom and private bath at the rear in return. "We had a lot of architectural fun solving the banal practicalities of the project within an insanely big project," Magalhães remembered. "But it's essentially just a living room," Belkhodja chimed in, "probably the largest one you'll find [aside from] old royal palaces."



## 101 (Houses of Cards) expected in 2021

Artifice is a recurring motif in Fala's vast portfolio. As a case in point, "these are five row houses pretending to be one building," said Soares. Set in pastoral environs on the edge of Tuias, a suburb east of Porto, this residential project comprises repeating modules straightforwardly strung together. Much, if not all, of the design is pushed to the envelope, which betrays the influence of Memphis and *Miami Vice*. "The shape of the building is the maximum volume [allotted] for the site. Clients say they want the maximum volume but not a box," she said, laughing.





# LAND VALUES

WHILE THIS MONTH'S ISSUE HAS AN INTERNATIONAL BENT, THE FOLLOWING FEATURES TURN THE FOCUS INWARD. THEY HIGHLIGHT ATTEMPTS WITHIN ARCHITECTURE TO RECOVER THE MATERIAL KNOWLEDGE OF NORTH AMERICA'S DISPOSSESSED INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND TO AGITATE FOR RESTITUTION.



The radial glulam structure of the Seneca Nation's Allegany Council Chamber in Salamanca, New York, is patterned after the 13 lunar phases in tribal calendars.





The Anishinabek Discovery Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, features an impressive barrel-vault timber roof. Both the center and the council chamber were designed by Two Row Architect.

# SEVEN-GENERATION THINKING

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' TRADITIONS IN NORTH AMERICA EMPHASIZE FAITHFULNESS TO MATERIALS AND LONG-RANGE RESILIENCE. ENGINEERED TIMBER PRODUCTS, HARVESTED SUSTAINABLY, ARE HELPING PUT THOSE PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE.

The rising popularity of mass timber products in Canada and the United States has led to a rediscovery of fundamentals among architects. Not least Indigenous architects, for whom engineered wood offers a pathway to recover and advance the building traditions of their ancestors. Because timber is both a natural, renewable resource and a source of forestry jobs, it aligns with Indigenous values of stewardship and community long obscured by the 20th century's dominant construction practices.

For Brian Porter, principal of Two Row Architect in Ohsweken, Ontario, mass timber compels architects to relearn the art of making the most out of natural materials. "Where I come from, Six Nations of the Grand River, where we were longhouse people," Porter said, "most of the longhouses are made out of, maximum, four- or six-inch-diameter wood poles that were bent to form structural arches." By posttensioning the poles, these erstwhile builders were modifying the material to take maximum advantage of its inherent strength. Cross-laminated timber (CLT), glulam, and related products update this approach, Por-

ter suggests, because they make use of "not-so-precious, softwood species that grow quickly, putting them together in columns and two-dimensional planes." The radial glulam structure of the Council Chamber in the Seneca Nation's Allegany Administration Building in Salamanca, New York, exemplifies Two Row's fusion of culturally respectful forms and new interpretations of old materials. (The project was completed in 2010 with Buffalo's Kideney Architects.)

Timber had already achieved a "mass" status in Austria and Germany by the early 1990s, but it had yet to take root in North America. And where it had, the material was not being deployed in accord with the principles of Indigenous peoples, who belong to Inuit or Métis nations, or to First Nation "bands." The first building to do that, according to Porter, was a small school for the Stó:lō (Lower Fraser River Salish or Séliš) people living on the Seabird Island Band, a couple of hours' drive east of Vancouver. Designed by Patkau Architects and opened in 1990, the project used Weyerhaeuser Parallam parallel-strand beams, oriented strand board, and cedar shingles

in what Porter calls "a modern-day interpretation not only of the plank house but also of the surrounding landscape."

Both conceptually sensitive and spatially generous, the Seabird Island School, however, continues to be an exception to the type of construction performed for Canada's Indigenous peoples, typified by generic, cost-cutting design and cultural inattention. Douglas Cardinal, an elder statesman among Indigenous architects, has in his lengthy career seen flashes of promise overtaken again and again by the forces of convention. He laments the clear-cutting of forests and lambastes the impoverished building script of the 20th century that plays out in Indigenous communities. "You have suburbs that are all filled with stick-built houses and drywall, that are really blowing energy out of their walls and windows," Cardinal said. "The true architects of our housing are not architects—they're developers that are trying to do things as cheap and nasty as they possibly can."

He has found mass timber useful in numerous projects, particularly the Oujé-Bougoumou Cree Nation village southeast

of James Bay in northern Quebec, which won the United Nations "We the Peoples" Award, the Habitat II: Best Practices Award, and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Award. A return to natural materials, he contends, improves durability, resistance to mold and fire, aesthetics, and energy efficiency. This performative aspect of Indigenous building know-how deserves the same level of appreciation given to its cultural aspects, argues Harriet Burdett-Moulton. A former senior architect at Stantec who comes from a Labrador Métis background, Burdett-Moulton founded the eastern Arctic's first architecture firm and has designed over 200 buildings in Nunavut, Canada's northernmost territory. She recalled how the Arctic regions where she has worked are rough on materials, which need to be "shipped in from faraway sources, often only once a year." If something breaks or warps en route, it isn't replaced, and those materials more resistant to damage—primarily steel and concrete—are heavy and thus prohibitively expensive to ship. Besides, the cold temperatures make concrete difficult to work with, Burdett-Moul-



ton added. Wood, on the other hand, is replenishable, easy to work, and adaptable, as is CLT, which, she has observed, handles low-humidity conditions better than untreated wood. “Moisture content in wood that is acceptable in southern Canada will warp and crack after it arrives on-site in places like Igloolik, Pangnirtung, or Qikiqtarjuaq,” she said.

But mass timber’s material benefits aren’t enough to rectify poor construction standards, which often suffer when outside builders lack accountability to local residents. According to Burdett-Moulton, suppliers hundreds of miles away commonly shortchange remote communities by sending the lowest-quality products, knowing return shipment is costly. Even well-intentioned efforts by the Canadian government requiring that building projects within nations or bands bear input from Indigenous consultants have failed to make an impact, she said. “[T]he people who are selected as consultants often do not understand what is being asked of them. Very little thought has gone into training or explaining to the local people what a particular project is about, or the type of information that would be useful to the designers.”

Burdett-Moulton notes that Indigenous communities have housing shortages

that expanded use of timber could remedy, were it not for procedural hindrances. Porter echoes her complaint and points to building codes and insurance policies that effectively preclude the use of uncertified materials—namely, locally cut and milled lumber—even in instances where it is fiscally and environmentally beneficial. In particular, First Nations bands, he said, “are surrounded by these timber forests, but because all of their funding agreements restrict them to using graded wood, they’re surrounded by these resources that they can’t use. They’re precluded by bureaucracy from incorporating locally harvested timber into their housing solutions.”

Instead, cheap houses vulnerable to mold have been posited as quick fixes. Finding these inadequate, Cardinal developed a modular prototype that is scalable and also durable, thanks to its mass timber structure. Unveiled in 2019 at the Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick, the Cardinal House uses prefabricated CLT panels to speed up construction (after off-site manufacture of weather-tight panels in a controlled environment, on-site assembly took all of three days) and improve on both quality and costs. An earlier CLT project Cardinal designed in northern Quebec for the Algonquins helped to relieve a

local seasonal job shortage. Construction on the Long Point School in Winneway was so swift and efficient that laborers did not need to break for midwinter, which, in this frigid clime, typically puts building projects on hold for a couple of months.

Paradoxically, just as interest in Indigenous building practices is at its highest, Cardinal looks to northern Europe for strategies for scaling up mass timber in and around Indigenous nations and bands. His studies of German and Norwegian building methods and forestry convinced him that Canada, with its vast forests, should do the same. “Downtown Bergen, Norway, is all heavy timber construction, and that was designed in the Middle Ages, and it’s still functioning,” Cardinal said. Within North America, he sees the Pacific Northwest adopting mass timber methods fastest, though he hopes for an influential proof of concept in a cultural center that rests on Lenape land: “I think a good wood building in New York would be a real advantage to the industry.”

There are plenty of roadblocks that would stem timber’s rise, however. Misconceptions about fire resistance, for example, are not easily assuaged. Trade organizations are pivotal in dislodging such attitudes; among these, the Toronto-based

Mass Timber Institute (MTI) has been the most active, educating AEC practitioners on timber’s environmental and economic impact. (Editor’s note: The MTI has partnered with *The Architect’s Newspaper* on the institute’s two-part TimberCon virtual event series; the first installment occurred in March, with the follow-up set for October.) Porter hails that outreach, just as he salutes regional efforts like the Whitefeather Forest Initiative north of Red Lake in Ontario. The initiative lists the Pikangikum First Nation as equity partners in a sustainable forest and, as such, offers educational programming for Indigenous students to study ecosystem management.

Yet, Indigenous architecture remains “a work in progress,” Burdett-Moulton said. “There are architects with Indigenous roots that are closer to the land and [to] Indigenous values than their sister and brother architects,” she said—in other words, the Indigenous experience was never homogeneous, nor is it today. Even so, Porter is optimistic about the cumulative effect of this knowledge sharing. “Mainstream architecture,” he said, “is coming closer and closer to the Indigenous worldview that we’ve had for 30,000 years.” **Bill Millard**



Along with Douglas Cardinal, architect Harriet Burdett-Moulton is among the most prolific Indigenous architects of her generation, having designed scores of buildings for Canada’s northernmost regions. Burdett-Moulton, who is a former senior architect at Stantec and of a Labrador Métis background, deployed mass timber at an educational facility for an Inuit community on Baffin Island. Known as Piqquisilirivvik (Inuktitut for “a place to keep the things we know”), the project (bottom) makes use of an engineered wood structure (top and middle).



# ARCHITECTURE'S COLONIAL RECKONING

IN RECENT YEARS, CALLS TO “DECOLONIZE” ARCHITECTURE HAVE GAINED SUPPORT AMONG PRACTITIONERS AND ACADEMICS. BUT WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICAL TERMS IS AN OPEN QUESTION.

California College of the Arts, I learned recently, is in the process of building over in order to expand its campus. At the same time, the college’s public lectures routinely begin with a land acknowledgment. This tension—between a growing consciousness that we all live in an ongoing colonialist project and an uncertainty as to exactly what can be done about it—lies at the center of the discussions around decolonization in architecture.

Colonization, understood historically, is the forcible displacement of Indigenous peoples from their land for the purposes of extraction and, in nations like the U.S., expansion. This inherently exploitative process is crucial for the accumulation of resources, capital, and, ultimately, power, through which ruling classes have dominated and subjugated the rest of the world. And it all continues to the present day: The construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), announced in 2014 and completed in 2017, relied on the displacement and endangerment of thousands of Indigenous people. Put bluntly, colonization has been an indispensable part of establishing our current world order, capitalism.

Architecture has served as a tool within that process. For Léopold Lambert, editor of the Paris-based magazine *The Funambulist*, “no other discipline is better at implementing settler colonialism,” since architecture occupies land and imposes ways of being on that land.

As the framework of decolonization in architecture has taken further root, the term, Lambert suggests, can create more questions than it answers. Looking to the U.S. context, there is the question of what can be done within the academy, in terms of educating students to better understand the country’s history of colonization. There is the question of what can be done within the profession, in terms of ensuring architects know how to work with Indigenous clients and on Indigenous sites—and whether non-Indigenous architects should be doing this work at all. And there is, of course, the question of whether any of these changes can happen within the field without society at large changing first.

The first question seems most easily answerable. Summer Sutton, an architecture PhD student studying questions of decolonization at Yale University and a member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, tells me that there is much progress to be made on this front. “I don’t think it’s just up to academia to be the voice of decolonization, but there is room to incorporate more voices,” Sutton said.

Andrew Herscher and Ana María León, cofounders of the Settler Colonial City Project (SCCP) and faculty at the University of Michigan, have contributed to such efforts. They founded SCCP in 2019, aiming to, in



At the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennale, the Settler Colonial City Project worked to “decolonize” the walls, materials, and environs of the Chicago Cultural Center by pointing to the stolen land on which it stands.

their own words, collaboratively produce “knowledge about cities on Turtle Island/ Abya Yala/The Americas as spaces of ongoing settler colonialism, Indigenous survival, and struggles for decolonization.” At that year’s Chicago Biennial, their intervention sought to bring attention to the stolen Indigenous land on which the Chicago Cultural Center, the event’s primary venue, stands and to the legacy of colonial extraction and displacement on which the production of architecture relies.

Herscher and León see their efforts as “first steps” to educate and move architects toward a decolonizing practice. “It’s not just in the way architecture is practiced,” León said. “It’s also in the way it’s taught and reproduced.”

Still, architecture ultimately is produced through its practice. Here, the immediate next steps are less clear. Chris Cornelius, founder of the architecture firm studio:indigenous and citizen of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, suggests that decolonizing architectural practice would necessarily entail efforts to understand the cultures and practices of communities architects build for, especially Indigenous communities. According to Cornelius, architects should seek to work closely with their clients, understanding them as people, and using that understanding to produce a more “empathetic” architecture. Certainly, this is a practice individual architects can take up, but because colonization is inextricably linked to larger political and economic systems, could the effects of such efforts extend beyond a specific project, client, or firm?

“I don’t think we can decolonize architecture,” Lambert admits. “That does not mean that architecture can’t be part of a decolonial political agenda, but even in that case it’s serving that agenda; the architecture itself doesn’t decolonize.”

Because architecture is implicated within

the broader process of colonization, it would be impossible to simply decolonize architecture without dismantling the larger system to which both it and colonization itself belong. That is a much more difficult and challenging task than, say, making changes to curricular, or even disciplinary, structures.

Proponents of decolonization within architecture, design, and the built environment recognize what a daunting task that is, as well as the absolute need for political organizing to carry it out. Dr. Sharon Sutton, author of *When Ivory Towers Were Black: A Story about Race in America’s Cities and Universities*, believes youth movements can play a crucial role in fomenting change, akin to the way her own generation, which grew up in the post-World War II years, compelled powerful institutions (Columbia in Sutton’s case) to adopt more equitable policies in the wake of the civil rights movement. Yet, Sutton acknowledges that today’s students are quite different from their ’60s counterparts. The former are less marginalized than the latter, less working-class, and more integrated into the system. “We make them servants of neoliberal capitalism,” she said.

Perhaps for this reason, Herscher and León point instead to the leadership of grassroots Indigenous activists, like those who led the efforts to stop DAPL at Standing Rock. “It’s impossible to decolonize architecture from within architecture,” said Herscher. “That’s a process that relies on architecture’s connection to on-the-ground political movements for decolonization.”


Such movements, however, can work to prevent architects from perpetuating their profession’s colonizing role. For example, in 2019 *The Funambulist* called on the French architect Jean Nouvel to back out of a project to “revitalize” the Casbah in Algiers, a key site of the Algerian struggle against French colonialism. “Unfortunately,”

the 400-signature-strong petition read, “there is no Hippocratic Oath for architects that would prevent anyone from designing a project harmful to the inhabitants of a given site—many architectural firms would then have to go out of business!” Though the effort ultimately proved unsuccessful—Nouvel offered a testy response and did not drop the commission—it represents one type of activity through which designers can be held accountable for their work.

The notion of a professional oath squares with recent efforts to enforce guidelines that would prevent architects from designing prisons. But for Herscher and León, decolonization has less to do with compulsory guidelines and belongs, rather, to a broader project of “coliberation,” as León says. This project, in turn, is tied up with other liberatory movements such as feminism and antiracism. “Talking about the way colonization dehumanizes those of us it benefits makes decolonization not giving up something but gaining something: gaining a way to be human that doesn’t rest upon the oppression and domination of others,” said Herscher.

Looking to move beyond decolonization as a slogan into thinking about what specific next steps would be necessary to realize it in the world quickly brings to the fore the central issue: The problem is not the practice of architecture, but the system to which it belongs. Following that, a decolonizing view of architecture has to take into account what most people in the field have in common—we are not in power—and understand colonization as a process that exists within a larger extractive capitalist project. The decolonization push within the discipline should drive architects to see themselves as activists—and to then act accordingly—if they want to bring about such deep change. **Mariana D’Aprile**





# TECH UP

COURTESY HELIATEK

It's no secret that we've relied on technology to maintain some semblance of normalcy in the past year. In forcing us to work from home, the pandemic has revealed the full capability of certain applications but also the shortcomings of others. Software companies have had to quickly update their products and services to facilitate a new normal and a working culture that will likely continue. AEC design professionals, like others, have had to acclimate to these new conditions. Working remotely on large, complex, and data-heavy projects has been no small task. A slew of improved modeling and management tools have done wonders in aiding this transition. Keeping pace with technology companies, architecture firms are developing and implementing their own solutions—like pre- and postoccupancy sensors that allow studios to design more efficiently. A growing number of start-ups are also making the seemingly impossible possible when it comes to harnessing green energy through infrastructural interventions. The following think piece and market pages take a closer look at the latest technological innovations. By Adrian Madlener



# TECH+Virtual

## Harnessing Technology for Future Practice

**May 20, 2021**

After a turbulent year of adjusting forecasts and changing expectations, 2021 will be a year of reemergence and growth for the AEC industry. While construction may be known for more traditional approaches that have stood the test of time, many practices have emerged that have allowed for improved communication, more complex digital fabrication, and striving innovation in the face of safety concerns and a competitive market. Tech+ Virtual Harnessing Technology for Future Practice will showcase the latest tools and research relevant to architects, engineers, and construction practices from leaders who are quantifying physical properties within the digital environment.

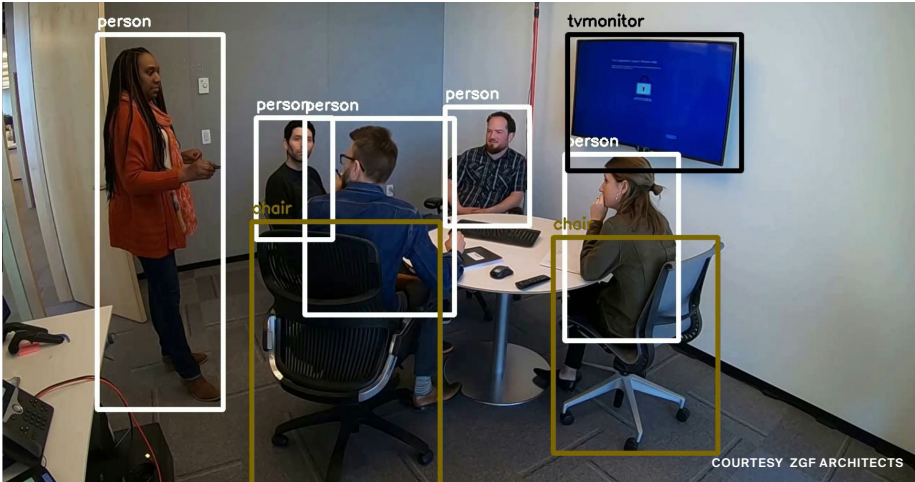
**Register at [techplus.co/vc21](https://techplus.co/vc21)**



# Just Another Day at the Office

New pre- and postoccupancy sensor technologies could change the way we design our workplaces.

By Adrian Madlener



With the end of the pandemic hopefully in sight, many companies are contemplating a return to the office. However, most are unsure of how to do so. Will these shared spaces be the same as they were before we went into quarantine? While many employers have altogether forgone their dedicated offices in favor of permanent remote work setups, others are eager to make the transition back and to do so as smoothly as possible. It's clear that while certain aspects of these environments will be restored, others have been irreversibly transformed. Architecture firms are among those gearing up for a return and are keen to implement some of the innovations they've been developing during our time away.

Several practices have been exploring the use of pre- and postoccupancy sensor technologies to better understand how workspaces, large and small, are employed and how different forces interact. Developed in-house at KieranTimberlake, LMN Architects, and ZGF Architects, these multifaceted systems and applications provide their design teams and clients with objective feedback that can supplement the more subjective information generated from surveys. Overall, the data sourced through these solutions can help architects design and lay out spaces that are more conducive to our changing needs in a postpandemic world.

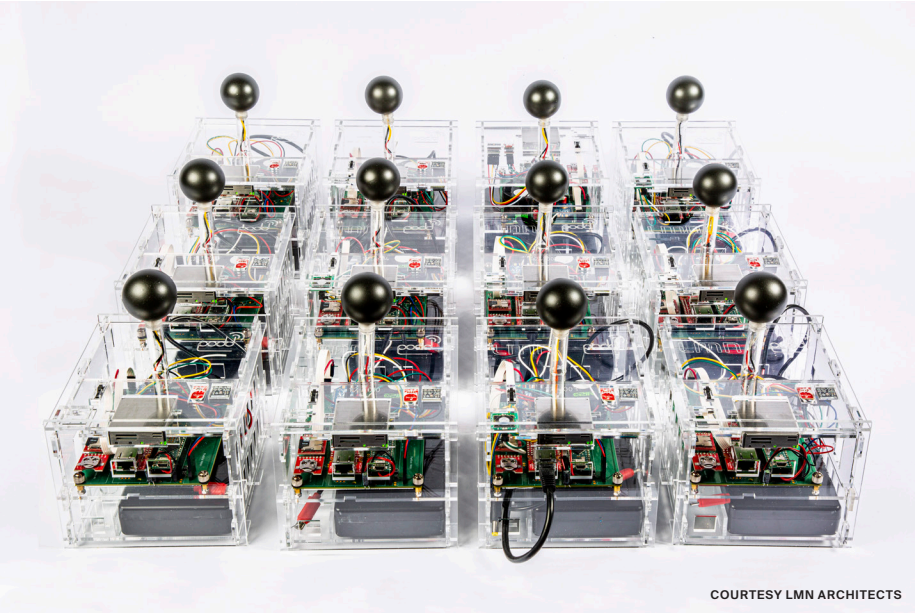
"The built environment has a huge impact on our health and well-being," said Flavia Grey, ZGF senior data strategist. "We want to think deeply about the users of our projects and enable them to do their best work. Using a

range of wearable sensors, we're trying to get as much transparent information as possible." Grey and her team began experimenting with this technology before the pandemic hit. They used sensors to set up demos based on standard office practices of personal desk work and group meetings within ZGF's Seattle office. Grey was able to draw correlations between seemingly unrelated metrics like one's heart rate and building parameters. This type of information can help designers understand how someone feels within one area or another.

"COVID-19 has made this research even more relevant," Grey said. "We've had to prove the value of remote work and at the same time find ways to maximize real estate. Employers have to ask themselves, 'Should we give everyone their own desks again? Should we optimize our space plans in order to leverage the benefits of remote work and save money on rent?' These technologies are teaching us what work really is and how to use space efficiently."

Sensor information can translate into practical solutions such as the ability to light specific areas rather than entire office floors. Such data could also help establish staggered work schedules so that not all employees have to share the same space at the same time. "Once you learn the patterns, you can be more flexible," Grey added.

While ZGF is still working on turning these investigations into products and services for its clients, firms like LMN Architects have developed and marketed their own industry-specific sensor systems. LMN's Post Occupancy



Top left: Roast by KieranTimberlake

Top right: PODDs by LMN Architects

Bottom left: Pre- and postoccupancy evaluations by ZGF Architects

Data Devices (PODDs) can be installed in any interior to measure carbon dioxide, sound, and temperature levels. "With our clients especially aware of indoor environmental quality now, PODDs can deliver data that allows our teams and clients to understand and manage indoor environmental quality," said Kjell Anderson, director of sustainable design at LMN. "They track data over a period of weeks, providing insight into when and where issues occur, allowing them to pinpoint any concerns in time and space."

With multiple devices placed in a room, employers can make nuanced adjustments to improve the comfort, health, and safety of their workers. "They're able to make determinations based on a series of questions: How did the predicted comfort correlate with actual comfort conditions? How does the building 'breathe' over hours and days? Does indoor air quality go down in the afternoon? Each of these can influence the design and operation of buildings as well as the education of occupants," Anderson said.

Joining tech giants Amazon and Google, which produce a slew of comparable products, some practices have developed their own smartphone applications. Roast by KieranTimberlake affiliate KT Innovations is an occupant comfort survey program that lets designers and clients develop interactive surveys, process responses, and visualize data. This interface allows users to register their perceptions of temperature, humidity, ventilation, ambient light, noise levels, air freshness, and cleanliness within their surroundings.

Time and location stamping helps designers monitor the activation levels of the systems being analyzed.

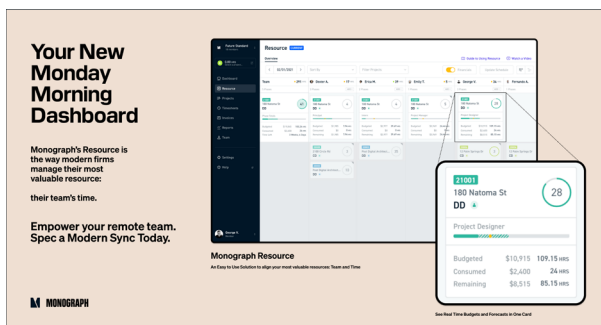
"While we don't expect Roast to be used in new ways, postpandemic, we foresee another motivation for its implementing," said KieranTimberlake principal Roderick Bates. "After a year of living in spaces where they have a high level of personal control, returning building occupants will likely bristle at the standard one-size-fits-all method of building operations. Occupants will desire their offices to accommodate their comfort needs, and building owners will have to provide safe and comfortable spaces to draw people back. Comfort surveys and applying the data collected to building operations will be crucial for navigating the shift in comfort expectations."

The challenge in making these solutions work for a wide range of stakeholders is to ensure that the data generated is used for the right purposes and does not fall into the wrong hands, so to speak. It's essential that these sensors, applications, and systems safeguard employees' privacy. Architects should be able to implement these tools to make considered choices without the risk of breaching this boundary. The pandemic presents an opportunity to make seismic changes in workplace design and address problems that have been ignored for too long. These technologies have the potential to remedy those issues by making our buildings more sustainable and energy efficient. **Adrian Madlener**



# Remote Working Tools for Architects

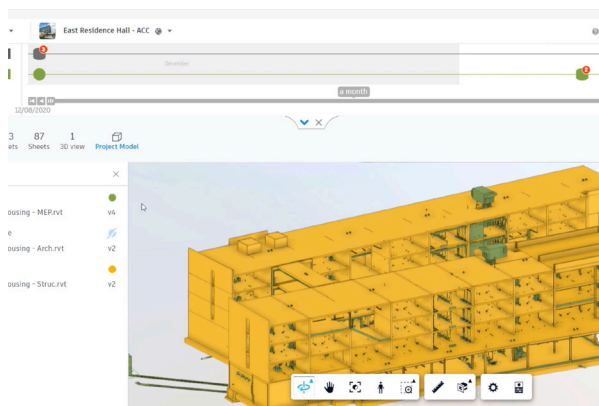
The pandemic has revealed the full potential of remote working technologies. Equipped with the latest virtual meeting and project management tools, we've grown accustomed to being productive at home and elsewhere. However, for architects who rely on data-heavy files and intensive teamwork, this transition has been more challenging. The following selection of new and improved applications make it easier for designers to collaborate on modeling, rendering, and BIM tasks as well as manage projects, monitor finances, and stay connected with colleagues. **By Adrian Madlener**



## Resource Monograph

Resource by Monograph is a project management dashboard tool tailor-made for architects. A simplified alternative to endless spreadsheets, the application helps streamline weekly Monday morning planning meetings, saving firms with five or more employees up to \$100,000 in billable hours each year.

[monograph.io](https://monograph.io)



## BIM Collaborate Pro Autodesk

The next innovation in the ongoing evolution of BIM 360 software, the new BIM Collaborate Pro program combines the best of Autodesk's suite of products so that AEC teams can coauthor and collaborate on various design projects from as many remote locations as needed. BIM Collaborate Pro pairs with Autodesk Doc, Cloud Worksharing, Civil 3D, Plant 3D, and Revit applications.

[autodesk.com](https://autodesk.com)



## CORE Paperspace

An accelerated computing infrastructure, CORE by Paper-space lets architecture firms oversee complex workflows. The program can manage multiple remote machines at once and offers shared storage. CORE also integrates with the leading CAD applications.

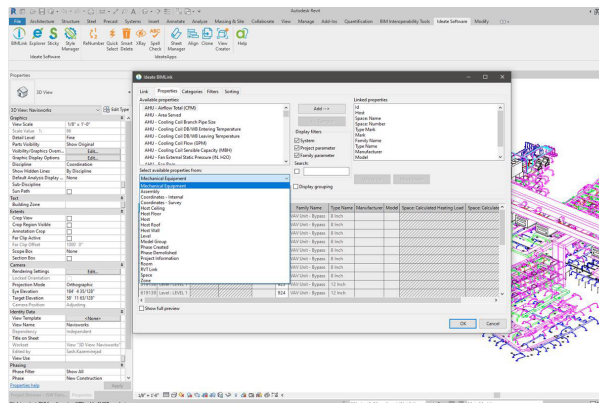
[paperspace.com](https://paperspace.com)



## BQE CORE Architect BQE Software

A cloud-based platform, CORE by BQE manages time and expense tracking, as well as invoicing, accounting, project management, HR, and CRM. The easy-to-use interface incorporates powerful automatization and can be used on different mobile and stationary devices. Integrated artificial intelligence provides real-time insight into the progress of projects.

[bqe.com](https://bqe.com)



## Ideate BIMLink Ideate Software

The Ideate BIMLink plug-in provides architects with better control of their Autodesk Revit data. Users can interface between Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and input volumes of BIM data back into Revit with a new level of precision and speed. Accessible from multiple devices simultaneously, the application makes full use of Excel and Revit's capabilities and can process multiple streams of data at any given moment.

[ideatesoftware.com](https://ideatesoftware.com)



## Enscape 3.0 Enscape

Incorporating the quality of high-end video game technology, the recently released Enscape 3.0 is collaborative real-time rendering and virtual reality software. The modeling application allows for faster builds with less error. With quicker turnaround times, different team members can review designs simultaneously and swiftly implement changes if needed.

[enscape3d.com](https://enscape3d.com)

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# Green Tech

As we move closer to meeting crucial sustainability benchmarks, less carbon-intensive building materials like responsibly sourced mass timber are being joined by upcycled and recycled composites to create more efficient buildings. Innovations in integrated systems, IoT products, and green energy that all might have seemed unimaginable a few years ago are becoming common. Here are a few standout examples that can transform our built environments. *By Adrian Madlener*



## V3 Energy Tile Pavegen

London-based start-up Pavegen first began harvesting energy from the U.K.'s myriad soccer stadiums. A potential game changer in green energy, the company's V3 Energy Tile turns a foot-step into electricity. Implemented as a modular system, this kinetic technology can be used in almost any setting, from sidewalks to retail spaces and even nightclubs. Yosemite National Park recently installed a 30-square-foot surface within its main visitor center that helps power two digital screens. These displays share information about the product and promote awareness of the possibilities of sustainable living.

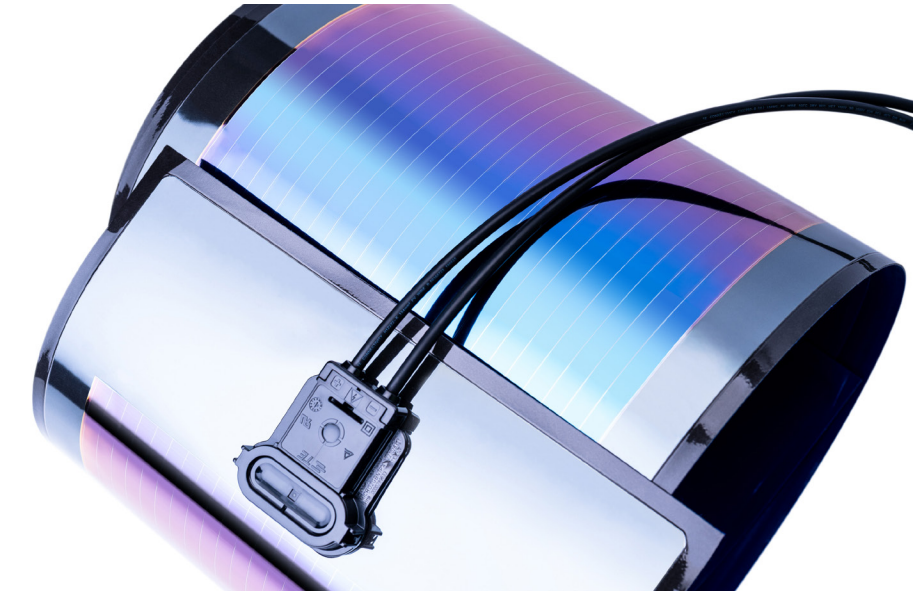
[pavegen.com](http://pavegen.com)



## Living Installation Bioo

Bioo Living Installations transform plants into power switches. An engaging alternative to the standard tools, Bioo's custom Living Installations can take on many forms. Bioo One and Bioo Two are plug-and-play potted plants that can turn on music or launch a light show.

[biootech.com](http://biootech.com)



## HeliaSol Heliatek

HeliaSol is a quickly applied solar-cell-based textile that can retrofit any building into a source of green energy. Produced by German start-up Heliatek, this ultralight, flexible, and easy-to-install product can adhere to almost any metal, concrete, membrane, glass, or bitumen surface. It eliminates the need for the complicated penetrative substructures common with standard rigid solar panels. Available in 16-foot-wide strips, HeliaSol can transform structures large or small.

[heliatek.com](http://heliatek.com)



## Heavy Duty Portable Solar Canopy Pvilion

Brooklyn-based tech company Pvilion has spent the better part of the past decade expanding the scope of solar-cell technology in building facades, military tents, tensile charging stations, backpacks, and more. Products like the Heavy Duty Portable Solar Canopy transform underused surfaces into sources of energy. Installed for both temporary and permanent tent coverage, this durable synthetic textile solution is perfect for industrial or commercial applications. The easily assembled Portable Solar Canopy is also ideal for charging large equipment.

[pvilion.com](http://pvilion.com)



# TECH+

## Harnessing Technology for Future Practice

The annual architecture technology conference returns with its first virtual iteration on May 20.

After a turbulent year, 2021 has the potential to be a period of reemergence and growth for the AEC industries. To take stock of how to adapt to our new reality, *The Architect's Newspaper* presents the seventh annual Tech+ conference on May 20. It will showcase the latest tools and research relevant to architects, engineers, and construction practitioners. Seattle-based practice and digital-infrastructure R&D pioneer LMN Architects is the cochair of this year's event, titled Harnessing Technology for Future Practice. The day will feature leaders presenting on topics like quantifying physical properties within the digital environment by using tools such as laser scanning, biomimetic materials, and innovative energy simulation.

Because Tech+ will be held virtually for the first time since its inception, *AN* is taking advantage of all that the format has to offer, including the opportunity to peek into the environments that surround our speakers. "Just as we have all peered into each other's lives over the past year, at Tech+ we will have the opportunity to see where and how our panelists work," said Mark Nicol, principal at LMN. "By connecting remotely, we get a small window into the studios, workrooms, and

shops of each of the speakers. This offers a different insight than is afforded if we all gather in one location." The conference's virtual platform, Hopin, offers more than just speed dating-style networking; it allows attendees to participate in the cross-pollination of ideas by sharing their video and audio directly with panelists.

At the heart of the event is the idea that the practice of architecture must be focused on the realization of durable physical artifacts. Further, our thinking about and utilization of technology should serve those ends, a mindset exemplified by LMN's approach. Nicol said: "Whether it is digital delivery, physical computing, or recent exploration using lidar, LMN is always looking for new opportunities for emerging technologies to inform and advance our design thinking. We are committed to the principle that ultimately the goal is to make beautifully crafted physical creations, and we are careful to employ technology toward that end."

The conference's lineup will explore this idea through topics like forecasting the future of simulation and how data can be used in early stages of design development. The last panel will explore how digital delivery

affects craft at the final stage of projects. The program offers the opportunity to hear from a diverse set of scholars, practicing architects, engineers, contractors, and fabricators, with most panelists wearing a combination of those hats.

This year's opening keynote speaker is Jenny Sabin, principal of Jenny Sabin Studio and Arthur L. and Isabel B. Wiesenberg Professor in Architecture at Cornell University. As an educator, designer, and artist, she draws from biology and mathematics to create structures informed by responsive material systems. "Jenny will blow the door wide open at the start of the conference and challenge us all to think in new ways about the relationship between material behavior, structural performance, form generation, and the role that technology can play in negotiating these relationships," said Nicol. "She is a big thinker whose innovative work is grounded in rigor and care. Jenny is sure to set the stage for a great series of conversations to follow."

Other featured speakers include Christoph Reinhart, director of the Sustainable Design Lab at MIT, and Robert Stuart-Smith, director of the Autonomous Manufacturing Lab at the University of Pennsylvania and principal of re-

search practice Kokkugia. These speakers will be joined by Luc Wilson, director of KPF Urban Interface, to discuss the future of simulation tools at urban and material scales.

While construction may still rely on traditional approaches that have stood the test of time, new practices allow for improved communication and more complex digital fabrication. One of the conference's panels, Data Driven Pre-Construction, will dive into pre-construction tools and explore the untapped potential of data. Scott Overall from SHoP Architects and Sophie Pennetier from Enclos will showcase the complex geometries of the Botswana Innovation Hub and go behind the scenes of the National Veterans Resource Center at Syracuse University for the first time in public.

The conference will close with a look at how emerging technologies facilitate the digital delivery and highly customized fabrication demanded in many of today's boundary-pushing projects. Panelists include Martin Miller, partner and design director at AntiStatics; Peter Brown and Joseph Skulski from Digifabshop; and Scott Crawford, founding member of LMN's in-house research and development tech lab, LMNts. **Katie Angen**



### cove.tool

Building energy codes are becoming more stringent around the world, and cove.tool allows users to cut construction costs by 2 to 3 percent while adhering to them. The app's machine-learning algorithms look through thousands of alternatives to help pick the best one for the project and budget. The app itself is easy to use and learn, allowing every designer to model buildings for energy, daylight, glare, water, carbon, and more. The software ties in directly to the AIA 2030 Design Data Exchange and the Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Survey database for benchmarking and reporting.

cove.tools

### Branch Technology

Branch Technology is an advanced-manufacturing firm using construction-scale 3D printing to unlock design freedom while providing an exclusive competitive advantage to clients who value design differentiation and innovation. These solutions include facade panels and wall systems, theme-based rock work, and large exhibit installations.

branch.technology

### Microsol Resources

Microsol Resources has been delivering integrated solutions to the architecture, engineering, and construction industries for over 30 years. The company is a recognized leader in BIM- and CAD-based solutions as well as an Autodesk Platinum Partner. Besides CAD and BIM software, Microsol provides training, consulting, staffing, 3D printing, and data management services to help customers gain a competitive advantage and improve their productivity.

microsolresources.com



For more architectural technologies coverage, visit [techplus.co](https://techplus.co).



# Esto

Photography of the Built Environment

esto.com

Brooklyn Navy Yard, New Lab, Brooklyn NY, Marvel Architects  
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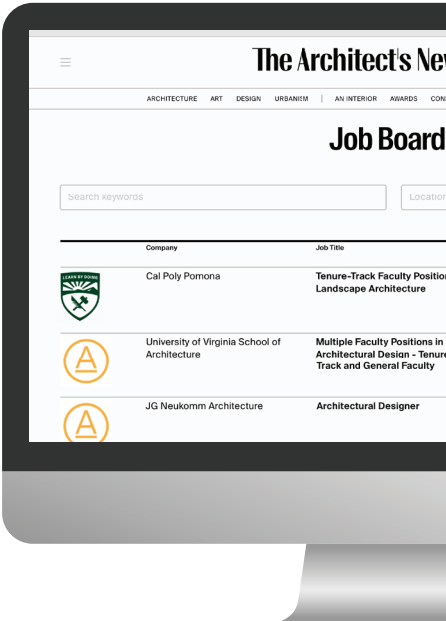
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**Mid-Atlantic**  
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**Midwest**  
**August 18**

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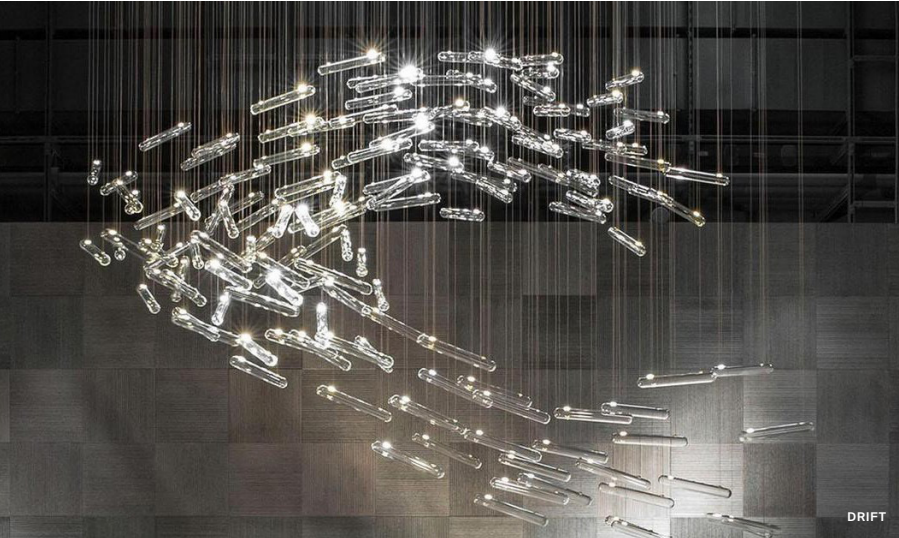


Southwest

Electrifying Design: A Century of Lighting

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
1001 Bissonnet Street  
Houston

Through May 16



This spring, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is hosting *Electrifying Design: A Century of Lighting*, a show looking at the history of lighting design around the world over the past century. It is the first large-scale exhibition in the U.S. to examine lighting design as a catalyst for technological and artistic innovation.

Since the late 19th century, electric lighting and its accompanying fixtures have become salient features in both domestic and urban life. Finding a lighting fixture for any room is not so much about satisfying a need, but rather a conscious aesthetic choice. *Electri-*

*fyng Design* examines lighting as a crucial part of modern and contemporary design practices through a time line of the field's development. The exhibition examines lighting through three themes (Typologies, The Bulb, and Quality of Light) chosen to reflect function, design, and effect.

*Electrifying Design* was curated by Cindi Strauss, curator of decorative arts, craft, and design at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and Sarah Schleuning, senior curator of decorative arts and design at the Dallas Museum of Art. **Keren Dillard**

West

Why Not Things? PUUUULP on display

M&A Storefront  
1313 Sunset Boulevard  
Los Angeles

Through June 30



Los Angeles nonprofit Materials & Applications (M&A) curates exhibitions and commissions work by architects, designers, and artists to provide a platform for experimental architecture. Its newest exhibition, *Why Not Things? PUUUULP on display*, foregrounds the personal protective equipment (PPE) and other basic supplies that became critical survival tools during the pandemic. "This project is really interesting in that it is a portion of a larger, ongoing conversation at M&A about mutual aid," said Jesse Hammer, the designer of the exhibition and the person who runs PUUUULP, a Los Angeles-based studio practice whose

work explores the intersection between art history and architecture. "These objects can be positioned as something of care and love instead of something that we throw away and take for granted." Hammer's installation occupies M&A's storefront space on Sunset Boulevard. "We used the storefront as a storage system for water and recast [it] into an exhibition space for our heat-aid project of distributing water and PPE," Hammer said. "The storefront itself became an information system and a storage system on how to get involved in the project." **KD**

Midwest

There is Black Housing in the Future: Equitable Public Housing as a Memorial

Elmhurst Art Museum  
150 South Cottage Hill Avenue  
Elmhurst, Illinois

Until June 20



This spring, the Elmhurst Art Museum, outside Chicago, is hosting two shows revealing historical and contemporary efforts for equitable housing in the region. The exhibitions, *In Focus: The Chicago Freedom Movement and the Fight for Fair Housing* and *There is Black Housing in the Future: Equitable Public Housing as Memorial*, foreground the inequitable and bias-ridden history of the Chicago public housing system along with the disparities in housing made available to Black people in the suburbs of Chicago.

*There is Black Housing in the Future* will

be exhibited in the Mies van der Rohe-designed McCormick House. The installation, designed by Pittsburgh-based Alisha Wormsley and Chicago-based Ayanah Moor, aims to be a catalyst for activism and education in support of mothers fighting for the future of Black housing. Inspired by Afrofuturist writings and artists, *There is Black Housing in the Future* affirms the visibility of Black communities and references national, community, and grassroots organizations, like Moms 4 Housing, that advocate for affordable, dignified housing for all. **KD**

Southwest

Houston 2020 Visions

Architecture Center Houston  
902 Commerce Street  
Houston

Through August 27



*Houston 2020 Visions*, an exhibition at the AIA Houston's Architecture Center Houston (ArCH) space, displays the results of an initiative that began in 2018 in response to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey the year before. Since then, two design competitions have been put into motion, titled Complete the Community: An Affordable Housing and Design Competition and Request for Visions. Both solicited proposals for innovative ways to rebuild a better city and place design

and sustainability at the core of planning for a more resilient future.

The exhibit features 26 selected projects from the competitions that explore themes including Prairie-to-Bay Ecology, Green Corridors, Hubs, the Future of Buildings, and the Future of the Energy Economy. The showcase is the inaugural exhibition for the newly reopened ArCH space, which flooded during Hurricane Harvey. It is currently open to the public by reservation. **Nathan Bahadursingh**





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**Portland** (AM)

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**Chicago** (1-DAY)

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**Boston** (1-DAY)

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**Los Angeles** (2-DAY)

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**Seattle** (1-DAY)

December 3

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# Modern Architecture: A Critical History, fifth edition

Kenneth Frampton | Thames & Hudson | \$29.95

## Modern Architecture and the Lifeworld: Essays in Honor of Kenneth Frampton

Eds. Karla Cavarra Britton and Robert McCarter | Thames & Hudson | \$40

Architectural history has a tendency to cross the line into boosterism. Such was the famous contention of the historian Manfredo Tafuri, who chastised his peers for using their platform to promote various stylistic developments. Tafuri originally termed this phenomenon “operative criticism,” effectively damning the practice for decades to come. But one scholar, Kenneth Frampton, has bucked this trend, adopting the phrase for his own ends.

In the estimation of his peer Mary McLeod, Frampton is “arguably the most influential architectural historian since Sigfried Giedion.” His writings and teachings have shaped generations of architects and theorists, including myself. Still, one is given to wonder why Frampton would describe his work as “operative criticism” or “operative history.” Does this not undermine his authority as a historian and critic? Why embrace a label that carries negative connotations?

Two recently published books offer some insight into these complex questions: *Modern Architecture and the Lifeworld: Essays in Honor of Kenneth Frampton* (2020), expertly edited by Karla Cavarra Britton and Robert McCarter, along with the new edition of Frampton’s 1980 classic *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*. Both these books make evident Frampton’s extraordinary analytical talents and scholarly brilliance. They also speak volumes about what is missing from the academic training of architectural historians and theorists today.

*Modern Architecture and the Lifeworld* brings together the voices and perspectives of Frampton’s contemporaries: architects whose careers he influenced, historians whose scholarship he admires, and colleagues and sparring partners whose friendship he still values. It also situates Frampton’s historiographical and theoretical achievements in relation to his life and times: the writings of Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, and Edward Said, which shaped Frampton’s conception of the public sphere; the student protests of 1968, which stirred his engagement with Critical Theory, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt School; the Venice Biennale of 1980, which instigated Frampton’s forceful critiques of postmodernism; Hal Foster’s *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (1983), which gave Frampton occasion to theorize Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis’s notion of critical regionalism anew.

Jean-Louis Cohen’s probing remarks highlight Frampton’s contributions to our knowledge of Soviet avant-garde architecture and urbanism. He details how Frampton, under the influence of Camilla Gray’s *The Russian Experiment in Art* (1962), brought works by El Lissitzky, Vladimir Tatlin, Ivan Leonidov, and other eastern European artists to the attention of English-speaking architects and historians. At the time, scholars were still heavily under the sway of Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture* and Reyner Banham’s *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, which mostly ignored Soviet achievements in art and design.

Anthony Vidler’s text offers an incisive appraisal of Frampton’s early analysis of Le Cor-

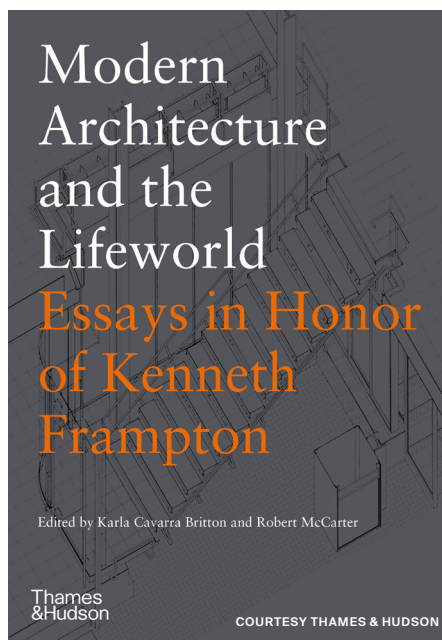


Last fall, Thames & Hudson published the fifth edition of Kenneth Frampton’s classic study, *Modern Architecture*, as well as the commemorative volume *Architecture and the Lifeworld*.

busier’s Radiant City, which appeared “at a moment when the grand utopias of the Modern Movement were being subject to serious critique.” Vidler explores how Frampton’s early preoccupation with Le Corbusier—who was the subject of Frampton’s last seminar before he retired last year from Columbia University, incidentally—anticipated his later concern with the “spoilation of the environment, the breakdown of local cultures, and the loss of the art of tectonic design.” He suggests that Frampton’s analysis of the Radiant City must be read in relation to the postwar hegemony of the automobile, the proliferation of urban sprawl, and the postwar disenchantment with utopian thought.

Brigitte Shim and Howard Sutcliffe offer a vivid portrait of the newly established Kenneth Frampton archive at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. They pull together personal notebooks and conference proceedings, Mylar drawings and professional correspondence, all in an effort to understand Frampton’s “long-standing interest in the crucial role of landscape and topography in the powerful act of placemaking.” Steven Holl, in a very personal account, acknowledges his artistic and professional debt to Frampton. Pritzker Prize laureates Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara underscore the importance of Frampton’s writings on critical regionalism in their evolution as practicing professionals.

But Mary McLeod’s essay is arguably the most significant contribution to the anthology. Her text unpacks the meaning behind Frampton’s usage of the term “critical,” which raised eyebrows at the time. (McLeod contends that the historian “was one of the first, if not the first, to use ‘critical’ in the title of an English-language book on architecture.”) She argues that the identification grew out of Frampton’s growing political awareness, which took root in the late 1960s when he moved to the United States. It al-



lowed him to develop an approach to cultural criticism that took “the risk of proposing alternatives that might offer, however modestly, the promise of a richer, more fulfilling existence.” Frampton’s writings recall the work of Walter Benjamin, McLeod suggests, to the extent that he refuses to abandon hope in the face of rampant ecological devastation and capitalist exploitation.

In my view, one of Frampton’s most attractive traits is how he came of age intellectually long before the professionalization of architectural history and theory. He has never aligned himself with theoretical cliques, which permeate professional academia, nor has he succumbed to the pressures of overspecialization, which limit one’s sense of what is important at any given time. Intellectually restless, he often remarks that he learns as much from his students as they do from him. The clearest evidence of his genuine love of learning can be gleaned from the fifth edition of *Modern Architecture*. At 735 pages, it is almost twice the length of the previous edition and represents the most substantial reworking of the book since it first appeared in 1980.

With this latest revision, Frampton has sought, in his words, to “widen the scope of the book in order to redress the Eurocentric and transatlantic bias of previous editions of this history.” Taking Luis Fernández-Galiano’s *Global Architecture circa 2000* (2007) as his starting point, he surveys the major trends in 20th-century architecture from the world’s major continents: Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, and the Americas. Within each area, he foregrounds select works and practices in nations and regions whose artistic and architectural contributions have been underrepresented to date: Canada, for example, which gave us Patkau Architects; West Africa, which has been the stomping ground of Diébédo Francis Kéré; China, which is home to the Beijing-based ZAO/standardar-

chitecture; the former Yugoslavia, which was recently the subject of an outstanding exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. Frampton draws on his encyclopedic knowledge of 19th- and 20th-century socioeconomic and cultural histories in situating each chapter. He traces the careers of specific architects and their practices (Kamran Diba in Iran, for example) in order to give the reader an appreciation for how the modern movement evolved in various geopolitical contexts over the past 50 years.

Consisting of four parts, the new edition of *Modern Architecture* is sure to attract the interest of architects and students of architecture who are hungry to broaden their artistic and geographical horizons. Parts 1 and 2 are virtually unchanged from previous editions, focusing on the historical avant-garde and postwar European and American modernism. Part 3 includes Frampton’s examination of critical regionalism. Part 4 grapples with modernism in a global context. It is this section that covers wholly new terrain, emphasizing the richly heterogeneous character of the modern movement. Frampton considers here the decisive impact that climate, geography, politics, technology, and culture have had on form and program. His postscript recounts the challenges that architecture faces today. “Our failure to develop a sustainable, homeostatic pattern of residential land settlement over the last half-century,” he writes, “is the tragic corollary of our incapacity to curb our appetite for consuming every possible resource.”

To be sure, *Modern Architecture* has an *operative* flavor, as Frampton freely admits. Architects whose practices could be classified as critical regionalist—Rick Joy or Charles Correa’s, for example—are presented in this book in a favorable light. By contrast, “blobitects,” from Frank Gehry to Greg Lynn, come off rather badly. Still, is it really wrong that he expresses preferences for certain figures over others? The reader who seeks a comprehensive and dispassionate overview of recent architectural history should look elsewhere. Postmodernism is underrepresented, for example, despite the fact that it remains a highly influential syntax in contemporary architectural practice. But for anyone interested in the fate of the historical avant-garde—and its continued relevance to the contemporary architectural scene—this book remains in many ways the best resource that we have available. Rooted in the essay form, it speaks clearly and powerfully, reminding us that thoughtful scholarship can be passionate and judicious at the same time. Conviction and commitment may indeed be the essence of critique, as Frampton himself points out: “Despite the constant attempt to maintain a certain level of objectivity, there is an inescapable subjectivity determining one’s choices. Perhaps this is the ultimate meaning of the term ‘a critical history.’”

**Nader Vossoughian is associate professor of architecture at the New York Institute of Technology.**



## *When Practice Becomes Form: Carpentry Tools from Japan* Japan Society | New York City | March 11 through July 11

**Continued from front page** surviving wood structure. Exquisite artifacts from Nishioka's practice offer a view into the exacting process and principles of Japanese carpentry at the Japan Society's exhibition *When Practice Becomes Form: Carpentry Tools from Japan*.

The show offers a satisfying and often awe-inspiring primer on Japan's great timber architecture tradition, which was designated a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2020. Most commonly known in the West for its ingenious and beautifully intricate system of hand-tooled joinery, this living tradition is carefully parsed by the Japan Society's exhibition to reveal an almost devotional ethic of resourcefulness and natural balance. This approach to building offers important lessons for contemporary architecture, especially as the field grapples with the challenges of the climate crisis.

Designed by Sou Fujimoto in collaboration with Brooklyn-based Popular Architecture, the exhibition unfolds over three intimate galleries. This show marks the 50th anniversary of Junzo Yoshimura's landmarked building for the Japan Society—the first structure designed by a Japanese citizen in New York City. Yoshimura's elegant architecture, which merges high modernism with traditional Japanese principles, provides a charismatic background to the exhibition. In the first gallery, exemplary timber constructions are displayed via technical drawings and scaled models of temples and bridges. The models are shown both fully assembled and disassembled, like a kit of IKEA components—without the easy disposability. A beautifully arranged taxonomy of bracket components makes apparent the key to this architecture's resilience. Each temple is an authorless system of interchangeable parts designed with a shared vocabulary of forms and techniques. Even after millennia, these structures can be continually renewed and even reconstructed for changing conditions. For example, the East Hall of the Yakushi-ji Temple, built in the eighth century, has been fully reassembled several times to capture different solar orientations over its life span, demonstrating the adaptability and responsiveness of this method of construction.

Not immediately evident is another secret to this architecture's great longevity. Many of the models on display were expertly crafted by Mitsuo Ogawa, Nishioka's former apprentice and today a renowned *Tōryō* and inheritor of temple construction techniques. Not receiving equal billing as his former teacher or the exhibition's famous designer, Fujimoto, Ogawa's silent presence in the exhibit reminds us of an insight from Richard Sennett's seminal 2008 book *The Craftsman*: that craft traditions are communal technologies collectively managed over generations by often anonymous artisans and laborers. Care for the land, inherited knowledge, and the community itself are responsibilities shared by those building for the future—an instructive idea for how contemporary architectural practice might address the collective challenges facing the planet.

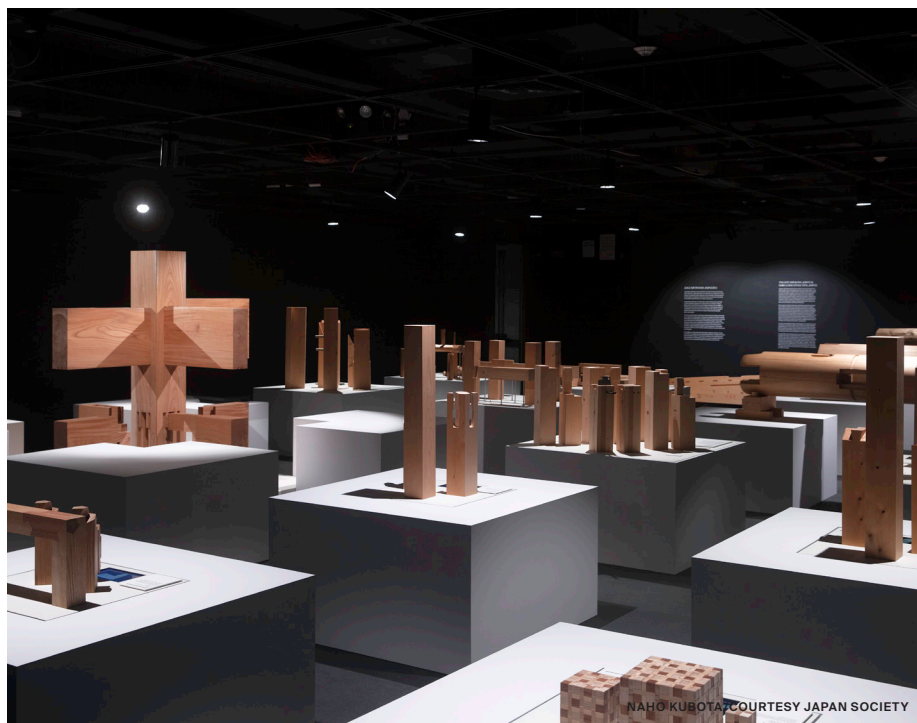
The exhibition's second gallery displays beautifully crafted tools of forged steel and wood that, in the hands of a skilled craftsman, allow for control and precision beyond



NAHO KUBOTA/COURTESY JAPAN SOCIETY

what modern machines can achieve. The show culminates in a reverent display of archetypal joints dramatically lit on pedestals, a staging that demonstrates Fujimoto's deft hand as a designer in elevating these basic building blocks. These joints are part of an elaborate system of structural connections that provide both stability and expression in traditional Japanese architecture. While certainly crowd-pleasing, the striking display of virtuosity at times threatens to aestheticize and overshadow the core principles of economy and expressive pragmatism that are most remarkable in this way of building. When these construction components are overly abstracted into sculptural forms and fetishized for their complexity, they risk becoming what a contemporary practitioner of the craft once described to me as "vanity joinery." In its best moments, the exhibition celebrates a clear and vital approach to building and a particularly relevant practice of cultivating material consciousness.

**Henry Ng is a solo architect practicing and living in New York City.**



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**Top:** Scale models in the exhibition's first gallery show how systems of interchangeable parts facilitate the reconstruction and repair of buildings over centuries.

**Bottom:** The dramatic final gallery places examples of joinery techniques on pedestals, allowing viewers to study them at full scale.





Pershmerga soldiers engage in a simulated raid on a mock town—complete with eclectic facades—in Erbil, Iraq.

CPL. NELSON RODRIGUEZ/PUBLIC DOMAIN

## False Fronts

**As postmodern architects and planners theorized new ways of citymaking, military analysts were right behind them.**

In the latter half of the 20th century, as suburbanization and low-density development diversified urban morphologies around the world, architects and planners worked to establish disciplinary tools and perspectives capable of keeping up with the new urban forms. The many developments in urban planning and architectural discourse of this period were echoed by equally rapid and far-reaching advances in urban military intelligence.

While architects and urban designers crafted new narratives and imaginaries to address the changing face of the city, their research was mirrored by a related, but twisted, counter-

narrative dispassionately and exhaustively detailed in training manuals and military treatises on urban warfare doctrine. Through these texts we can read an alternate architectural and urban education, in which lethal operatives are trained to treat contemporary urban and architectural forms as suspect. They would prepare a new generation of urban warfighters to see past sprawling streetfronts and disingenuous facades to deep structures of underlying patterns and forms, decoding the secrets of the postmodern city to enlist its structures as cover for violence.



## Holding patterns

Two analysts, training expert Lieutenant Colonel John W. Burberry and military geographer Richard Ellefsen, would prove instrumental in shaping the military doctrine on “urban terrain,” which promised to make the increasingly complex, shifting urban landscape tractable for military personnel. The concerted efforts of Burberry and Ellefsen produced a tool kit for identifying patterns of growth, land use, and building form that underlie all cities. Burberry took the broad view, documenting the shape and spread of urban morphologies, while Ellefsen had a narrower focus, measuring repetitive qualities of districts, neighborhoods, and buildings within the new city forms.

In 1978, Burberry outlined his operational framework in his article “Urbanized Terrain: Perspective and Patterns.” Details of individual cities, he argued, were less important to military command than the overall distribution of built-up areas and the infrastructural connections that crisscross between them. Under his rubric, the seemingly endless variety of urban forms could be reduced to a limited number of essential patterns of growth, neatly labeled as hubs, satellites, networks, and pie slices. Each pattern, in tandem with its surrounding natural terrain, would shape unique combat potentials and liabilities. In a series of drawings projecting imagined lines of attack through each urban pattern, Burberry

describes the funnels, fans, and canals of troop movement each form mandates. The following year, in June 1979, Ellefsen published *Characteristics of Urban Terrain*, in which he applies a similarly pattern-based analytical approach to the finer scale of urban space. The document aimed to reduce the complexity of the city into actionable variables and rules of thumb, described by Ellefsen as “replicative generalizations,” essential and inevitable spatial tropes evident and operative in even the most complex urban areas. The world’s cities, Ellefsen argued, share common metrics, and within roughly equivalent districts across a wide variety of cities, these metrics are constant and predictable. The width of city streets in a low-density suburb or the proportions of public space in an urban core, for example, are patterns that repeat worldwide. By cataloguing these recurring metrics, and deciphering the patterns, Ellefsen’s study effectively enables a probabilistic reading of urban form. Both Burberry’s and Ellefsen’s work were quickly incorporated in urban warfare military training manuals, beginning with *Field Manual 90-10: Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain*, released in August of 1979. Burberry’s shorthand diagrams of hubs, satellites, networks, and pie slices featured in the manual, while some of Ellefsen’s concepts found parallels in an expanded sec-



Another mock environment, this simulated refugee camp in Fort Bliss, El Paso, was erected according to the principles of urban warfare.

tion on urban terrain analysis. The broad definition of urban terrain the doctrine laid out would allow for a fluid operational equivalence in radically diverse scenarios, a smoothing of previously distinct environments. While the homogenizing forms of late-20th-century development took root, the new manual would seek to address their inescapable spread. Villages, suburbs, and exurbs would be addressed with the same rigor—and skepticism—as the historical urban core. Urban sprawl, and other “urban peripheral phenomena” dissected by Ellef-

sen and his predecessors, would be canonized in the military lexicon, foregrounded in the crosshairs of projected future combat. The document highlights both suburban and exurban forms populating the sprawling city regions. Among the growing taxonomy of suspect urban forms were “strip areas,” “dispersed residential areas,” “prefabricated” structures, and dedicated “industrial/transportation areas.” The “gently curving” street pattern of the ubiquitous suburb is highlighted as a unique feature capable of impacting operations.

## Readings from the front

As the training doctrine sought to expose the hidden interior conditions of the urban fabric, the city’s exterior condition proved a formidable barrier. To the urban combat operative, contiguous urban walls and the individual building facades that composed them deserved the same scrutiny as active combatants. The strategic deployment of walls on an urban grid could shape the prospects of battle formations as significantly as known enemy positions. Ornamental embellishments and playful architectural details were like a form of counterintelligence, capable of projecting misinformation about the spatial layouts and structural systems they worked to conceal. Throughout the late 20th century, the military urban warfare training apparatus developed tactics of intelligence gathering on conditions of urban and architectural enclosure, hoping to gain the upper hand on these enigmatic vertical interfaces.

At the urban scale, military planners would place increasing significance on the frontage of vertical surfaces within given neighborhoods and blocks. While the concept of “frontage” is familiar to urban planners, it finds new purchase in this period within the lexicon of urban combat, conflating a seemingly benign spatial metric with the combat logics it helps to shape. Urban planners conceive of frontage as a multi-dimensional design constraint, shaping the public realm of the city by articulating both the desired width of a building along a given street and the desired distance of the building facade setback from the street. Military command, on the other hand, speaks of frontage as the width of a battlefield for which a combat operative or unit may be responsible during the fight. From Roman military history, a frontage of an individual soldier may be tied to the dimensional width of the soldier’s shield, and in modern

military history, frontages have expanded exponentially with the advent of long-range weaponry and communications technologies allowing the command of larger territories. While frontages of troops and tanks may be more fluid and relational on open terrain, where spatial landmarks are provided by the distribution of force itself, within an urban context, the term is inextricably tied to the urban fabric, where prescribed widths of command and control are grafted onto the metric grid of the city. In 1987, Ellefsen developed his Urban Terrain Zone Characteristics for the U.S. Army Human Engineering Laboratory, which forged an explicit correlation between the militaristic and urbanistic readings of frontage. In it, he presented a robust detailing of the frontage conditions in various typical urban districts, with common patterns of land value driving a predictable set of dispositions to the street. Buildings

in the urban core, for example, are marketed by the “front foot”—the number of linear feet exposed to a major thoroughfare, driving demand for long storefronts. Residential districts, on the other hand, require each unit to be accessed from the street, resulting in long, narrow forms with minimal frontage. While other urban analysts might describe differing neighborhood districts in terms of their varying patterns of density, floor area ratios, or lot coverage, Ellefsen’s “urban terrain zones” collect similar building types in districts distinguished most clearly by common degrees of frontage, percentages of street lengths framed by urban facades. With this new conception of the city as a matrix for the distribution of vertical barriers projecting dominance over prescribed slivers of the urban arena, the assessment and control of those barriers was more important than ever.

## Architectures of subterfuge

In the late 20th century, military strategists, like architectural critics, recognized that structural legibility and truthful expressions of building materials were increasingly things of the past. As Ellefsen’s building identification keys evidence, traditional building exteriors had mostly telegraphed their internal structure and function. Modernist buildings, too, were easy to decipher from their outward appearance, their unadorned, unornamented building skins and legible structural expression considered refreshingly “simple” from the combat analyst’s perspective. But the contemporary city was stylistically and programmatically more complex, and “one-to-one” relationships between interior and exterior were harder to come by. Amid a sea of postmodern development and architectural deceit, urban facades could not be taken at face value. According to Ellefsen’s pamphlet, build-

ing use has a direct impact on the amount and proportions of structure to glazing, and therefore the degree of concealment and cover available, especially on the front facade. While modernists may have argued that “form follows function,” Ellefsen recognized the many possible contradictions of the built environment, as summarized by his description of “function versus form.” The document suggests that a dangerous inauthenticity abounds in the streetfront facades of world cities, where the expectations of type are commonly subverted. Storefronts, Ellefsen writes, are particularly deceptive, likely to be ornamented to the extent they obscure load-bearing construction beyond. He encourages trainees to look above and beyond these flashy ground-floor facades with expensive veneers in order to assess the true character of the building. Mixed morphologies—for instance,

“box-wall” construction atop column-supported podiums—may send mixed signals about the spatial and structural logics within, Ellefsen warns. Modern frames topped with traditional roof pitches or vernacular details are similarly deemed suspect. Mixed-use buildings are another particular conundrum, changing their layout from ground-floor retail to upper-level offices or residences, with separate entrances to upper levels sometimes not immediately apparent. The city, it seems, is always at risk of infiltration by these architectural double agents, and the astute observer must flush them out. Military trainees are encouraged to not judge buildings by their covers—to look beyond the compound ornamental logics of the facade, averting their eyes from this curated public interface. In the more humble aspects of the building, combat op-

eratives might find more direct insights into the structure’s organizational truth. “The true character of the building,” Ellefsen argues, “can be seen always from the rear.” **Editor’s note: Portions of this text were previously published in *Fronts: Military Urbanisms and the Developing World* (AR+D Publishing, 2020) by Ersela Kripa and Stephen Mueller.** **Ersela Kripa and Stephen Mueller are co-founders of AGENCY, an architectural practice leveraging spatial design and information to counteract nascent forms of global and urban insecurity. Kripa and Mueller are faculty members at Texas Tech University, where they codirect POST (Project for Operative Spatial Technologies).**



# 38 Comment

## Silver Lining

Architects survived the Trump years by adopting critical, activist viewpoints. It would be a shame if they were to abandon them now.

The day after Donald Trump was elected president, I made my way, still massively hungover and dressed half in pajamas, from my apartment in the Copycat Building in North Baltimore to the Peabody Conservatory, where I went to graduate school. The administration wanted to *talk* about things, and so frightened, despondent students crowded into a small but high-ceilinged meeting room in a campus annex. I sat in the back among dozens of others who spoke in frightened voices about violence and deportation and all manner of horrible things that seemed, with the election of this one man, imminent. All the administrators at the front of the room could do was *be there for us*, assure us that everything would be all right. I felt instead like I was in some kind of bizarre movie where the suits to whom I was indebted to the tune of \$40,000 promised to be stalwarts in the fight against a nascent fascism. I left early and skipped class afterward.

Only after Joe Biden was finally granted office four years later, following a long, drawn-out process, did I recall how surreal those early days of Trump had been, how everyone suddenly and all at once decided that it was the time to do something because *bad things were happening*.

Architecture was no exception—except for, well, the AIA. On November 9, 2016, the American Institute of Architects released a now-infamous statement that effectively pledged its 89,000-strong membership “to working with President-elect Trump to address the issues our country faces, particularly strengthening the nation’s aging infrastructure.... This has been a hard-fought, contentious election process. It is now time for all of us to work together to advance policies that help our country move forward.”

The backlash was immediate, with #NotMyAIA leading the charge on architecture Twitter. The AIA’s statement wasn’t just tone-deaf but borderline insipid, considering the sheer frenzy and grief and gravitas of the moment, and the organization was quick to elaborate that it would “continue to be at the table and be a voice for the profession, especially when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion.” (This is very funny when one considers the statistics of exactly who is and is not an architect in America.)

However, Trump’s election and these subsequent AIA blunders made thousands of architects consider that, if their professional organization was willing to work with a despotic racist at what seemed like the end of the world, then perhaps they didn’t want to be associated with said professional organization—or even said profession itself. For the first time, many people in architecture awakened to the reality that their jobs were, in fact, highly political and, now, thanks to the AIA, had been explicitly politicized (albeit without their consent).

There were viral hashtags and Twitter threads about how *this is NOT okay*. Signs reading “WE WON’T BUILD YOUR WALL” appeared in the windows of the Harvard Graduate School of Design and the Yale School of Architecture. Everyone became an activist seemingly overnight. They decided to take a much more visible and outspoken stand against injustice. They went to their first-ever protests. *This was a good thing*.

In those heady months, universities declared themselves bastions against insidi-



The Architecture Lobby, a pressure group aiming to change the working conditions of architects, emerged from the Trump years with a higher profile.

ous xenophobic immigration policies, people poured into the streets in the hundreds of thousands, and every day, one got the sense that history was happening and that it involved ordinary people with boring jobs coming together to disavow political moves and attitudes rooted in hatred, violence, and cruelty. Organizations like the Sunrise Movement sprang up overnight, and within architecture itself, existing pressure groups like the Architecture Lobby ballooned into real forces of nature. The Lobby’s response to the AIA was, for me, one of the galvanizing texts of the early Trump days, linking the AIA’s (shocking to some) support of Trump to a broader set of issues that have plagued architecture for *years*—issues of labor and proletarianization and inequality.

The fear that things were getting very, very dark very, very quickly gave people a kind of permission to be outspoken, because if they didn’t *do something*—even if that something was just Tweeting About It—the very balance of the world would fall on the side of fascism. Like I said, this activism, armchair or otherwise, naive or experienced, was a *good thing*. It was a good thing that AIA members were rightly pissed at their organization’s open willingness to bend to despotic power; it was a good thing that many architects pledged not to build the border wall; it was a good thing that new discourses opened up surrounding ethics and the carceral state, architectural aesthetics with regard to federal buildings, Trump’s previous tenure as a developer, and his emoluments-clause violations. Trump’s presidency was inherently, explicitly spatial and easily invited debate on the role of architecture in his America, which, in reality, was an America that had been simmering beneath the surface for a very long time, if not from its very founding as a plantation state.

For the duration of Trump’s presidency, as awful as it was, there was great momentum for an activist turn in architecture, one that led people to ask questions about racism, sexism, ableism, climate change, labor, technology, form, and ethics, all in a way that was, in comparison with the Obama

years, explicitly political and increasingly oriented around social and economic justice.

To take an issue particularly close to architecture’s heart as one example, the discourse about climate change shifted dramatically. I remember reading Kate Orff and Richard Misrach’s 2014 book *Petrochemical America*, one of the most visceral and lauded works about pollution and climate change published in the field of landscape architecture in recent years, and getting to the end and seeing the atomized, often individualized solutions for systemic environmental and climate issues ranging from bioremediation to co-ops and citizen science projects, with a few broader ideas like closed production and a civilian conservation corps thrown haphazardly into the mix. But by 2019, major architecture schools such as at the University of Pennsylvania were holding design studios themed around the Green New Deal, which is, on its face, a social democratic (if not outwardly socialist), massive, centralized program of total infrastructural and economic change managed by a responsible state. The state! Of all things!

Finally, *capitalism* and its attendant tentacle of technology were being called into question by greater and greater numbers of architectural workers. Technology wasn’t just about limitless innovation anymore—it encompassed surveillance and privatization and proletarianization. (What architect didn’t shudder at the prospect of being replaced by the likes of Fiverr?) For an architecture writer like myself, it became possible—perhaps for the first time since the 1970s—to publish pieces in a certain critical tradition (namely a socialist one) in a wide array of publications ranging from the mainstream (*The Atlantic*, for example) to the niche (this publication and others like it). This is a massive amount of political progress to make in such a short amount of time. And yet, it is not enough. It is not enough because the problems underlying American society, the ones that gave us Trump in the first place, are still there, lurk-

ing beneath the surface. Our project is not yet finished even though Trump himself seems to be.

Of course, Trump was and remains terrible, and there is no doubt that he’s done irreparable harm to the psyche and infrastructures of this country. However, months after he was tossed out of the Oval Office and exiled from social media, I can’t help but be struck by the lack of, well, *doing things*. Suddenly, all that was once threatening and menacing is now calm; the good guys are in power. But despite the passage of a stimulus bill (something, we must remember, Trump also did), not much has changed, especially with regard to immigration and labor (the \$15 minimum wage), issues to which the Biden administration has responded by sticking its head in the sand. Perhaps the most positive thing I can say about the change in administration is that at least construction on the border wall has been halted. That is a start but is certainly not enough.

I hate to break it to all of you who haven’t yet heard, but there are *still* kids in cages, climate change is *still* escalating, racism and sexism are *still* rampant, and insidious parts of American life—in particular, the working conditions in places like Amazon warehouses but also in all the universities and architecture firms around the country—are still deplorable. These things require political momentum and pressure for them to change, whether that be in protest or in organizing a union or in agitating for justice in one’s own workplace or city. They do not just go away because we elected the lesser of two evils, and it would be a terrible, terrible waste for architecture to abandon its new critical, activist tendencies in favor of what was a rather odious and uninspiring and unjust status quo to begin with. Things may have got worse with Trump, but in a way, they also got much better.

**Kate Wagner is an architecture critic and the creator of the blog McMansion Hell. Her column America By Design can be found in *The New Republic*.**



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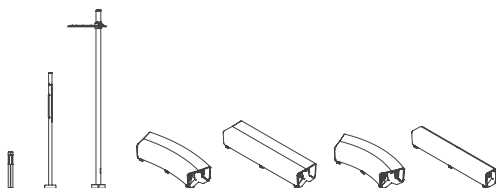
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