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When I was a kid, I dealt with agoraphobia. It's the fear of not being able to get to a safe space—being stuck somewhere and unable to return somewhere safe. I was a scared child with an overactive imagination. I was scared of everything.

Fast forward to young adulthood—I was comfortable being alone in the middle of nowhere in Utah, under a bridge, far from anyone, waiting for a train that may or may not come. It's exactly the setting where something bad would happen in a scary movie. At some point I realized there are things that go bump in the night, and it's me. When someone hears a person in a remote place, it's probably me or someone like me, just trying to get from point A to point B, or passing through and needing a place to sleep.

I guess my brain does me a solid. The situations that would be the scariest are the ones I don't get afraid of.

This was when you were train hopping?

Oh yeah. I've been to all the lower forty-eight on trains.

All the lower forty-eight on trains. Damn. When did you start?

I rode my first train in 2014. I was twenty.

Sometimes the places you get on a train are the most bizarre middle-of-nowhere spots. Sometimes it's a dense urban center. There are IM facilities in cornfields where everyone commutes an hour or two because there's nothing around—like North Baltimore, Ohio. If you get dropped there, the only thing you can do is get on another train. You're not walking through corn to civilization.

What's IM?

IM stands for intermodal, it means trains that carry shipping containers. The containers travel by many modes of transportation, big freight liner boats, trains, trucks...

For riding, IM trains tend to be the fastest, highest priority trains, so if you're trying to go a long distance and don't want to deal with having to get off, or to switch trains, or worrying about staying on when they block swap, or do other work, then riding IM is a good idea. Drawbacks are less choice of rides, you're more visible than on most kinds of grainers—Cadillacs, high walls, alien eyes, shotguns, Canadian grainers. Boxcars are as comfortable as it gets.

How do you pack for a trip like that?

No tent. Sleeping bag. A bivy sack is good but not necessary. Three days of food and water, ideally. One change of clothes. A rail map.

What's the longest trip you've been on?

My life was circling the country. I measured years in laps. I had an abandoned shipping container I lived in. I stole solar panels from payphones and set it up. It's still there, but not like it used to be. It got arsoned.

It used to look like a rusty container on an abandoned train bridge with weeds up to here. But inside it was framed and drywalled. It was crazy cool.

Before train hopping. I was born in Brooklyn, left as a kid, came back around 2014 or 2015. Boston was my home base, then back to New York.

Every year I'd come back to New York in the fall, work as a bike messenger—December was crazy busy, that's when I made money. Then I'd go to New Orleans for New Year's. Sometimes I'd come back and work through February. By March I was out, traveling until fall. It didn't feel like a trip. It was just my life.

The longest I ever spent on one train was ninety-seven hours.

Ninety-seven?!

On one train. From Birmingham, Alabama to Needles, California.

There's no single railroad that crosses the country, but there's one train that effectively does. Chicago is the rail hub. If you time it right, you can ride through the handoff.

The train I took starts in Atlanta, goes to Birmingham, then up to Memphis, Springfield, Missouri, up a bit more, then down through Oklahoma, into Texas, meets another line, goes through New Mexico, and ends in Needles, California—right near the Arizona border.

Being from the city, when people talk about feeling at peace in nature, I don't. I've been in remote places—trains can take you places there's no other way to reach. That's scary.

There's a crew change in Ruby Canyon on the Denver and Rio Grande Western.

It's famous for going up and over the Rockies, which is a huge engineering feat because trains don't like hills. A 9 percent grade is insane. Getting a train 11,000 feet above sea level is wild.

Usually trains tunnel through mountains, but the Rio Grande goes up and over. Ruby Canyon is the kind of place where if you step off the train, you'd immediately get eaten by a mountain lion. It's nowhere.

When I'm on trains in wilderness like that, it's scary because I'm relying on this big hunk of metal to get me out.

And if you get caught, they'll just kick you off and you'll be stranded?

Most of the time if you get caught, they either write you a ticket or call the cops and send you to jail. In a place like that, you probably wouldn't get caught.

If they did spot you in the middle of nowhere, they'd radio ahead to the bull—that's a railroad cop. They're federal officers who work for the railroad.

In the old days, they were brutal. Train riding is old. There were railroad goons whose job was to beat people up. That's where "bulls" came from.

These days it's usually just a ticket or jail. When I started riding, there were rumors about certain towns—like Officer Flood in Roseville, California—who hated train riders.

Because I've never driven, when I go camping somewhere remote, I don't feel peaceful. I feel dependent on a vehicle I don't know how to operate and whoever brought me there.

If I woke up and everyone had left, I'd be stranded. I'd feel that same agoraphobic panic—how do I get back to civilization?

My friend Sid spent most of the last decade in London squatting. He ended up in rehab upstate somewhere where, if you don't have a car, you can't survive. You're not walking ten miles to the grocery store in the snow. He said he got there and immediately felt like he'd made a mistake—that agoraphobic feeling.

There's so much of America where, if you don't have a car, it's frightening. You need the car to get to safety.

That's why I like New York.

You told me about that tower where you slept on the roof. I feel like you couldn't do that in the same way somewhere else.

No way. That was awesome. It's in Midtown.

There are delis that look normal from the outside. Beers are a little more expensive, and there's a discreet staircase.

You go upstairs and there's a huge empty room, maybe two tables with people drinking. It's basically a bar but not legally a bar. A lot of Guatemalan construction workers hang out there. Some might even sleep there. I'd see the same guys constantly and realized they might be homeless—get off work, drink, pass out, wake up, go back to work.

One of those spots was connected through a stairwell to a skyscraper around the corner. We realized the building wasn't just three floors. We kept going up and ended up in a different building. We said, let's see how high it goes. It went up forty-one floors.

You took the stairs?

Yeah.

And you took the elevator down after sleeping there?

In the morning. It was summer, so no sleeping bags. We shared a jacket. We started noticing businessmen doing double takes, so we decided to leave. We just pretended to be messengers and took the elevator down.

The funniest thing was looking at all the glass condo towers. So many of the rich people had telescopes. None were pointed at the sky. They were all pointed into other apartments. Everyone was watching each other.

Is that a thing? Rich people having telescopes?

It must be. There were too many for it to be coincidence.

That's crazy.

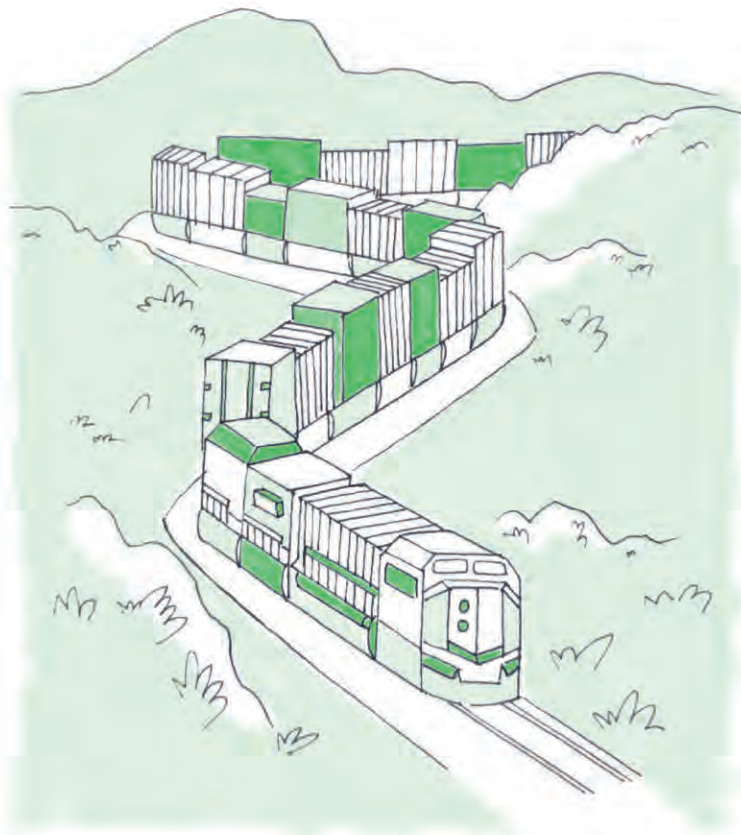
They choose to live in those glass-wall buildings. If I were rich, I'd want privacy. I don't understand wanting

your whole life on display. Maybe they get off on it. But the only people who can see those rich people are other rich people.

They can look down on everyone else, but only other rich people can look back—unless someone sneaks up to a taller building.

Like you on the roof.

It's funny how my life went from being an agoraphobic teenager to being in dense cities one week and alone in the middle of Idaho the next, waiting for a train. I never would've guessed that. I thought I'd be too afraid. Far from safety. I embraced a life without safety. Safety was my backpack. I made my safe place internal. That sounds corny, but there's something to it.



Agoraphobic Train Hopping

Abe Marx

The following interview is with my friend Switch. Switch and I met working at a bike shop together in Bushwick this past summer. Switch would always have an incredible story to share from her own life, or an insightful opinion or reference to the conversation at hand.

Switch is one of those people that I always run into by happenstance. We'll end up spending an afternoon or an evening hanging out in a park or just riding our bikes around. Admittedly, in trying to plan this interview, we both had a fair amount of trouble formally scheduling time to talk. As the deadline crept closer, by a stroke of luck I ran into her while riding my bike through Chinatown—she was there dropping her phone off to be repaired.

We went to a local dumpling spot and sat in the window for two hours and talked. I recorded the conversation; this text is an abridged version.



As architecture becomes increasingly mediated through images, videos, and digital platforms, the experience of space is no longer limited to physical presence. Most audiences encounter buildings first—and often only—through screens. Eric Honghao Zhao frames this condition as media architecture: architecture designed not only for bodily inhabitation but also for visual circulation and narrative consumption. In this interview, Zhao speaks with creative technologist June Bee, a designer working on the commercial space station project Starlab at Journey. Their conversation examines how zero gravity reshapes architectural logic, how digital twins transform design processes, and how media, capital, and digital representation redefine architecture as both experience and commodity.

Eric Honghao Zhao **June Bee**

Alright June, tell me about yourself. What have you been working on recently? Do you have a project you'd like to share with us?

I'm a creative technologist working across film, architecture, and software development, designing between physical and digital dimensions, pushing the boundaries of human understanding of environments and living for the current generation. I currently work at Journey, where one of my main projects is Starlab—a commercial space station developed through a joint venture between Voyager, Mitsubishi, Hilton, Airbus, Palantir, Journey, and more.

Starlab represents a shift toward commercial space travel. Lower Earth orbit, once primarily occupied by the International Space Station under NASA, is now opening to commercial ventures, with multiple companies building space stations and operating as landlords in this emerging ecosystem. What distinguishes Starlab from traditional aerospace projects is that we approach space not only as an engineering challenge, but as an experience design problem. Beyond survival, we ask what everyday life might look like in orbit: how people carry out daily chores, how they navigate rest and entertainment, and what it means to live collectively in a zero-gravity environment. These questions shape how we design the station as an experiential environment rather than a purely technical structure keeping people alive.

Most people will never physically enter a space station, yet they will experience it through images and videos online. I describe this condition as media architecture: architecture designed not only for bodily experience, but also for images and visual circulation. In projects like Starlab, where most audiences encounter the space through media, how does zero gravity change the logic of architectural design?

Designing in zero gravity fundamentally reshapes how we think about space. On Earth, we assume a hierarchy between floor, wall, and ceiling. In space, that hierarchy disappears. Every surface becomes potentially functional, and people can occupy space from multiple orientations. Spatial organization is no longer centered on a single

upright perspective. Circulation, privacy, and everyday activities must be rethought, because movement depends on being able to reach and push off surfaces. This constrains scale and openness in unexpected ways. Architecture in zero gravity becomes less about monumental form and more about choreographing bodily interaction within a fully three-dimensional field.

At the same time, these environments are largely encountered through mediated representations. Most audiences experience space stations through renderings, videos, and press images rather than direct bodily presence. Designing space today therefore also means designing how it will be seen, narrated, and circulated across platforms with the intent of delivering observed sensory input through visual and sound.

Another concept often discussed in contemporary design is the digital twin. How do digital twins function in the design process of projects like Starlab? And how would you distinguish them from traditional renderings?

Digital twins operate as real-time, interactive replicas of environments that are either physical or soon-to-become physical. Unlike traditional drawings or static renderings, they allow designers to simulate circulation patterns, environmental conditions, and user behavior, and to update models as new data emerges. They are tools for coordination between engineers and designers, but also platforms through which users and stakeholders can engage with a project. Architecture becomes an evolving system rather than a finished object, shaped by feedback loops between the digital and the physical.

A rendering communicates an idea visually, but it is fixed and non-interactive. A digital twin, by contrast, must be both real-time and interactive. It connects digital models to live data streams, allowing changes in one realm to affect the other. In this sense, the digital environment is no longer merely representational; it becomes operational, participating in how architecture functions rather than only how it appears. The space itself becomes its own intellectual being consciously living with humans.

In projects like Starlab or large-scale visions such as NEOM's The Line, design processes are constantly exposed to media coverage and public discussion. Do you think contemporary architecture has entered a kind of Truman Show condition, where design unfolds under continuous observation? How does this media exposure shape the way architects and designers work?

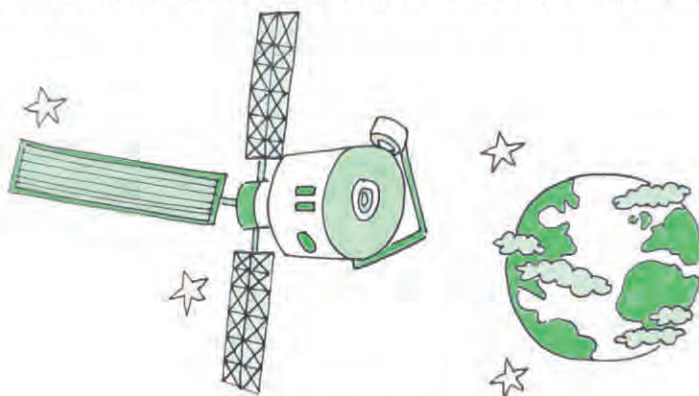
Design today rarely happens behind closed doors. Large-scale projects, especially those with strong media appeal, are often developed under public view, accompanied by press releases, renderings, and speculative narratives. In this sense, the design process itself becomes a mediated performance. Designers receive feedback not only from clients and collaborators, but also from a broader public that encounters the project through media representations. It does feel like a large seminar of collective iteration.

This exposure can be productive, because it introduces diverse perspectives and forces designers to articulate the social meaning of their work more clearly. At the same time, it can also distort priorities. Public attention often gravitates toward spectacle, novelty, and easily consumable images, which may push design toward visual impact rather than long-term usability or ethical considerations. Designers are therefore negotiating between professional judgment, public imagination, and media logic. Architecture is no longer only built for use, but also staged for observation, debate, and evolution.

If architecture is increasingly encountered through digital representations, do you think a rendering can be considered architecture? And how does this relate to the way digital mediation and capital shape human experience today?

If we define architecture purely as physical material, then a rendering is not architecture. But if we understand architecture as “experience,” representation becomes part of architecture. There are three layers of it that compose it into an experience—a rendering exists as a digital artifact, produces the activity of viewing, and generates emotional and cognitive responses. These layers together form a spatial experience, even if the space does not yet exist physically. Representation participates in architecture by shaping how people imagine, desire, and relate to space in advance of construction.

Today, we increasingly consume narratives and images before encountering physical objects. Digital platforms sell lifestyles, aspirations, and futures long before any material experience occurs. Architecture becomes part of this economy of imagination: people buy into the idea of a space through images and stories, sometimes without ever entering the space itself. The commodity is no longer only the building, but the narrative attached to it. At the same time, physical experience still matters—touch, materiality, and bodily presence cannot be fully replaced. What has changed is that digital mediation shapes expectations in advance, intensifying the influence of media and capital on how architecture is perceived and valued. It interweaves the personal and collective aspects of what creating and experiencing life is like in this multidimensional world now. Architecture's main service now has become to provide a vessel for evolution, exercise the capacity of growth with various users' needs, and nurture multi-culture experiences.



Architecture After Physicality

Eric Honghao Zhao



APRIL 2026

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FOUNDATION

A83: Architectural Drawing 4

Violet Caleca



This year's *Architectural Drawing* show, the fourth in ongoing series at A83, certainly continued the gallery's reputation for being at the warm, gooey heart of what's good in contemporary architectural practice. Upon entering the opening, your glasses fogged over with the humidity of a hundred breaths from socialites packed shoulder to shoulder. Although the "feels like" temperature outside was -4°F , a committed group of smokers was not deterred.

Viewing the work was not an important part of the gallery opening. Obscured vision due to fogged glasses—or what my colleague described as the incredibly high sexual tension between all the men in the room—didn't matter. The work on opening night was to observe who's who in this pocket of the New York City and global architecture scene. Notable appearances included Lydia Kallipoliti of Columbia's GSAPP and Hayley Eber of the Van Alen Institute. Both arrived an hour after the posted end time in outfits that proved "fashionably late" is alive and well.

Returning to the gallery after the opening, I was able to get up close to the work and hear from co-directors Owen Nichols and Clara Syme about the process and drama behind the prints. A triptych screen print series composed of around forty layers of black ink (printed by Jasper Townsend AR'25 for Mexico City-based architect Isidoro Michan-Guindi) features redacted language excerpts from a litigation battle between the firm and a neighbor who hated the house Isidoro designed. Another notable triptych comes from Cooper alum Sophia Mercado AR'25, depicting vernacular domestic architecture in the Philippines—an extension of her ongoing thesis research.

Mercado's series is screen printed but made to look like an etching, using a predictive investing software script to generate a hairy texture. The texture renders the drawing with a surreal sense of movement and light. It captures the literal materiality of thatched roofs and the essence of a goat's shadow in one uniform blow.

The Edge of the Practice

Abe Marx



The Edge of the Practice, shown in the Third Floor Hallway Gallery in the Foundation Building, is an exhibition by the Office of Adrian Phiffer. The exhibition is divided into three parts: a book, a film, and a competition submission. Phiffer describes the interaction of the three works as "an atlas of fragments that represent the work of the Office of Adrian Phiffer at the fringes of the traditional practice of architecture." The exhibition overall was an exciting experience and was accompanied by a talk given by Phiffer on February 5th.

The book, titled *Strange Primitivism*, can be entered at any point in its non-narrative. The first panel in the gallery is wallpapered by the pages of the book and becomes an atlas of its own. The second panel delves further into the book and shows cover tests by Haller Brun, the book's graphic designer. These tests notably situate Phiffer in the presence of Salvador Dali and Andy Warhol.

Hero of Generic Architecture is a film that is hard to dissect. It comes in five parts that explore similar idols of the generic. The film is exciting, using animated printmaking, digital rendering, plaster model-making, collage, and a plaster stop-motion animated Rhino interface to locate its hero.

The competition submission is a proposal for an installation in the Gay Village in Montreal: a one-kilometer-long airtight cylinder made of clear ETFE suspended above the road. The cylinder's isolated air chamber creates variability in position as temperature fluctuations affect its buoyancy. This makes the installation reactive to the seasons and weather. It acts as an independent organism as it floats above Montreal's queer neighborhood, asking compelling questions about what is inside and outside, as well as questions of scale and form.

Elvis at the World's Fair

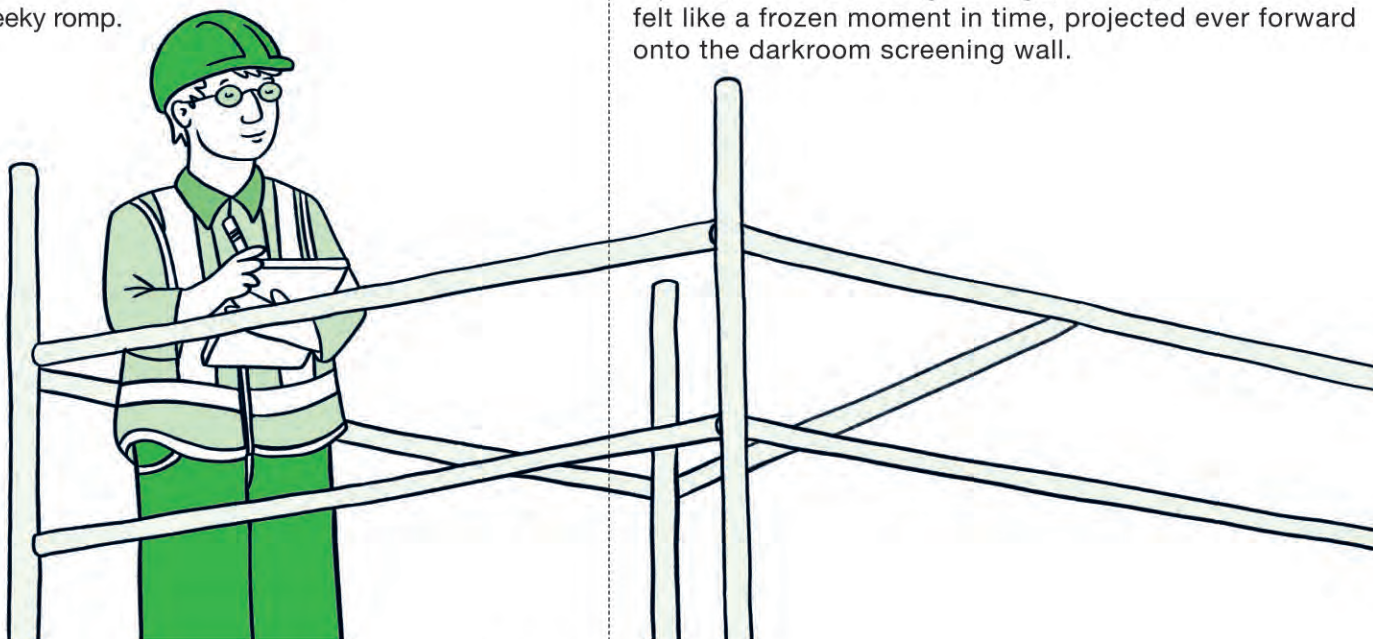
Matt Shaw



I love World's Fairs. They are a *gesamkunstwerk* of exhibition, commerce, architecture, technology, design, media, and nationalism (in the good way of being proud of your country's progress). They embody the optimism of every era in such cartoonish ways that they age like fine wine—a kitsch wine that is very dated but in the best way. I particularly like the 1962 Seattle World's Fair now, having found it through an Elvis Presley movie called *It happened at the World's Fair*. After hitchhiking to the World's Fair, Elvis and a young Chinese girl tour the Fair. The movie oscillates between wild, panoramic shots of the Seattle fair and Elvis sexually harassing nurses.

The views of the scenery, the setting of the fair, is impressive. Elvis rides the monorail at night in one scene—the darkness a perfect setting for such a film. The fair does not disappoint, with egg foo young stands and the brand new Space Needle being as big of stars as that country boy who combed his hair. At one point, Elvis is chased by security guards through the fountain that is now the Pacific Science Center, a Seattle landmark that has lived on and now represents the period well.

All in all a cheeky romp.



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The Film-Makers' Cooperative

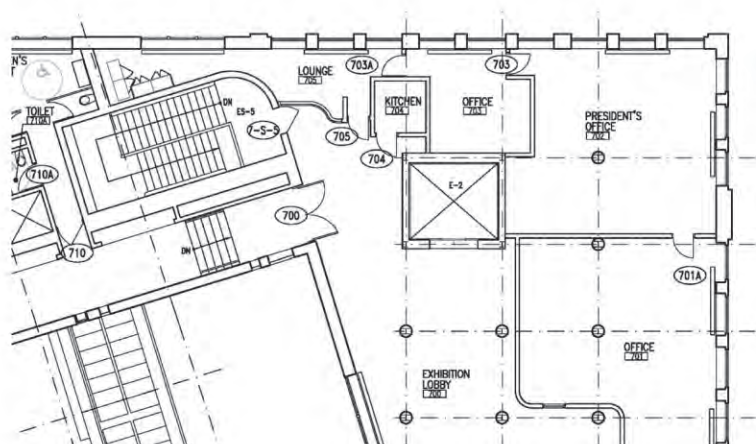
Jayne Miller



Professor Matt Shaw's "Contemporary Film and the City" class was graced with a visit to The Film-Makers' Cooperative, a non-profit organization founded in 1961 dedicated to the collection, preservation, and distribution of experimental film in New York City. Julia Petrocelli, from Cooper's Film and Video Department, works at the Co-op and led us on a tour of the office, culminating in a screening of various 16mm films. Among them were Rudy Burckhardt's *Square Times* (1967), Jack Waters' *Berlin / New York* (1984), Richard Tuohy's *Seoul Electric* (2012), and Jonas Mekas' *Williamsburg, Brooklyn* (2003). Julia has been a friend of mine for a while, and I was delighted when she greeted us at the door of the office, which is unassumingly nestled inside a ritzy glass and marble tower on Park Ave. It was even more delightful to see her expertise as she explained how film can develop 'vinegar syndrome,' an irreversible process of chemical decay that is triggered by humidity, causing film to shrink and emit an acid with a distinct odor of vinegar. The Co-op's archive is made of shelves storing rolls upon rolls of 16mm film, each canister labeled with a collage of typewriter labels and tape notations denoting damage, names, and makers—it felt like a frozen moment in time, projected ever forward onto the darkroom screening wall.

Filling Up the President's Gap

Kyle Ku



The seventh floor of the Foundation Building houses a media lab as well as a lobby used as a gallery space for art shows and architecture reviews adjacent to the president's office. This summer, the six-inch gap between the wall of the south stairwell and the wall of the lounge leading into the president's office was filled.

Function of Walls

A wall's performance can be assessed based on its ability to divide a space. This performance of division can be further broken down into elements and senses: visual, auditory, olfactory, and thermal. An intentional six-inch reveal coupled with a curved window between the public lobby/gallery and the president's suite, suggested that this specific wall registered only a programmatic division of space while being transparent to other senses.

John Hejduk's Democracy

Hejduk had a strong stance on how civic space within the shell of the Foundation Building should be defined, and the gap in the wall of the president's suite was a prime example.

The architectural details of the president's office conveyed transparency and openness to student input. While the intention behind the filling is unknown, the gap has been filled in for us; the president is now symbolically sealed off from a public space.

Bad Dreams In the Night: Examining the Houses in Emerald Fennell's *Wuthering Heights*

Lee Caulfield



Cinematically, we are in what the late André Leon Talley described as "a famine of beauty." Don't expect a visual feast with Emerald Fennell's latest offering, a fast and loose adaptation of Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights*. Fennell, who also directed *Promising Young Woman* and *Saltburn*, chose to adapt the first half of the novel, which focuses on the tragic romance between Catherine Earnshaw and her adopted brother, Heathcliff.

I'm not a stickler for historical accuracy by any means, but does anachronism have to look so cheap? *Wuthering Heights'* set design is an incoherent smorgasbord of visual references across time. The Heights' stables references 19th-century oil paintings, Heathcliff's fireplace is ripped from Hollyhock House, and Cathy's red resin entryway evokes a very merry Christmas with Melania Trump. Unlike Andrea Arnold's 2011 adaptation, which was filmed on location in North Yorkshire, Fennell's film was shot entirely on a soundstage. Although she may be aiming for an old Hollywood (or even Brechtian) treatment of the film's production design, where artifice is explicitly noticeable, every design choice is so gaudy and overwrought that the result is a Spirit Halloween version of Gothic lit. The magic of the titular stormy landscape is gone. In this fantasy, the decor is by Jonathan Adler, and the moors are made from polystyrene.

Perhaps the most baffling creative decisions by Fennell and Production Designer Suzie Davies are the houses' anthropomorphic qualities. The silver dining room is adorned with clear globules of perspiration, chandeliers hang from pseudo-umbilical cords, rocks protrude from walls like goiters, and Cathy's room is wall-to-wall flesh and hair. Thematically, the lack of subtlety from a set that oozes bodily fluids suits Fennell's signature style, but the result feels predicated entirely on a shock value that is rarely shocking. Once your eyes adjust to the tawdry halls of Thrushcross Grange, there's not much to see at all.

Lewerentz Divine Darkness

Eric Honghao Zhao



Lewerentz Divine Darkness, an architectural documentary directed by Sven Blume, was screened in room 315F of the Foundation Building this past February. The event was organized by the School of Architecture, and Michael Young led the discussion following the screening.

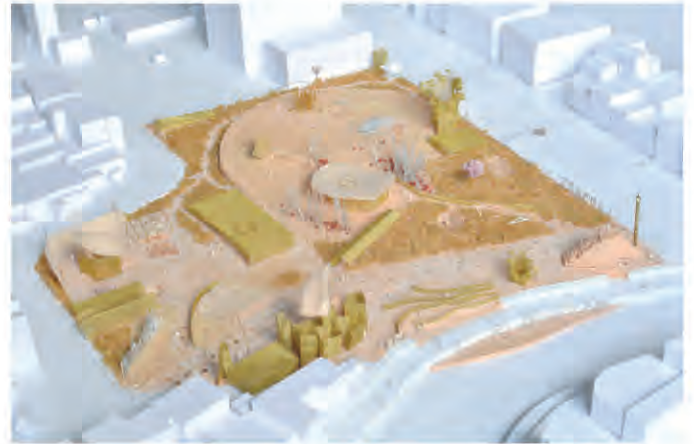
The film is a remarkable introduction to the life and work of Sigurd Lewerentz. Through interviews, archival photographs, and documentation of twelve projects across Sweden—including the renowned St. Mark's Church and St. Peter's Church—the documentary presents Lewerentz's architectural legacy with sensitivity and depth. The cinematography preserves a sense of divinity and spiritual stillness, echoing the abstract and sacred qualities that define Lewerentz's spatial aesthetics.

The discussion that followed approached the film from an architectural perspective. Some participants reflected on experiencing space through tactile and atmospheric perception rather than purely through vision. Others addressed the perceived strangeness or radical independence of Lewerentz's work. A central question emerged: how can film reveal, rather than reduce, the mystery embedded in architecture?

Representing *Foundation*, I raised two questions to the director. I first asked how he felt about the relationship between architecture and film. Sven responded that both disciplines share a similar creative process and can illuminate one another. The second question I had concerned stylistic continuity between those two media. Sven explained that he intentionally aligns his cinematic language with the architect's sensibility, maintaining coherence between

Urbanism, After All

Abe Marx



Office of Adrian Phiffer is not interested in "the systematic."

Office of Adrian Phiffer is interested in the distinctions that are made through exploring "the bounds of architecture."

This is how Adrian Phiffer started his talk in room 315F of The Cooper Union's Foundation Building. The talk took the audience through fourteen projects from his office. Much of the work explores themes of urbanism—not startling given that he is the 2026 Robert Gwathmey Chair in Urbanism. Projects presented include: a circus in Riga, Latvia; a museum in Sejong, South Korea (larger than the Louvre); and a house in Toronto with no windows described as "surprisingly respectful."

Phiffer presented a project for an art platform in Suncheon, South Korea—designed and modeled using sculpting clay—called *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Across the site are dispersed "survivors," a nod to John Hejduk's "victims." The survivors create what Phiffer describes as "a work of many parts, each with its own life." Another significant project was a public art proposal, an illuminated thatched house on a stick called *Ceci n'est pas une maison* which serves two functions: countering Norman Foster's high-tech architecture looming in the background, as well as confusing passersby that a person might be living inside.

After the presentation, the floor was opened to the audience for questions. Acting Dean Ben Aranda read his favorite excerpts from Phiffer's book, met with protest from the author. Aranda followed by asking the first question, of course coming after his favorite line: "The first question will go to the students."

Free as Fire and Water

Ilea Wunder



On Saturday, January 31st, 2026, 41 Cooper Square flooded seemingly from head to toe—rumors cited freezing temperatures causing a sprinkler to burst. Saturday Program classes situated throughout the building evacuated, and students working on the Benjamin Menschel Fellowship exhibition were left to scavenge for buckets and towels, diverting the water away from their half-installed exhibits.

This downpour comes exactly seven years after the 41 Cooper flood in 2019, where 12,000 gallons of water entered the building in approximately thirty-five minutes. The amount of water released into the building in 2026 remains undisclosed; however, students cite over three hours of active leaking before the water was turned off. 41 Cooper was closed for the entire following week. When the atrium and other remaining closed areas will reopen remains unclear.

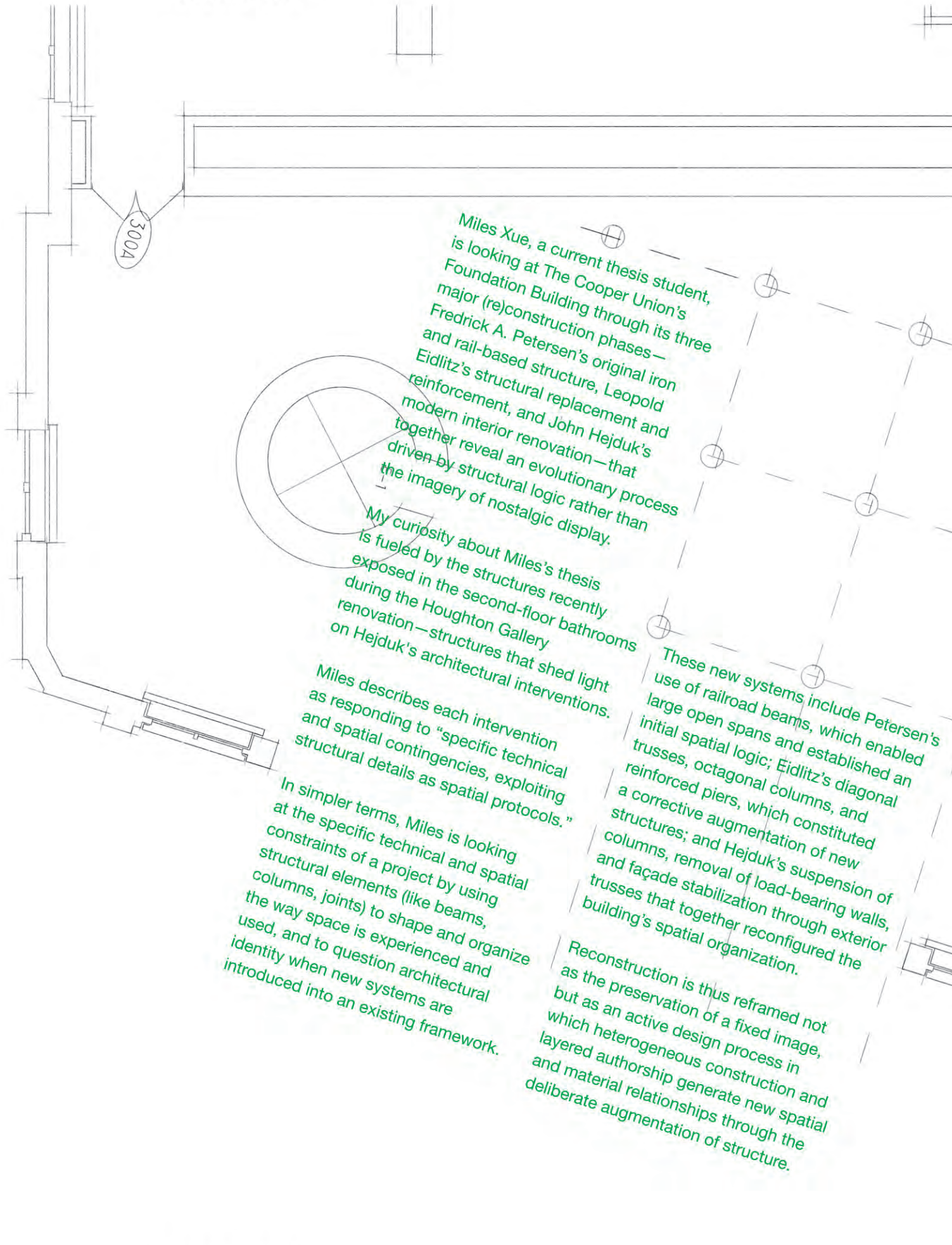
On February 13th, the Foundation Building experienced a fire contained to a single room on the sixth floor. NYFD extinguished the fire via fire-truck ladder—a new sight for students passing by. Closed for Peter Cooper's birthday, the building was empty except for essential personnel. A brief email sent out to students that morning created more questions than answers; students stewed in worry that weekend until "he said, she said" accounts started to surface.

With 30 Cooper Square—the office building near Grace Church School—flooding on February 9th as well, every building on campus besides the dorms has flooded in less than two weeks. With preexisting complaints about building temperature and maintenance left unanswered, students wonder when they can expect the buildings to go back to normal and what to expect as temperatures rise.

STUDIO CRITS

Studio Crits are a look inside the walls of the School of Architecture through the eyes of student critics. Each review is written by a student analyzing and contextualizing studio culture, the curriculum, or a current studio project by one of their peers. These critiques expand the feedback beyond the studio and bring more voices into these conversations.





Miles Xue, a current thesis student, is looking at The Cooper Union's Foundation Building through its three major (re)construction phases—Fredrick A. Petersen's original iron and rail-based structure, Leopold Eidlitz's structural replacement and reinforcement, and John Hejduk's modern interior renovation—that together reveal an evolutionary process driven by structural logic rather than the imagery of nostalgic display.

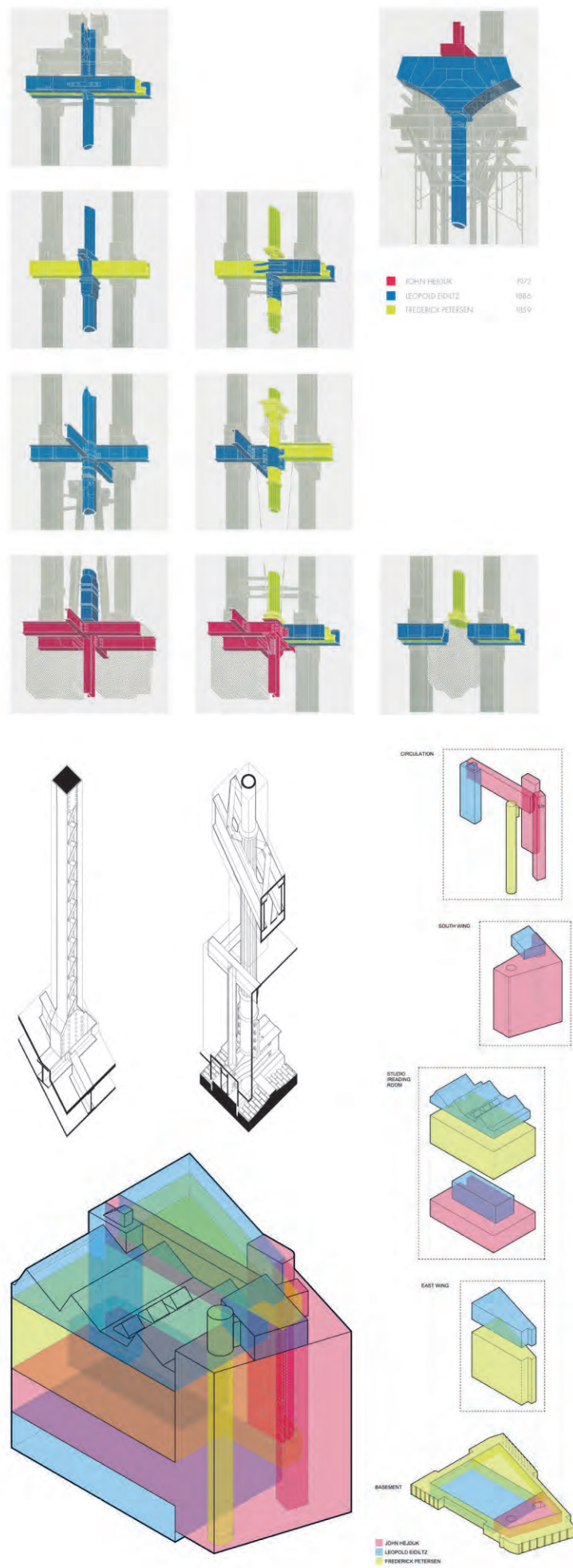
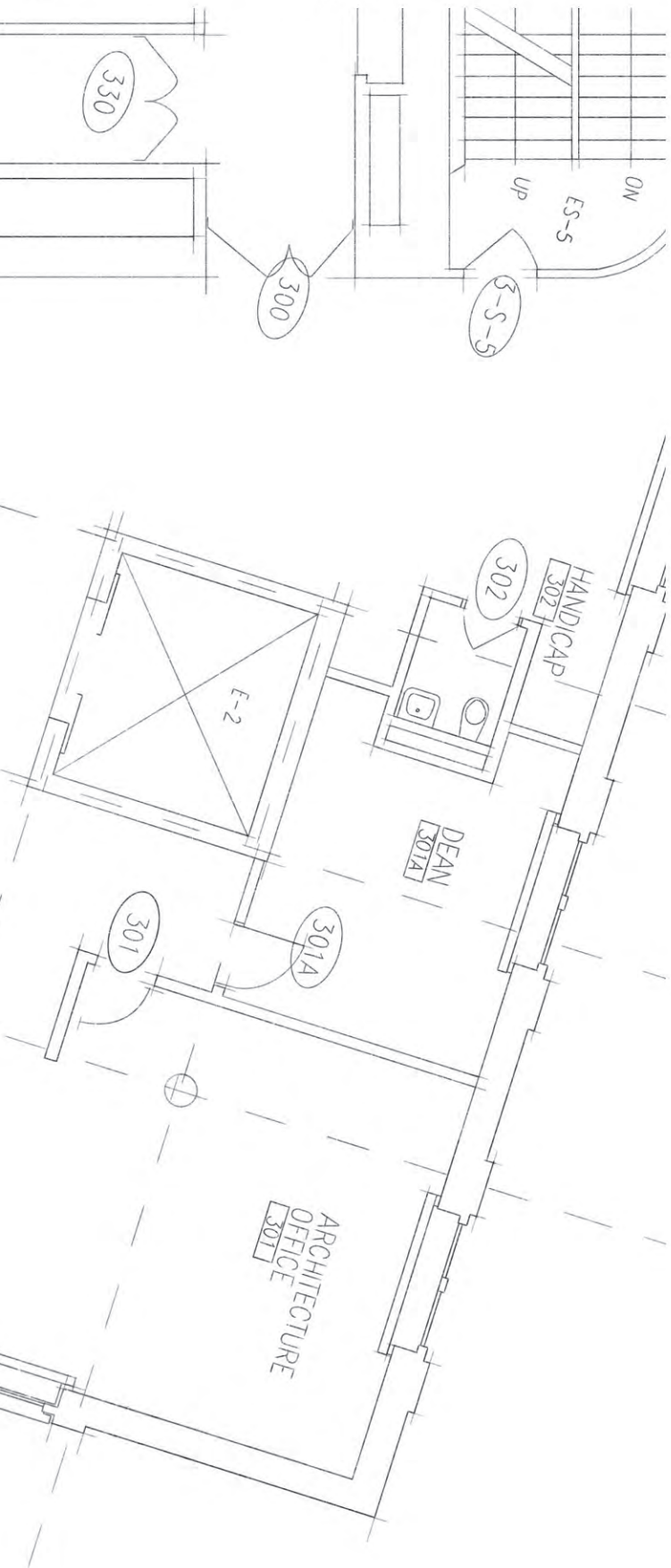
My curiosity about Miles's thesis is fueled by the structures recently exposed in the second-floor bathrooms during the Houghton Gallery renovation—structures that shed light on Hejduk's architectural interventions.

Miles describes each intervention as responding to "specific technical and spatial contingencies, exploiting structural details as spatial protocols."

In simpler terms, Miles is looking at the specific technical and spatial constraints of a project by using structural elements (like beams, columns, joints) to shape and organize the way space is experienced and used, and to question architectural identity when new systems are introduced into an existing framework.

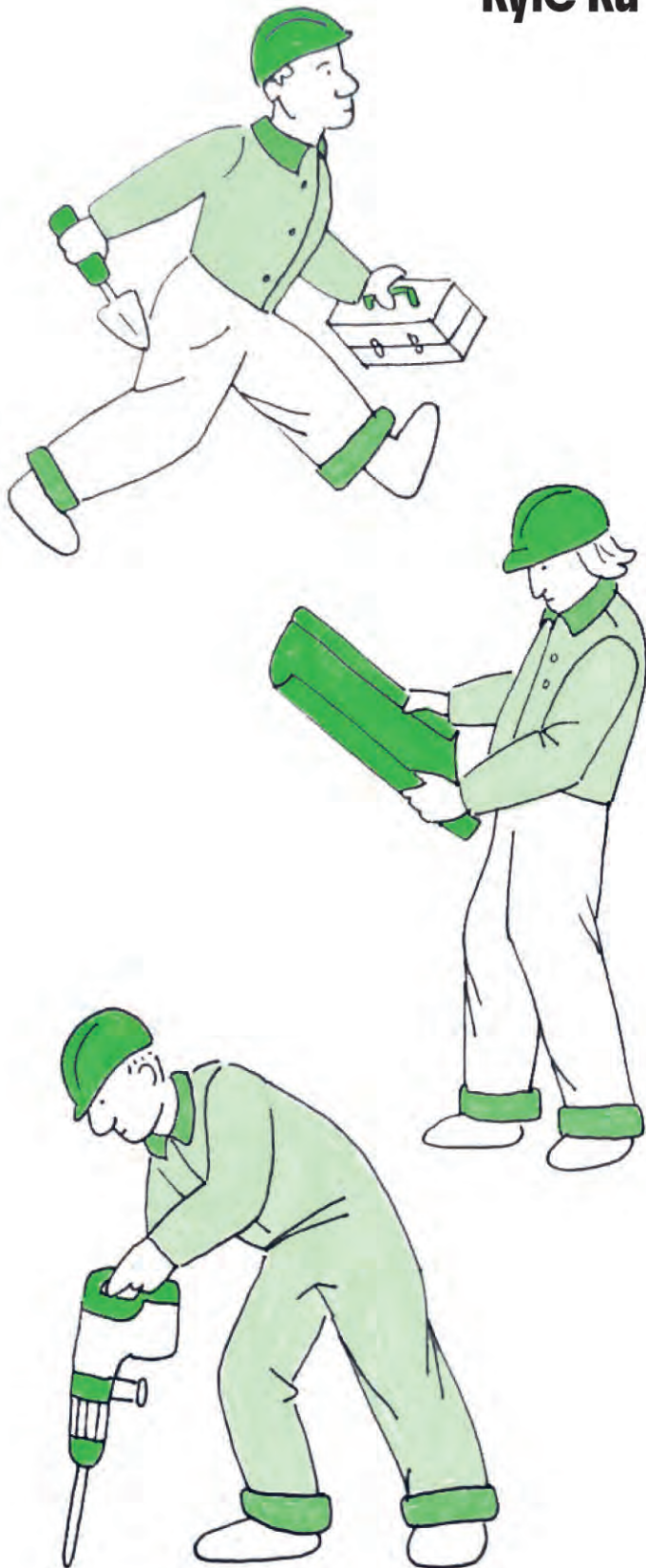
These new systems include Petersen's use of railroad beams, which enabled large open spans and established an initial spatial logic; Eidlitz's diagonal trusses, octagonal columns, and reinforced piers, which constituted a corrective augmentation of new structures; and Hejduk's suspension of columns, removal of load-bearing walls, and façade stabilization through exterior trusses that together reconfigured the building's spatial organization.

Reconstruction is thus reframed not as the preservation of a fixed image, but as an active design process in which heterogeneous construction and layered authorship generate new spatial and material relationships through the deliberate augmentation of structure.



Preservation Through Reconstruction

Kyle Ku

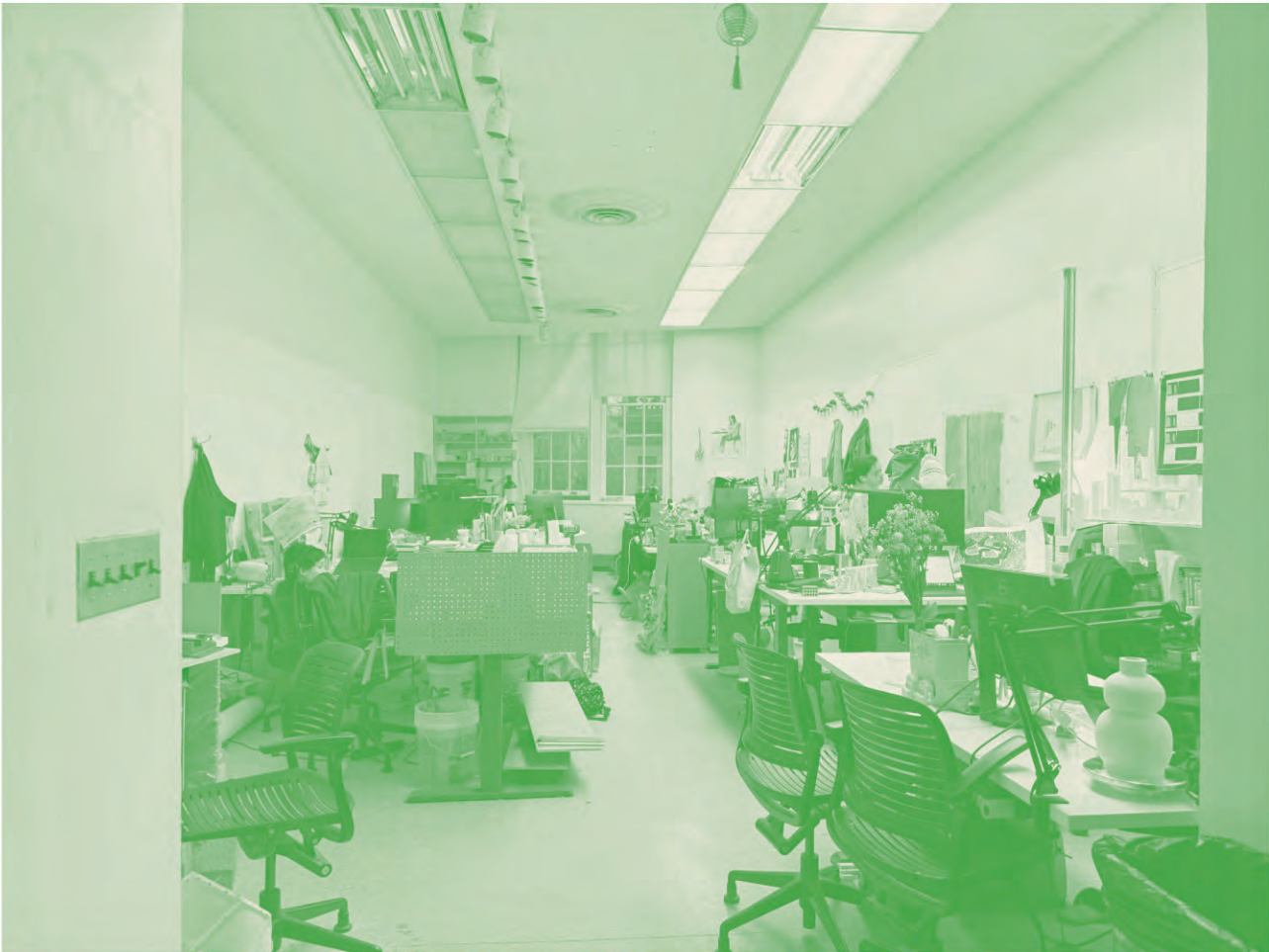


The thesis class had their first peer review of the 2026 spring semester on Tuesday, February 10th. It was meant to mark the first point of progress after defining the site and program. Many, if not all, students showed up empty-handed.

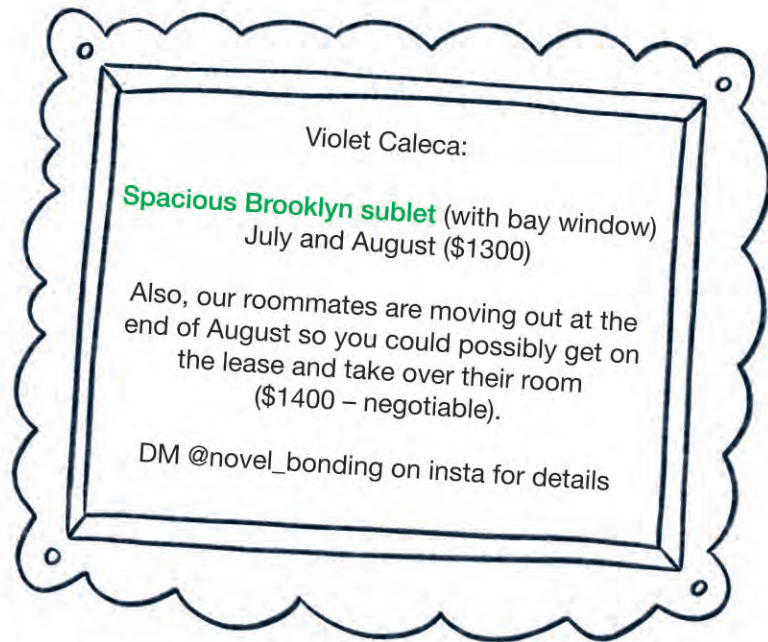
This review follows a first thesis semester with seven reviews—three “mode reviews,” three peer reviews, and the final. Splitting the semester into thirds, these “mode reviews” asked students to either “draw,” “capture,” or “model” in the hopes of jump-starting production during a time previously perceived by instructors as stagnant research. This is decidedly more structured than recent thesis years—which typically had only a midterm and final—and seems to be addressing the larger question of how to teach thesis.

With an emphasis on finding an appropriate “response” to their research, many students find—or have once found—their projects at a standstill. They are told their work is too symbolic, discouraged from paths they’d like to explore, and are left wondering if their projects are architectural enough.

Of course, disagreement between faculty and students is nothing out of the ordinary—and perhaps neither is this moment of questioning during a thesis—but is there a better way? How much structure is too much structure? Does a thesis have to be a building or have a clear site and program? These are questions the class is asking as they navigate expectations of themselves and their faculty and make this final push towards graduation.



An Update from a Concerned Thesis Class



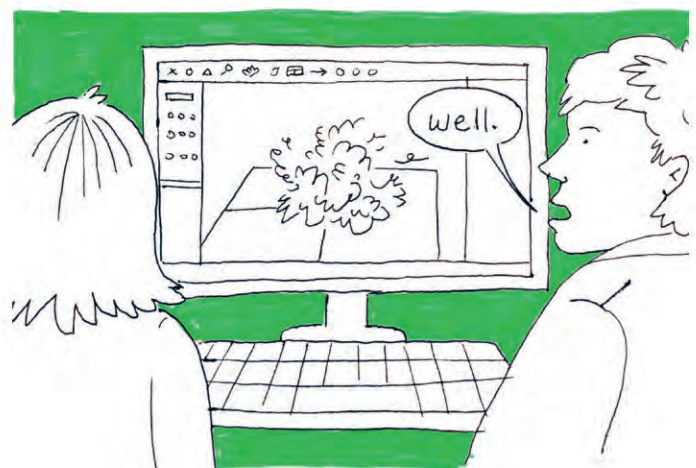
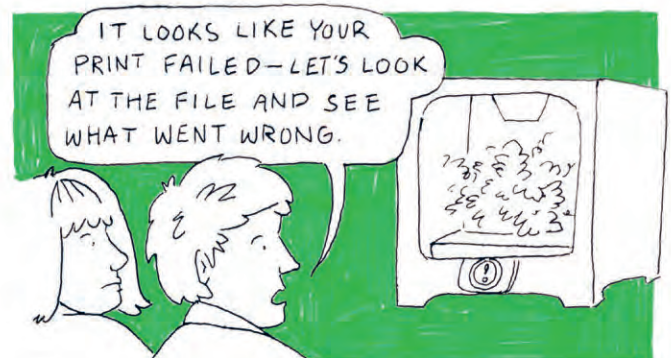
INTERESTED IN LEARNING HOW TO USE CNC or RHINO CAM?



CNC WORKSHOP

Ask an AACE lab staff member
to schedule CNC workshop

RHINO TUTORING





CALENDAR

THU 4/2/2026

Discussion

THE CO-OP BUILDERS:
A Panel Discussion

The People's Forum
320 West 37th Street
New York, NY

7pm-8:30pm

MON 4/6/2026

Lecture

Typographic Signals:
Phototypesetting as a
New Form of Writing

Herb Lubalin Lecture Series
The Cooper Union
Online

12:30pm-2:30pm

MON 4/6/2026

Lecture

Liz Carlisle's
Living Roots Book Launch

Pratt Institute
Higgins Hall North, Rm 304
61 St. James Place
Brooklyn, NY

6:15pm-8pm

TUE /4/7/2026

Discussion

WASTED x Van Alen

Van Alen Institute
303 Bond Street

WED 4/15/2026

Lecture

Public Pools
Karolina Czekczek
and Anna Morgowicz

The Cooper Union
Foundation Building, 315F
7 East 7th Street
New York, NY

6:30pm

THU 4/16/2026

Exhibition

Once in Awe
Drawings of Growth and Decay
A Memorial Exhibition of
the Work of Alexandra Kiss

The Cooper Union
The Arthur A. Houghton Jr. Gallery
7 East 7th Street, 2nd Floor
New York, NY

6:30pm-8:30pm

THU 4/16/2026

After Hours:
Pentagram

The Architectural
League of New York
250 Park Ave South
New York, NY

6pm-8pm

WED 4/22/2026



COLOPHON

Foundation is a student-led publication of The Irwin S. Chanan School of Architecture of The Cooper Union.

MISSION STATEMENT

Foundation is a student-led publication that documents the intellectual and cultural life of The Irwin S. Chanan School of Architecture. As a platform for critiques of ongoing public programming, student work, local events, and New York City's built environment, *Foundation* expands dialogue beyond the classroom, recording the school's institutional memory and its evolving urban context.

THE COOPER UNION

Founded by inventor, industrialist and philanthropist Peter Cooper in 1859, The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art offers education in art, architecture and engineering, as well as courses in the humanities and social sciences.

7 East 7th Street
New York, NY 10003

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Belinda Lin	Phoebe Zhang

Rome Prize Ceremony	Frederick P. Rose Auditorium 41 Cooper Square New York, NY	6:30pm
WED 4/22/2026		
Lecture		
Crisis in Higher Education		
National Academy of Design 519 West 26th Street, Fl 2 New York, NY		
6pm-8pm		
FRI /4/24/2026		
Discussion		
A Decade of Delta Cities: Lessons From Community Engaged Climate Visioning		
Pratt Institute Higgins Hall Auditorium 61 St. James Place Brooklyn, NY		
4pm-6pm		
TUE 4/28/2026		
Lecture		
Earl Kwofie AR'23 and Sarah Saad AR'23		
The Cooper Union Foundation Building, 315F 7 East 7th Street New York, NY		
12pm		
Brooklyn, NY		6pm-8pm
WED 4/8/2026		
CB6 Full Board Meeting		
Van Alen Institute 303 Bond Street Brooklyn, NY		
6:30pm-8:30pm		
THU 4/9/2026		
Lecture		
Cornell AAP Conversation Series J. Meejin Yoon + Cynthia Davidson		
Gensler Family AAP NYC Center 11 E Loop Rd, 4th Fl New York, NY		
7pm		
TUE 4/14/2026		
Lecture		
Nemanja Zimonjic / TEN		
The Cooper Union Foundation Building, 315F 7 East 7th Street New York, NY		
6:30pm		

EDITOR'S NOTE

Issue 00 is a first attempt by a group of students at The Cooper Union to create a publication documenting ongoing critiques and dialogue within The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture. In the fall of 2024, Acting Dean Hayley Eber introduced a new class, taught by Joanna Joseph and Nora Akawi, that focused on cultivating proposals for a student-led architecture publication. In the fall of 2025, Acting Dean Ben Aranda sustained the class—taught by Matt Shaw and advised by Chris Dierks and Steven Hillyer—as it continued to bring the idea of a student publication to fruition. Now, in the spring of 2026, the class is producing Issue 00 and Issue 01 of *Foundation*.

Foundation is integrated into the School's curriculum but aims to create dialogue beyond the classroom. This publication is interested in what students have to say about what's going on inside the school and outside its walls. The editorial board, composed of Cooper Union students from both the School of Architecture and the School of Art, aims to create a structure that will ensure the project's longevity. The goal is for *Foundation* to become an integral part of The Cooper Union's student voice.

In Issue 00, commissioned pieces examine the current state of thesis in the school of architecture, modifications to the Foundation Building, past and present, and a broad range of other topics such as Adrian Phiffer's third floor hallway exhibition *Urbanism, After All*, A83's exhibition *Architectural Drawing 4*, and the newest film adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*. Contributions take the form of interviews, reviews, studio critiques, and event coverage.

Foundation's future issues will be open to submissions from Cooper Union's broader community. Issue 01 will be released in May. The aim is to provide space for all students and faculty to voice their opinions and explore their interests. Keep an eye out around the school for more information.

NOT A DRAFT

THE COOPER UNION SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE