GRATITUDE

Despite enormous challenge all around us, we were grateful for so much at The Cooper Union this past year. We came together again, in person, on Cooper Square with great care and compassion shown for one another. The extraordinary efforts of our Health & Safety Committee and Facilities team as well as the dedication of our faculty and staff who adapted back from virtual to classroom learning made that possible. We found reason to appreciate our connections with one another amid the conflicts of the wider world and to notice the moments that prior to the pandemic we may have taken for granted. That renewal of perspective invigorated the ways we learned, worked, and lived together.

In this issue of At Cooper as we look ahead to the coming year, we present a snapshot of our extraordinary time back together. We were grateful to celebrate traditions and milestones—like End of Year Shows (page 4) and Commencement (page 3)—with one another again. We welcomed live audiences back into the Great Hall for compelling public programs, including the introduction of a fascinating new Cooper archive, Voices of the Great Hall (page 14). At the forefront, as ever, our students again enlivened classrooms, studios, and interdisciplinary spaces, including the still-new IDC Foundation Art, Architecture, Construction, and Engineering Lab (AACE Lab) and all-new Benjamin Menschel Civic Projects Lab. Their work—and that of their faculty—also took its place again in New York City and the world beyond, through exhibitions (pages 22, 24, 26) and competitions (page 18).

People are at the center of our renewed shared experiences, and we are fortunate that so many continue to contribute to the legacy of The Cooper Union. In this issue, we profile one of them, in particular: Nader Tehrani, who at the end of the spring semester, brought his time as dean of The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture to a close (page 8). While he has stepped down as dean, Nader will return as a faculty member this coming year, and with a robust international search for his successor drawing to its own conclusion, we look forward to the ways in which a new leader will continue to evolve the Cooper experience for architecture students and faculty.

In closing, I am pleased to share news of important progress made on the Plan to Return to Full-Tuition Scholarships by 2029. Our fiscal year ended on June 30, 2022, and we again met the Plan’s financial targets thanks to the generosity of so many. This builds our financial resilience for the future and allows us to continue to increase scholarship levels while holding tuition flat for the fourth consecutive year. At a time when our national economy seems headed for a period of uncertainty, we remain cautiously optimistic that our work to build reserves and safeguards within the plan, combined with your support, will help sustain our positive trajectory.

Our shared progress is a testament to our entire community, and it is, indeed, a great source of our deep sense of gratitude.

Laura Sparks, president
On May 25, graduating students, their families and friends, and Cooper faculty and staff members gathered in the Great Hall for a momentous in-person Commencement ceremony, the first in two years.
COOPER’S NEWEST LAB FEATURED IN EOYS

Student projects were on view in the new Benjamin Menschel Civic Projects Lab, an all-in-one classroom, workspace, and public showcase located on the ground floor of 41 Cooper Square and dedicated to engaging civic-focused issues. The exhibited work was created for Data Science for Social Good, an interdisciplinary course taught by Sam Keene, associate professor of electrical engineering, in which students partner with New York City organizations to develop projects that apply data to address social issues.

The Cooper Union’s annual End of Year Show (EOYS) returned this past spring semester with its first in-person student exhibition since 2019. Students from all disciplines had the opportunity to welcome faculty, staff, family, friends, and the public to celebrate the 2022 EOYS opening on May 24th and to showcase their projects from the past academic year, mounted throughout Cooper’s galleries, classrooms, hallways, and studios. The following is a small selection of projects and photographs representing the incredible breadth of student work featured in this year’s show.
Models from the Spring 2022 Design IV studio taught by Stella Betts: Re-imagining Empire State Plaza: Lessons in Adaptive Urban Recycling. As part of the studio, students traveled to Albany, New York to study the modernist Empire State Plaza and rethink its program and use in relation to larger urban, infrastructural, and environmental contexts.

Installation view of works by School of Art students

Wesley Wong ChE’24 with his poster describing an independent project he worked on with Ahmed Hassan ME’24 and Nada Shetewi ChE’23 investigating whether microbial fuel cells could be used for low-level power generation and simultaneous for wastewater clean-up.

Pia Roels ChE’23 is part of the Cooper Motorsports Team, one of three Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP) Program courses that give students an opportunity to work on large-scale projects over several semesters.

Joshua Yoon EE’22 watches his Sumo Robot compete in the ring. This year’s contestants were all built as part of Professor Brian Cusack’s ME’01 MME’03 mechatronics class.

Installation by Wildriana de Jesús Paulino A’22

Work from the Spring 2022 workshop, Everything’s on the Table, taught by Associate Dean Hayley Eber AR’01 and Assistant Professor Adjunct Mae-ling Lokko will be part of the Tallinn Architecture Biennale in Fall ’22.
n 2016, Dean Nader Tehrani told an interviewer at *Interior Design* magazine his goal as dean of The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture: “I want to open up the doors of The Cooper Union to the world, to a variety of debates and the challenges of our time.” That tall order was one he has fulfilled systematically—a reconsidered and expanded curriculum, the hiring of four new full-time faculty, new opportunities for study abroad and collaborations with other institutions, countless exciting guest lecturers and visiting faculty—and with extraordinary heart as a figure ever participating in the life of the school. Lydia Kallipoliti, assistant professor of architecture, sums up the breadth of his commitment: “Dean Tehrani showed us that to be a leader and a caring human are not contradictory. It is rare, at best, to witness in a person unwavering generosity, yet filtered with a critical insight.”

This past spring, Tehrani stepped down from his post as dean of Cooper’s architecture school, a position he’d held since July 2015. A highly regarded figure of the art and architecture firmament, Tehrani, who was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in May 2021, has worked to instill a global sensibility to students, faculty, and the Cooper community at large. That effort has above all entailed questioning architecture’s civic and public role, often pushing for a wider view than the scale of individual building sites and city blocks. As he wrote in a 2016 blog post, “the urban impact is no longer about the study of cities, but the study of the globe, the earth.” With the school of architecture now looking ahead to a new administrative chapter, it seems clear the changes stewarded under Tehrani’s deanship have, as President Laura Sparks puts it, “marked a significant step forward, positioning Cooper to support its architecture students in their pursuit of critical, interdisciplinary work that addresses pressing universal concerns, from racial equity to affordable housing to climate change.”
Perspectives at The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture

Nicholas Boyarsky at the opening of the exhibition “Drawing Ambience: Alvin Boyarsky and the Architectural Association,” 2015

Tehrani with 2017 “Shenzhen Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture” collaborators Cheung Lun Jeremy Son AR’20 and Margaux Wheelock-Shew AR’18
EVOLVING CURRICULUM & THE ARC OF LEADERSHIP

For Tehrani, the evolution of Cooper’s architecture curriculum has meant moving forward without losing sight of the past. Before becoming dean, he was well aware of the august history of that position first filled by John Hejduk A’50 from 1975 to 2000. Besides being an architect and educator of great merit and renown, Hejduk developed a pedagogy that has been central to architecture education. Following Hejduk from 2002 to 2013, the architecture historian Anthony Vidler served as the school’s second dean. Vidler, an expert on French architecture, launched initiatives to re-invigorate exhibition programs and engage students in current social issues—initiatives that have continued to gain momentum. Tehrani notes that when he joined Cooper, Vidler, along with Professor Elizabeth O’Donnell, then associate dean, provided “infinite support” as he fashioned ways to build on the work of his two predecessors. He discovered that “while Hejduk’s legacy still loomed monumental, his immediate presence was long enough in the past that it came to serve as important ‘historical’ matter to be researched rather than mythicized.”

At the same time, Tehrani understood his role as being one of advocate for discourses once thought to be outside of the architectural canon. Notably, he hired four new full-time faculty (there were three when he arrived), bringing with them a breadth of research interests: climate change and the environment; design and fabrication; social justice; and design and digital technologies. Facilitating ongoing discussion among faculty and students has also been instrumental to Tehrani’s championing of non-canonical perspectives. Alumna Chloe Fan AR’18, co-founder of Design with FRANK, a digital platform for people to design their own houses, says that Tehrani and the atmosphere he created at Cooper made for rich dialogue pertinent to the field: “Those discussions ranged from the tools of architecture, technology, representation, and conceptual urban ideology, and in those discussions, I learned more about architecture professionally and academically than ever before.”

Like the deans who preceded him, Tehrani eschewed the teaching of architecture as reducible to a set of technical skills. Instead, he and his faculty have approached architectural pedagogy as one that encourages students to get comfortable with uncertainty, to avoid simplistic, either-or solutions, and to seek answers through dialogue. Tehrani himself was often an active interlocutor for students, particularly in design critiques and studio visits.

“One of the key highlights of my teaching under his leadership,” Professor Mersiha Veledar AR’03 says, “includes the first summer we spent preparing—and rigorously reworking—the details of the new first-year studio sequence.” That work, she explains, was accomplished “through the development of novel concepts, tools, and techniques in architectonics in tandem with all concurrent first-year courses and a deep care towards our incoming students. This undertaking resulted in the receipt of the prestigious Studio Prize from Architect Magazine for a top studio in North America.” Cooper’s was the only first-year undergraduate studio to be awarded the prize that year. She notes that what she called the dean’s “brilliance and rigorous dedication”
to the school’s curriculum has had visible results. “Our students’ work has never looked stronger,” she says.

In part, that may be a result of Tehrani’s changes to curriculum, which gave students the chance to explore the relationship between design decisions and the social contract, and his obvious respect for his students and their quest to align the field of architecture with social justice. In a 2021 interview with the journal PLAT, he said, “What is interesting about the way that the students have fashioned this discussion is that they have formed a much broader conversation about decolonization, absorbing themes into it which often do not necessarily focus on the formal, spatial, and material aspects of the built environment. They have articulated that it is not just about race: it is about multiculturalism, climate equity, gender, and a range of other social issues that impact the world today.”

According to Professor Michael Young, Tehrani’s investigations into the pedagogy of architecture proved to be particularly meaningful with respect to digital technology, which he regarded not as an end in itself, but as a potential tool to aid students as they develop their understanding, techniques, and aesthetics. Students have explored those possibilities by way of the IDC Foundation AACE Lab, which opened during Tehrani’s tenure, gallery exhibitions of cutting-edge uses of digital tools, and lectures given by contemporary practitioners using innovative materials and technology. “As important as these instances are to the culture of the school,” says Young, “equally important has been the constant inclusion of seminars and studios that focus on the digital impacts on architecture from a multitude of directions, be they socially, politically, ecologically, materially, or aesthetically directed. Dean Tehrani’s support for bringing these courses into the school has opened many new ways for our students to explore and find their own voices in relation to the ever intersecting virtual and physical environment.”

LOOKING FURTHER AFIELD
To nurture a more global curriculum, Tehrani set out to provide students with ample opportunities to study outside of the Cooper studio setting. In 2016, students traveled to Mexico City for 10 days as part of their third-year studio. It was the first time in Cooper’s recent history that the school of architecture had offered students a

“*The urban impact is no longer about the study of cities, but the study of the globe, the earth.*” —NADER TEHRANI
“To study something abstractly—through photographs and structural concepts—is one thing, but to actually climb the shell and feel the curvature in your bones and walk the scale yourself is another thing entirely.”

—ELIZABETH O’DONNELL AR’83
chance to travel in conjunction with their studio course, which required them to conduct analyses of a building from myriad perspectives: relation to street grid, materials, history, and other aspects of its architecture. A student at the time, Kevin Savillon AR’19 asked Tehrani if a site visit abroad could be part of the curriculum. He found that the dean showed “immediate interest in having an ‘on the ground’ research component.” While there, the group, which included Tehrani himself, was able to explore buildings normally off limits to the public and meet with scholars versed in the architecture under study, such as the campus of UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), the Museo de Antropología, and Casa Barragán’s.

At the time, Professor Elizabeth O’Donnell AR’83 told the student newspaper, The Pioneer, “To study something abstractly—through photographs and structural concepts—is one thing, but to actually climb the shell and feel the curvature in your bones and walk the scale yourself is another thing entirely.”

Tehrani continued to give students that invaluable experience by arranging collaborations with other schools and nonprofits for the new third-year housing studio, which was introduced while he was dean. One year, for instance, students worked with HelpUSA while it designed and built affordable housing in East New York. Veledar, who coordinated that year’s integrated building studio, credits Tehrani with providing an opportunity “where our students learned to develop design experiments in collective housing ideas that directly helped reduce homelessness in New York.”

Other collaborative opportunities came in the form of studios that brought students to Kansas, Hong Kong, Chicago, and Vicenza. Some of that work was also aimed at large exhibitions at the Shenzhen Biennale, Festival des Architectures Vives in Montpellier, and the Venice Biennale. Tehrani and his team ensured that students were exposed to as many experiences as possible on campus as well, including a joint event with Public Art Fund that brought Ai Wei Wei to the Great Hall and a 2017 partnership with the City of New York to install two structures by John Hejduk in front of the Foundation Building. All of that, Tehrani notes, was undertaken in service of a larger academic goal: to learn from the world while also giving back to it.
A MULTITUDE OF VOICES & VIEWPOINTS

A similar effort to expose students to the world beyond Cooper has hinged on bringing a greater variety of ideas and viewpoints to campus, aligning with an institution-wide emphasis on advancing diversity of thought. To that end, Tehrani invited some of the most renowned practitioners in architecture and adjacent fields—Eva Franch I Gilabert, Lesley Lokko, Joshua Ramus, Deborah Mesa—to teach as visiting professors. Guest speakers were equally diverse in their perspectives: Samia Henni, Mario Gooden, Mpho Matsipa, and Anooradha Siddiqi in collaboration on the topic of (anti/post/de)-colonial practices; Andrew Freer and Rusty Smith, who run the famed Rural Studio, considered the economic and environmental costs of architecture; Ilze and Heinrich Wolff of Wolff Architects, based in Cape Town, South Africa, discussed their work investigating the inequity of the city’s history and how their practice brings light to those injustices.

While some of Tehrani’s invited speakers focused on materials and technology, they always also asked social questions, contextualizing architecture in relation to global crises of environment, politics, and war. In the midst of the COVID pandemic, for instance, Tehrani interviewed Tim Slade, an Australian filmmaker whose work documents the ways that combatants target architecture in an attempt to erase competing cultures. (Tehrani himself wrote eloquently on the subject in January 2020 for The Architect’s Newspaper.) Placing architecture in conversation with a plurality of voices reflects the dean’s refusal to “essentialize” Cooper education and his goal of instead building what he calls “a space of convergence” where “necessary frictions can be absorbed by the collegiality of opposing views.”

A LEGACY OF GIVING

Tehrani recently summed up his legacy: “I created platforms for others to be heard.” To keep those platforms accessible for the foreseeable future, he put effort into creating new endowments and building existing funds. With the help of recent alumni, the Sue Gussow Scholarship Fund and the Diane Lewis Memorial Travel Fellowship were created to provide resources for students in the School of Architecture in honor of current and past faculty. He also established the Tehrani Endowment Fund to support the annual Fariba Tehrani Lecture, and the NADAAA Endowment, which brings visiting critics to the school. Under his leadership, the
William Cooper Mack Fellowship, established in 2008 to afford a thesis-year student to engage deeply in research, has grown to be awarded on an annual basis, and the student lecture series will be fully funded thanks to the generosity of Elise Jaffe and Jeffrey Brown. In his final year, he has also focused on efforts to establish a fund to support programs at the intersection of architecture and the humanities, led by alumni Jesse Reiser AR’81 and Nanako Umemoto AR’83, and lent his own support toward fundraising in honor of John Hejduk to focus on underrepresented, early-career faculty voices in architecture. With all these new funding opportunities, Tehrani’s goal is to further engage and encourage alumni to keep supporting The Cooper Union, especially as the college continues to advance its plan toward a more sustainable fiscal future and increasing scholarship support for undergraduates.

Tehrani himself has already been exceptionally generous to the school via personal donations and those given from his firm, and through these gifts, he has committed further funds to promote a return to full-tuition scholarships and to draw the best professors and practitioners in the field to the school of architecture.

Associate Dean Hayley Eber AR’01 says that Tehrani “has been a transformational leader with a deep love for our students and passion for The Cooper Union.” And with all Tehrani has brought to Cooper—from hiring new faculty to revising the curriculum to greatly expanding opportunities for students and the donors who would like to support them—the next dean will step into a well-equipped architecture school, able to work from a strong foundation to shape their own vision and further advance what it means for students to be immersed in an architecture education at Cooper.

As he prepared to step down, Tehrani reflected on the support given to him by deans Vidler and O’Donnell during his early days at Cooper: “I hope to be able to do the same for the next dean. As for the future of The Cooper Union, I have created key opportunities for the incoming dean to make radical transformations and expansions in support of their conception of this place. I see Cooper Union as a dynamic pedagogical platform with the capacity of incorporating many other critical issues that our generation was unable to address.”

— ANGELA STARITA
between Third and Fourth Avenues in the East Village, bordered by Astor Place and Cooper Square, Cooper Union’s Foundation Building stands as a destination for academic exploration, inquiry, and creative expression. Through the front doors, a flight below street level, another destination is within—The Cooper Union’s Great Hall. A place of meet-ups, milestones, and ceremony for generations of Cooper students, the Great Hall was envisioned first as a gathering place for the people of a burgeoning city and a country on the brink of civil war, and a gathering place it has been ever since.

Peter Cooper opened the doors of the Great Hall in 1858, a year before the college was ready for students. It has played host to American presidents, New York City mayors, artists, scientists, early labor organizers, civil rights leaders, city planners, performers, advocates, designers, writers, historians, and everyday people who sought a say in shaping their civic lives. Now, an extraordinary new resource is making available all known sound and video recordings made in the Great Hall from 1941 to present day as well as more than 8,900 objects, such as photographs, tickets, and flyers, related to more than 3,000 Great Hall programs dating to 1859. Called Voices from the Great Hall (greathallvoices.cooper.edu), the growing collection is a digital archive, free and accessible to anyone, and generously supported by The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, that tells the history of New York and the nation.

The new archive is home to recordings of some of the most renowned thinkers and leaders from across disciplines, including Presidents Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, and nine others either before or during their administrations; Frederick Douglass and Chief Red Cloud; Supreme Court Justices Thurgood Marshall and Stephen Breyer; feminists and activists...
such as Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, and Bella Abzug; Congressional leaders like John Lewis and Adam Schiff; cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead; architect Louis I. Kahn; psychologist and writer Timothy Leary; and authors like Arundhati Roy and Orson Welles. The Great Hall was also host to early mass meetings of the NAACP, a cradle of the women’s suffrage and American labor movements, the early meeting place of the precursor to the American Red Cross, and the site of critically formative ACT UP meetings. In recent years, guests have addressed everything from art and advocacy, to immigration, the Electoral College, the death penalty in America, monuments, the climate crisis, the world’s pandemic response, and New York City politics. The digital archive is searchable by date, speaker, and 20 different themes such as Anthropology and Sociology; Architecture and City Planning; Art and Design; Environment; Labor and Economics; New York; Politics and Activism; Racial Justice and Human Rights; and Women, Gender, and Sexuality.

“The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation is pleased to have helped support such a vibrant educational resource that reflects the American experience. The Cooper Union has been the site of so many important conversations, and we know that the Voices from the Great Hall archive will become an instrumental tool for so many undertaking historical research and those interested in how that history informs our present.”

— Kathryn M. Curran, Executive Director of the Gardiner Foundation
Left: Oscar-nominated and Emmy Award-winning actor Sam Waterston hosted the May 17 launch event.

Right, top to bottom:
Laura Sparks, President, The Cooper Union
Kai Wright, host and managing editor, WNYC
Harold Holzer, Abraham Lincoln scholar and author

Musical performances:
Resistance Revival Chorus
NY Phil Teaching Artist Ensemble
AN EVENING OF VOICES

To celebrate the archive’s debut, a special public program was hosted at The Cooper Union on May 17. Oscar-nominated and Emmy Award-winning actor Sam Waterston returned to the Great Hall stage where in 2004 he reprised Abraham Lincoln’s “Right Makes Might” address (also known as Lincoln’s Cooper Union address). Waterston once again brought the Great Hall’s important history to life, introducing original recordings with large-scale, immersive projection imagery. Also returning for live encores that evening were Lincoln expert and author Harold Holzer, a frequent guest and lecturer in the Great Hall, and performers from the NY Phil Teaching Artist Ensemble and Resistance Revival Chorus. The relationship between The Cooper Union and the venerable NY Phil dates back to 1914 when the ensemble first performed in the Great Hall; and the Resistance Revival Chorus had previously performed in the Great Hall in 2018. WNYC host Kai Wright was also part of the program, commemorating a 54-year tradition (1949–2003) of Great Hall programs being broadcast on the station.

“Cooper’s Great Hall was once the largest gathering place in New York City—a place where people from all walks of life have organized and presented their views on the pressing matters of their time, a legacy that continues today,” says President Sparks. “We are so grateful for the Gardiner Foundation’s leadership and commitment to preserving essential New York history. Their support has made this digital Great Hall archive possible, making available again the very speeches and arguments as they were originally presented here and providing the framework for preserving the programs that are still to come. There is so much that we, as an engaged citizenry, can draw on and learn from these historical perspectives, and that is precisely our hope for the Voices from the Great Hall archive—that it helps us imagine how we might shape the future of our shared civic and cultural life.”

BUILDING THE ARCHIVE

Nearly five years in the making, the archive was created by a team of Cooper Union archivists and designers including Steven Hillyer, Elizabeth Muller, and Chialin Chou and Cooper Union Library staff Dale Perreault, Lisa Norberg, and Mary Mann. Many of the historic recordings were previously stored in Cooper’s audio-visual department. With the onset of the project, they were cataloged, digitized, rehoused, and preserved. In their new digital format, the authentic sounds of presenters, captured at the time they were on the Great Hall stage, complete with all the dialects, syntax, and perspectives of their time came to life again. From there, the idea to create a formidable resource, fully accessible to the public, took shape. Additional recordings were transferred from the New York City Municipal Archives’ WNYC New York Public Radio collection. Ultimately, the archive project grew into a larger cause to consolidate every available piece of Great Hall information into this formalized resource. The physical and born-digital materials represented on the site are archived and available in The Cooper Union Library Archives and Special Collections.

“We made many discoveries as the recordings were removed from dusty boxes and came to light,” says Steven Hillyer AR’90, Project Director of the effort. “The most joyful moments came when we received digital files of them and began listening. Hearing the voices of so many luminaries for the first time was astounding. The archive is a treasure trove of thoughts, events, and voices that have the ability to inform our current and future thinking on so many important issues. The Great Hall digital archive will be invaluable for historic research and celebrated through future Great Hall programming for years to come. We invite everyone to explore it.”

— CHRISTINE REIMERT
When the pandemic forced Formula SAE (FSAE) to move its collegiate design competition entirely online in early 2020, Julia Buckley, then a sophomore, saw the hiatus from racing as an opportunity for Cooper Union Motorsports to take on a big challenge. “I was the engine lead at the time and was thinking about what projects the team could move forward with,” she says. “Electric vehicles are where the industry is moving, and it’s something I was really interested in.”

In a typical year, FSAE hosts a series of competitions that challenge teams of students to conceive, design, fabricate, and fine-tune a Formula-style vehicle with the goal of racing at the Michigan International Speedway. The Cooper team has historically competed in the internal combustion class, but with the extra time afforded by the pandemic’s disruptions, they set their sights on the electric vehicle (EV) portion of the competition, embarking on an ambitious research design process.

“This year was obviously a push year for us. Everything was new,” says Julia, who served as the 2021–2022 Cooper Union Motorsports president and came to Cooper to study mechanical engineering, largely out of an interest in automotive design. With support from technical staff, faculty advisors, and alumni mentors, Julia and her teammates worked countless hours producing cost reports and 3D drawings, testing components, and constructing an all-new battery system and electric powertrain. Their hope is that by next spring, the team will have a thoroughly tested vehicle that is ready to race in Michigan.

According to Aidan Bowman, a rising senior in mechanical engineering and the team’s chief engineer, the focus this year was on learning the fundamentals. “We’ve set up a strong framework for next year’s leadership to dive in and be able to test the vehicle and collect data,” she says.

One significant challenge involved accounting for changes in the vehicle’s dynamics due to its “big power,” as Julia describes it. “The shape of the car hasn’t changed much, but we’ve had to do a lot of redesign when it came to our structural components to make sure they’re strong enough to withstand the acceleration and deceleration values. Our motor is twice as strong as our engine used to be.”

The complexity of the electrical systems posed a steep learning curve. “The sheer amount of electrical design we’ve learned is amazing,” says Aidan. Mechanical engineering students tend to outnumber those from other disciplines in Motorsports, but the team leaders say this was uncharted territory even for electrical engineering majors, who don’t generally focus as much on high voltage systems in their courses.

Adiv Ish-Shalom, who joined Motorsports last fall as a first-year BSE student, had prior experience building electric bicycles. “It’s very different from working out of my basement,” he says. Over several months, he collaborated with two other first-year students on designing a core component of the vehicle from scratch: a
357-volt battery pack with fused cylindrical cells, the same size used by the Tesla Model 3.

Finding support for the EV project was just as essential. Sponsorships from Con Edison and Constellation provided more than $50,000 in funding, in addition to generous support from other donors. The team found mentorship as well, meeting with battery experts at Con Edison and learning from Cooper alumni in design reviews.

On the whole, refocusing Motorsports on the design problems surrounding EVs has been time well spent. According to Julia, “It’s where the industry is moving and the future is moving.” Julia delivered the Class of 2022 Student Address at Commencement this past spring and recently landed her dream job working for cutting-edge sportscar manufacturer Koenigsegg in Sweden.

“We’re setting up the students who are interested in automotive engineering to transition much better to the industry,” Aidan says. “Major automotive companies are going electric. Startups are going electric. There are so many opportunities.” Julia adds: “So many industries are switching to renewables and electric, and there’s so much work to be done, especially in the next few years.”

—MATTHEW BOWER

AUTONOMOUS VEHICLE TEAM WINS ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

In June, a student team from the Albert Nerken School of Engineering received the Rookie of the Year award at the 2022 Intelligent Ground Vehicle Competition (IGVC), the oldest and largest autonomous vehicle competition in the country. The IGVC brings together undergraduate and graduate student teams from around the nation to design autonomous vehicles and showcase their vehicles’ self-driving and parking capabilities.

As newcomers to the competition, the Cooper students bested far more experienced teams, placing fourth for self-drive performance and fifth for self-drive design out of a total of 32 teams from 29 universities. The team was led by rising electrical engineering senior Daniel Mezhiborsky with advisors Neveen Shlayan, associate professor of electrical engineering, and Michael Giglia, adjunct instructor of mechanical engineering, and is part of Cooper’s interdisciplinary Autonomy Lab.
2021-22 IDC Foundation Innovation Fellows
Two Architecture Fifth-Years and Two Mechanical Engineering Seniors Share Their Innovative Work as Part of a New Fellowship Program

Cooper Awarded Two Major New York State Grants
NY State Grants Totaling Nearly $850,000 Support the Saturday Program and the Restoration of the Foundation Building’s Historic Façade

Cooper Establishes the Cheryl D. Miller Collection of Black Graphic Design History
The Herb Lubalin Center will house the East Coast’s premier collection for the preservation and study of the work of black designers

Diversity Award
The Albert Nerken School of Engineering Receives the ASEE Diversity Program’s Prestigious Bronze-Level Recognition

New Course Combines Art History with Art Making
Sculpture: Arte Povera
GINGER BROOKS TAKAHASHI
AWARDED THE 2022
IDA APPLEBROOG GRANT

ROTARY PARK
ALUMNI FIRM BALLMAN KHAPALOVA
PROPOSES AMBITIOUS PARK PLAN FOR
LOWER MANHATTAN SITE

HISTORIC LEGISLATION SIGNED AT COOPER
GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL SIGNS LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE
FROM GREAT HALL STAGE TO PROTECT REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
IN NEW YORK STATE

PRESIDENT SPARKS LEADS AITU
LAURA SPARKS ELECTED AS THE 2022 CHAIR OF
THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES

SEEING HOW BODIES MOVE
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY EXHIBITION ENGAGED PEOPLE ON THE STREET
BY VISUALIZING THEIR MOVEMENT

ART STUDENT LAUNCHES FOOD DRIVE
ORCHID SYLVESTER A’24
HOPE TO START A NEW TRADITION
OF COMMUNITY AID

GINGER BROOKS TAKAHASHI
AWARDED THE 2022 IDA APPLEBROOG GRANT

Photos: Lindsay Dill, Olivier Kpognon, Don Pollard/Office of Governor Hochul, Sandenwolff, Julio Santillana, Leo Sorel
Several Cooper Union faculty members and alumni are among the artists featured in this year’s much-anticipated “Whitney Biennial 2022: Quiet as It’s Kept.” The renowned contemporary art exhibition, organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, is in its 80th iteration and includes works by School of Art faculty members Coco Fusco and Lucy Raven as well as three art and architecture alumni: Rose Salane A’14, Rayyane Tabet AR’08, and Kandis Williams A’09.

The biennial opened this past April after being delayed a year amid the pandemic and widespread calls to question cultural institutions and their structural role in fights for racial justice. According to curators David Breslin and Adrienne Edwards, this year’s title, “Quiet as It’s Kept”—a colloquialism invoking secrecy—takes inspiration from the works of novelist Toni Morrison, jazz drummer Max Roach, and artist David Hammons.

Professor Coco Fusco’s featured work, Your Eyes Will Be an Empty Word (2021), is a video focused on Hart Island and filmed in the context of the 2020 pandemic lockdown. The island, which has served as a public cemetery for New York City’s unclaimed dead since 1869, became the final resting place for many COVID victims explains Professor Fusco, who last year was named a Latinx Artist Fellow by the US Latinx Art Forum and received a 2021 Anonymous Was A Woman award.

“I convinced a few colleagues to go out to Hart Island on a boat and we lowered a little dinghy into the East River for me to row in while the drone camera was managed from the big boat,” Professor Fusco says of the filming process. “We had to work pretty fast because the sun’s movements across the sky change the light drastically.”

Coco Fusco, still from Your Eyes Will Be an Empty Word, 2021. HD video, color, sound; 12 minutes
Lucy Raven, associate professor of art, is exhibiting a moving image installation. “This suite of short films will be the second installment of a trilogy of Westerns I’m working on,” Professor Raven explains. “Part one was installed at Dia [Chelsea] this past year; this one I’m making at an explosives range and test site in New Mexico.” Ready Mix (2021), Raven’s first part to the trilogy, was named one of the defining artworks of the year by an ARThnews survey.

For 64,000 Attempts at Circulation (2022), artist Rose Salane acquired 6,400 “slugs”—tokens that mimic legal tender—from a New York Metropolitan Transit Authority asset recovery auction, employing the collected objects to tell stories about New York City and its inhabitants. Lebanon-born artist Rayyane Tabet draws directly from his experience applying for U.S. citizenship in his exhibited work 100 Civics Questions from Becoming American (2022). Multidisciplinary artist Kandis Williams contributes the video Death of A, which is based on Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman and reconfigures the play around historical quotations and imagery that emphasize the Black body as both a site of experience and coopted symbol. —KIM NEWMAN
Circular Pyrolysis, Brandon Bunt BSE’22, Lionel Gilliar-Schoenenberger CE’23, and Elias Dills AR’24 researched and built an easily reproducible pyrolysis kiln that uses cardboard and paper waste from artistic production to produce charcoal.

The Benjamin Menschel Fellowship is awarded annually to exceptional students from all three of Cooper’s schools, in support of forward-looking, socially relevant projects and research. This prestigious fellowship provides funding for independent projects in the fields of architecture, art, design, and engineering, culminating in a public exhibition of the completed students’ work. The program is generously supported by Richard and Ronay Menschel, the Charina Endowment Fund, and the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation.

The 2021 Menschel Fellowship Exhibition, which ran from February 15 through March 3, 2022, showcased a variety of independent and interdisciplinary projects that, in the words of Ninad Pandit, director of the program, “exemplify the caliber and astonishing range of Cooper students’ intellectual pursuits that push the boundaries of creative research, analysis, and intervention.”

2021 BENJAMIN MENSCHEL FELLOWSHIP EXHIBITION

In Circular Pyrolysis, Brandon Bunt BSE’22, Lionel Gilliar-Schoenenberger CE’23, and Elias Dills AR’24 researched and built an easily reproducible pyrolysis kiln that uses cardboard and paper waste from artistic production to produce charcoal.

Opposite page: Kevin Chow AR’22, Chau-Anh Nguyen AR’23, and Virginia Reboli A’22 investigated “Pastoral Capitalism”—an architectural typology that combines the quintessentially American aesthetic of pastoralism and open land with the language of corporate and capitalist built-form, best exemplified in the architecture of Silicon Valley.

Opposite page: Annabella Chen AR’22, Jiawen Chen AR’23, and Ahzin Nam AR’22 set out to re-imagine the shift to outdoor dining structures amid COVID-19 restrictions in New York City—specifically by prototyping street furniture that prioritizes the safety and comfort of food delivery couriers who are deemed essential workers but often overlooked within the built streetscape.
Above, l to r: Birangona: Women of War, a poly-vocal animated short film by Kaniz Fatema A’22, focuses on the oral history of the women survivors of mass rape in the Pakistan-Bangladesh War of 1971. Talya Krupnick A’22 traveled to the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah, a landscape left behind after a major climate event, and developed her first-ever long form video, Tracer, which examines relationships between experience, temporality, and space/place.
Students from The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture recently showed off their skills and expertise at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). The occasion was a special collaboration between The Cooper Union and MoMA as part of the revelatory exhibition “The Project of Independence, Architectures of Decolonization in South Asia, 1947-1985.”

The model-building enterprise, a follow-up to a similar collaboration in 2018 for MoMA’s “Toward a Concrete Utopia” exhibition, was part of a hybrid course on modern architecture in South Asia taught by James Lowder, assistant professor of architecture, in the spring of 2020. Along with the academic component of the class, students built six models of the buildings under study, which had been chosen by the MoMA curatorial team. Those models were on display at MoMA as part of “The Project of Independence” exhibition, which ran through July 2, 2022.

In the post-war period in South Asia, nations worked to create new identities distinct from their colonial pasts. In architectural terms, this meant finding a fresh architectural language and a different way of embracing modernism. “Modern architecture was a global phenomenon that at once could be said to have some colonizing qualities, as it is a cultural product of Western Europe but was also seen as a liberating force,” Lowder explains. “Part of the task for these new democratic governments of the region was to find an architectural expression that matched their social, political, and cultural ambitions.”

The models themselves, made by hand and constructed of wood, organically mirror the use of craft and natural materials that architects of the region adopted to recast modernist motifs in terms that honored histories and traditions. “I think the students got a lot from studying the buildings and discussing them with the curators.
to see what the important aspects were for the models to show,” says Lowder. “Along with that, the exposure to the inner workings and thought processes that go into an exhibition at a world-class museum is such a special experience.”

Andrew Song, a fourth-year student in the architectural program, notes that consulting with the MoMA curators was a unique opportunity and that teamwork among the students was vital. “The scale of the project demanded a collaborative process. Given its size and complexity, it could not have been a single person’s endeavor,” Andrew says. “One example I recall was the construction of the ground that one building rested on—that alone took nearly a month of work. The necessity for the team to communicate fluidly and work in unison was essential.”

“Working once again with the architecture students and faculty of The Cooper Union has been an immensely gratifying experience for the MoMA curatorial team. Cooper students are widely known to be extremely adept model-makers and for continuing a long legacy of the school on visual representation and material craftsmanship,” says Evangelos Kotsioris, assistant curator in the Department of Architecture and Design at MoMA. “In most instances, the documentation available was scant. The whole operation often resembled a forensic analysis and assembly of evidence in order to arrive at the exquisitely detailed models that we are thrilled to finally be able to share with MoMA’s wide audiences.”

— CHRIS QUIRK
Henri Arnold A’50 spent four decades illustrating the hugely popular syndicated newspaper cartoon puzzle Jumble, an analog predecessor to Wordle. Though he hated puzzles, he loved illustrating: “Art, ideas, and gags are what I’m interested in,” he said. While he did not let Cooper know of his plans while he was alive, when he passed away in 2015, he left Cooper generous funding to endow the Henri Arnold Scholarship Fund for students in the School of Art who exhibit financial need. We wish we had been able to thank Mr. Arnold for his generosity while he was alive.

Thanks in large part to donors like Henri Arnold, The Cooper Union has continued to deliver on our financial goals as defined by our 10-year plan to return to full-tuition scholarships by 2029. One increasingly popular way of giving back is by including Cooper in financial, estate, or end-of-life plans. In doing so, donors are inducted into The Society of 1859, designed to recognize and honor benefactors who have made enduring gifts to the general endowment of The Cooper Union, established a named endowment fund, or notified the college in writing that they have established a trust, bequest, or other planned gift. Currently, The Society of 1859 has approximately 175 members and counting. This commitment helps ensure that Cooper will have sufficient financial resources to return to full-tuition scholarships for all admitted students.

While not alumni themselves, children of Cooper graduates also honor the opportunity the school provided their parents. Elaine Flug, who passed away in 2012, was the daughter of Cooper graduate Isaac Allen AR’24. In her will, she generously honored her father and the life Cooper helped him build through a bequest to The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture.

George Wallerstein was not a student either; however, he still chose to leave 10% of his estate to the school in memory of his late father, Leo Wallerstein, an immigrant from Germany. Leo came to the United States in 1900 and immediately enrolled at The Cooper Union, studying engineering and graduating in 1904. With his brother Max, he then built a thriving business focused on utilizing enzymes in novel ways in manufacturing; he is even credited with inventing the process for keeping the fizz in bottled beer. George chose to direct the bequest to student scholarships at Cooper, having seen the success of what a free education propelled his father to accomplish.

Cooper can also accommodate blended gifts, meaning donations that are given during a donor’s lifetime and continue to support the school even after they pass. In 2018, Vic DiFranco CE’63 committed to an annual donation in support of a new endowment, The Victor and Eleanor DiFranco Fund. The endowment provides opportunities for students to enrich their studies by participating in cultural
immersion experiences while gaining professional practice; presenting their research at national-level conferences; and developing the tools to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in impactful ways that reflect the real-world applications of the Cooper engineering experience. The DiFrancos’ generosity is felt by the entire Cooper community and allows the Albert Nerken School of Engineering to maintain a comprehensive curriculum that incorporates leading-edge engineering pedagogy. The endowment is currently supported through qualified charitable distributions from his IRA, thereby reducing his taxable income while supporting The Cooper Union. Proceeds from the entirety of his IRA will come to Cooper through Mr. DiFranco’s bequest, upholding the endowment for many years to come.

George Reeves ME’64 and his wife Ross Wisnewski decided to give Cooper a portion of their bequest outright during their lifetime to see the impact firsthand. They believe that this moment in Cooper’s history—as the school gets ever closer to raising the money needed to get back to full-tuition scholarships—is the right time to give a substantial gift that can have meaningful impact on Cooper’s future. Wisnewski says, “It just is so compelling to us right now, to want to take advantage of all the opportunities and to make a contribution.”

We are so grateful for the generous support of our donors.

Is The Cooper Union in your estate plans?
Please reach out to development@cooper.edu so we can properly thank you and induct you into the Society of 1859. Learn more about giving back to Cooper at cooper.edu/giving/other-ways-to-give
REUNION WEEKEND ’22

Alumni and their families and friends reconvened on campus and around New York City on June 3–4 as part of Reunion 2022.

Below, l to r: Malcolm King EE ’97, chair, Board of Trustees; Lisa Norberg, director of the Library; Hayley Eber AR ’01, associate dean, The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture

Mike Esil, dean, School of Art and Barry Shoop, dean, Albert Nerken School of Engineering

Photos: Marget Long

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George '59 and Frances Barletta
Arline Buechert '54
Eleanor '69 and Mark Blair
Michael Borkowsky '61
Peter '63 and Janet Bungay
Alicia and Michael...
The annual festival on the contemporary use of type, organized by The Cooper Union’s Type@Cooper and the Herb Lubalin Study Center of Design and Typography, returned for its eighth year this summer.

Left, top: Donna Payne, creative director at Faber & Faber, discusses how a strong design heritage has influenced contemporary typography at one of the world’s great independent publishing houses.

Left, bottom: Shivani Parasnis speaks about how type can help serve as a means of finding joy in designing everyday things.

Below: Typographics 2022 curators (l to r) Ellen Lupton A’85, senior curator of contemporary design at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, Alexander Tochilovsky A’00, curator of The Cooper Union’s Herb Lubalin Study Center of Design and Typography, Mike Essl A’96, dean of The Cooper Union School of Art, Barbara Glauber, Spring 2022 Cooper Union Frank Stanton Chair in Graphic Design welcome attendees to the main stage conference.