



Reggio School, Jaque, Andrés (Office for Political Innovation) 2022. Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York

TRANSSCALAR ARCHITECTURE: CONSTRUCTION DETAILS AS COSMOPOLITICAL ENACTMENTS

Professor: **Dean Andrés Jaque**, Columbia GSAPP, OFFPOLINN aj2375@columbia.edu

Teaching Assistant: **Himil Ramani**, Columbia GSAPP, Storefront for Art and Architecture
hhr2116@columbia.edu

Schedule: Wednesdays 11 AM - 1 PM

Room: Ware Lounge

Spring, 2026. Columbia University. Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. New York

What will we be doing?

This course will undertake a detailed examination, indeed, an inquiry conducted through the very lens of construction details, of some of the most influential buildings and architectural projects produced over the past five decades. The work of Ad-Wo, Adamo-Faiden, Anne Holtrop, Assemble, Atelier d'Architecture Autogénérée (AAA), Bernard Tschumi, BIG, Boonserm Premthada, Cave Bureau, Colectivo C733, Cooking Sections, David Chipperfield, DS&R, Elemental, Field Operations, Forensic Architecture, Forensic Oceanography, Foster + Partners, Frida Escobedo, Future Systems, Herzog & de Meuron, John Pawson, Jonas Staal, Juan Herreros, Junya Ishigami, Lacaton & Vassal, Lina Bo Bardi, Lina Ghotmeh, Liu Jiakun, LOT-EK, Marian Isufu, Mass Studies, Moss, MVRDV, OMA, raumlabor, Rotor Deconstruction, SANAA, SCAPE, Steven Holl, Sumayya Vally, TakK Architects, Toyo Ito, Wang Shu & Lu Wenyu, and WORKac, among many others, will serve as the ground from which to interrogate how architectural details perform, signify, and intervene within broader cultural, ecological, and political formations.

For those who wish to interrogate the architectural artifacts that have shaped architectural culture since roughly 1968 (a time that can be said to have ignited an unparalleled wave of experimentation, critique, and counter-proposals to modernism) this course offers an opportunity.

Construction, and particularly construction detailing, is too often framed as the exclusive domain of experts, a space governed by technocratic authority and presented as if it were neutral, inevitable, or apolitical. This course is designed to unsettle that assumption. It examines construction details as intensely ideological sites where social, ecological, and political relations are materially negotiated, and where architecture's capacity to enact forms of collective inclusiveness and fairness is most powerfully exercised.

Rather than treating details as the endpoint of design, the course positions them as generative instruments for rethinking architectural practice itself. Students will engage methodologies that recast construction detailing as an arena for critical inquiry and civic imagination, a terrain where alternative societal and ecological articulations can be prototyped and contested.

This is a unique opportunity to participate in a disciplinary reorientation: to contribute work that not only advances individual understanding but also

intervenes in broader debates about how architecture constructs the worlds we live by/as. The outcomes of the course will be publicly shared in order to amplify the impact of each participant's contribution within the course's collective mission.

How will sessions be structured?

Each session will be organized in two parts:

1. The first will take the form of a lecture by Dean Andrés Jaque, in which approximately ten buildings, or, in some instances, other architectural artifacts, will be closely examined. The analysis will begin with precise readings of their construction details and will then expand outward, moving fluidly across scales to situate those details within the broader societal and ecological configurations they help materialize. Through this oscillation between the minute and the planetary, the class will unpack the critical, cultural, political, and historical agendas and controversies in which these details, and therefore the architectures themselves, are actively entangled.
2. The second part of each session will take the form of a moderated debate, led by Dean Jaque and Himil Ramani, in which students will bring their own research, questions, and provocations into the collective discussion.

The course will function as a space of collective inquiry, where every participant's perspectives and research are treated as essential contributions to the shared intellectual project. Together, we will cultivate a mode of collaborative investigation, and evidence accumulation and articulation, aimed at provoking new questions and disciplinary shifts within architecture.

Overall purpose:

Together, the sessions will form a dynamic survey that identifies and examines, *in detail and through detail*, the critical dimensions and operative roles of the most influential architectures of recent decades, revealing how they actively participate in the enactment and advancement of critical thought.

1. The course will operate in a *transscalar paradigm*. This means that architecture will be understood as constituted in how concrete devices

(like buildings, infrastructures, or installations) gain their agency by *transitioning* across scales.

See: Jaque, A., 2020. *Superpowers of Scale*. New York: Columbia Books on Architecture and the City. Jaque, A., 2022. The Time of Transscularity. *Apartamento Magazine*, Issue 30 (Autumn/Winter 2022-23).

2. The course will center on the interrogation of architectural devices themselves (buildings, interiors, infrastructures, etc.). Rather than dispersing horizontally into adjacent technologies, every discussion will originate in, and ultimately return to, architecture as its primary field of inquiry. The aim is to examine how architectural devices operate politically and critically without relinquishing their objecthood or their performative capacities. Here, architecture is understood as enacted: simultaneously material and performative, at once a setting and an event, a device that participates actively in shaping the worlds it helps to compose.

See: Jaque, A., 2014. *Urban Enactments*. *A+U (Architecture + Urbanism)*, 520

3. The course will approach politics as *cosmopolitics*: the field where heterogeneous beings, forces, and interests negotiate their coexistence and where architectural details become active participants in shaping those negotiations.

See: Stengers, I. 2010. *Cosmopolitics I*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; and Stengers, I. 2011. *Cosmopolitics II*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Through the semester the group will progressively become a group of experts on how the architectural detailing of the last five decades has prompted discourse, engagement and societal and ecological articulation.

Student Assignment:

Either individually or in small groups (no more than three students), participants will undertake a semester-long investigation of a single construction detail from a significant architectural work produced in the last fifty years. Applying the methodological framework introduced in the course, and working under the guidance of Dean Jaque and Himil Ramani, students will engage in archival research to unravel how the chosen detail operates within broader societal and ecological compositions, becoming an active site of political, cultural, and discursive negotiation. The ongoing development of each research project will be discussed collectively during the second part of the weekly sessions.

The final submission will consist of a 1,500-word essay accompanied by relevant images.

Requirements:

To earn credit for the course, students are expected to attend all sessions, contribute to discussions, and meet all submission deadlines.