

Columbia University, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
ARCH 4105.007, Fall 2018

Advanced Studio V: **Super Manhattan**

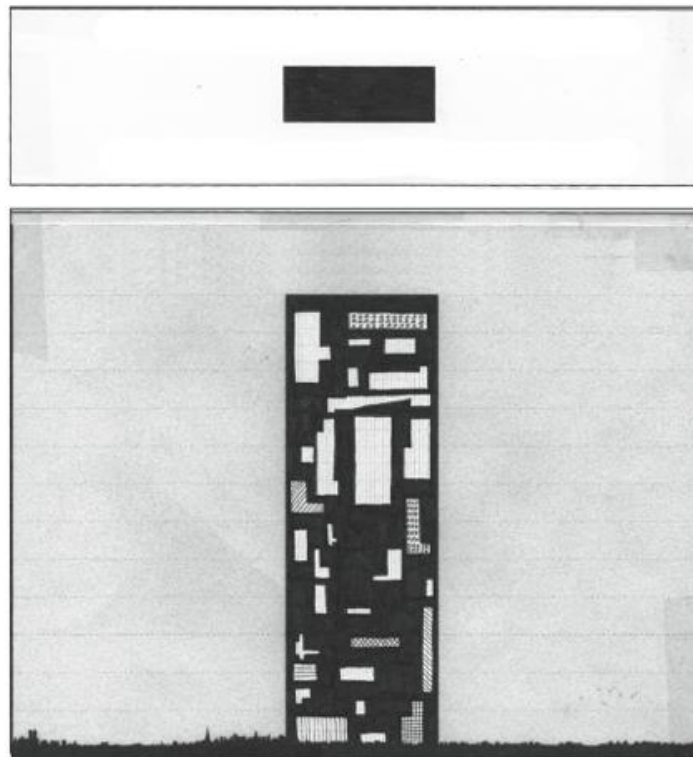
Subtexts: 1. Utopic Journalism 2. Metamodernism & Architecture 3. Bigness, Again 4. Age of the Raster

Jimenez Lai (jimenez.lai@bureau-spectacular.net)

Matthew Davis (matthew.e.davis@columbia.edu)

Super Manhattan

Subtexts: 1. Utopic Journalism 2. Metamodernism & Architecture 3. Bigness, Again 4. Age of the Raster



Babel, from Citizens of No Place (Jimenez Lai, 2012)

Studio Project

This studio is a collection of cities inside of a building, a phalanstery. Participants of this studio will subdivide the building into individual prefectures and sub-jurisdictions, where focused theses by individual designers can be mobilized. Apart, this is a city of cities - every prefecture or jurisdiction will take on their own architectural, economic, or socio-political agendas. However, when re-combined together, this city is one oversized building with sub-pockets of plural cultures. Akin to a surrealist Exquisite Corpse, each individual jurisdiction will take on their own “thesis”.

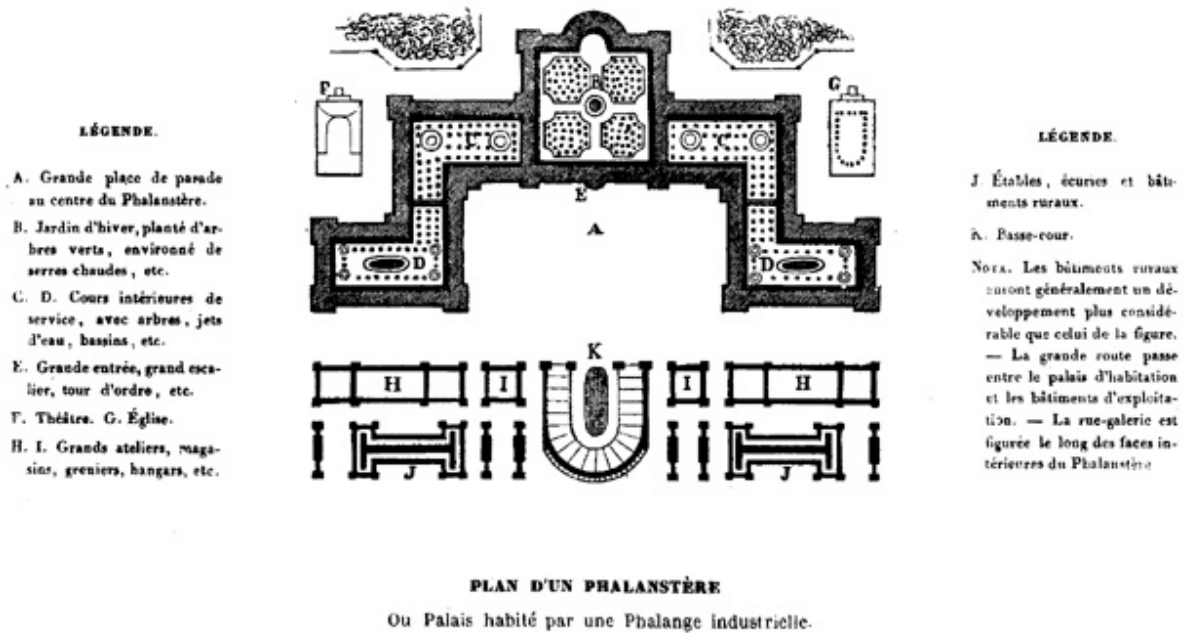


Illustration of Charles Fourier's Phalanstère

Site

This studio is based on the Babel Universe within Citizens of No Place (2012). The question of “how high can we build” is answered by our relationship with air. At roughly 12 kilometers, we will be close to the stratosphere and therefore will not have enough oxygen. The Babel Tower in Citizens of No Place is an extrusion of Central Park (4 km x 800m x 12 km), with enough room to shelter at least 80 million people.

This extrusion of Central Park reverses the figure-ground relationship of Manhattan. Additionally, it creates a population density high enough to absorb many of the nearby states - as a Phalanstère, this project is more than just a city inside of a building - this is an architecture as a political and economic entity at the scale of a State or Country.

Conventionally, urbanism is mostly a plan problem. However, architecture at the scale of urbanism transitions the question of size and scale into a sectional problem. We will develop the individual claims of territory via their relationships with the ground, air, clouds, sun, and privacy.

Studio Subtexts

Additional to the primary design project, there are four subtexts to this design studio:

1. Utopic Journalism
2. Metamodernism & Architecture
3. Bigness, Again
4. The Age of the Raster

Subtext 01: Utopic Journalism

The Function of “Utopia”

What has Utopias ever done other than a vehicle to reveal contemporary issues within the realities the authors lived in? “Utopia”, in its etymology, does not describe an “ideal place” - but rather, utopia is a “not-place”. As far back as Thomas More and as recent as Superstudio, the function of utopia has been a placeless thought-experiment to examine and reveal the critical concerns within the world they lived in. A Post-68 Italian experience may offer a very different project than that of a 16th Century English problem. It is as such we should consider the nuanced differences between *parody*, *parable*, *caricature* and *satire*. All of these formats of fiction hold a particular attitude about realism. Moreover, all of these formats of fiction have a close relationship to “journalism”. If the hyperboles of The Onion only highlight aspects of truths, or if Jon Stewart re-tells familiar stories in order to articulate the cultural textures of his times, the function of such fictions are there to offer a new lens to re-look at the world we live in.

Heterotopia (Of Other Spaces)

In the work of Michel Foucault, the status of “norm” is a moving target always under pressure. As people engage with matters of fact, their relationship with “norm” is dependent on the subjectivity of the observer. The relationship between the status of self and the society that the self belongs to is a relationship of shifting standards that continuously re-shape the identity of a culture. In this studio, we are counting on the individual selves to play out their individual concerns, and construct a composite society with many identities.

Political Architecture

It's important to estate the distinction between “politics” and “political”. The readings of the philosopher Chantal Mouffe and the architect Andres Jaque provide a key to understand the conflict of this concept in our society. Mouffe understands “politics” as the set of practices and institutions corresponding to the traditional political activity in our society trying to establish an order in a controversial present while “the political” refers to the a dimension of antagonism that can take various forms and can arise in

various social relationships. This antagonism is a dimension that can be eradicated. As Jaque argues, we will try to envision an architecture that instead of eliminating conflicts by simplification, generates a conflictive everyday life. The issues of "The political" are not mere technical issues intended to be resolved by experts. The properly political questions always involve decisions that require us to choose between conflicting alternatives.

The Politics of Normal

"Normal" is relative over time and space. Something "normal" to Los Angeles in 2018 would not be normal to Los Angeles in 1918 - nor would the "norm" be the same between Los Angeles 2018 and New York 2018. Having the message of being an "independent" "centrist", in fact, requires a lot more work than having a position. While many of us probably lean one way or another, it is interesting to observe how politicians identify or construct "normalcy" over time and space. Normal is not any of the following: boring, generic, bland, punchless... it is in fact the average temperature of the spirit of the time – of a time, a space. We will try to rethink about this idea of average user trying to generate an object that escapes from channels of functionalist simplification. The material design of this construction should be understood as the translation of a conflictive social milieu and at the same time a device that enunciates and constructs the social from multiple points of view. In our utopias, we will articulate strange "normals".

Fictions and Facts

2016-2018 has been a strange time for the field of journalism, and by extension our relationships with facts and fiction. In this studio, such notions of facts and fictions will be examined as we continue to discuss the relationship between relativism, pluralism, and other formats of considering the re-telling of accounts as we reflect upon the reality we live in.

Subtext 02: "Metamodernism & Architecture"

Metamodernism is a term extended thanks to the articles of the Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin Van den Akker that acquired great fame, above all, to the association with the controversial artist Shia Leboof. Metamodernism has gained traction in recent years as a means of articulating developments in contemporary culture, which, it is argued (and our generation appears to intuitively recognise) has seen a move beyond the postmodern mode of the late 20th century. In the wake of the myriad crises of the past two decades—of climate change, financial meltdown, and the escalation of global conflicts—we have witnessed the emergence of a palpable collective desire for change, for something beyond the erroneously proclaimed "End of History."

“The metamodernism discourse is thus descriptive rather than prescriptive; an inclusive means of articulating the ongoing developments associated with a structure of feeling for which the vocabulary of postmodern critique is no longer sufficient, but whose future paths have yet to be constructed.”

Instead of opting for an ironical-passive-critical position against reality, Metamodernism architecture represents that spirit of inclusion of opposites, dissidence and empowerment and the search and acceptance of contradictions revealing new ways of understanding cities complexities.

Subtext 03: “Bigness, Again”

Pans and Zooms (Big Paintings)

Garden of Earthly Delights (1503–1515, Hieronymus Bosch) and Along the River During the Qingming Festival (1085–1145, Zhang Zeduan) are two enormously big paintings. Because of the format of these two paintings, two cinematic techniques can be applied to read the details of these two paintings:

Pan:

At 25.5 centimetres in height and 5.25 meters in length, the aspect ratio of Along the River During the Qingming Festival is a very long scroll painting. The aspect ratio produces a scenario where the part-to-whole relationship renders the parts difficult to read and the whole difficult to register. As a painting, it demands the human to walk alongside the painting and consume only a little bit of the painting at a time. The details within such a scroll can be well-understood via a long, horizontal pan.

Zoom:

At 220 × 195 cm, 220 × 97.5 cm and 220 × 97.5 cm, Garden of Earthly Delights is a triptych, comprised of three panels. There is an abundance of details inside the three parts of this painting, the kind of details only visible when we zoom into the image. There are plenty of surprising moments hidden in plain sight, made possible by the sheer size of the painting.

When We Talk About Bigness...

1. Beyond a certain critical mass, a building becomes a Big Building. Such a mass can no longer be controlled by a singular architectural gesture, or even by any combination of architectural gestures. The impossibility triggers the autonomy of its parts, which is different from fragmentation: the parts remain committed to the whole.

2. The elevator-with its potential to establish mechanical rather than architectural connections-and its family of related inventions render null and void the classical repertoire of architecture. Issues of composition, scale, proportion, detail are now moot. The 'art' of architecture is useless in BIGNESS.

3. In BIGNESS, the distance between core and envelope increases to the point where the façade can no longer reveal what happens inside. This points at the obvious question of the communicative qualities of architecture, and of interior architecture. If the question of a Duck and a Decorated Shed is not necessarily the exact question to be asking, what are the semiotic opportunities in an urban interior? The humanist expectation of 'honesty' is doomed; interior and exterior architectures become separate projects, one dealing with the instability of programmatic and iconographic needs, the other-agent of dis-information- offering the city the apparent stability of an object. Where architecture reveals, BIGNESS perplexes; BIGNESS transforms the city from a summation of certainties into an accumulation of mysteries. What you see is no longer what you get - and, in this massively intertwining collection of "interior filmstrips", the question of form and function is going to be a complex one.

4. Through size alone, such buildings enter an amoral domain, beyond good and bad. Their impact is independent of their quality.

5. Together, all these breaks-with scale, with architectural composition, with tradition, with transparency, with ethics-imply the final, most radical break: BIGNESS is no longer part of any issue. It's exists; at most, it coexists. Its subtext is fuck context.¹

Subtext 04: Age of the Raster

The First Digital Age: A Story of Vectors (1994 - 2014)

The Paperless Studios at Columbia University marked many of the beginning points for architects working with computer-aided technology. From the then-young professors who taught the early digital studios (Greg Lynn, Jesse Reiser, et al) to the then-students who became masters digital architects and future leaders in their own right (Ulrika Karlsson, Winka Dubbeldam, Hernan Diaz Alonso, Jason Payne, Marcelo Spina, et al), this was an important chapter in the recent history of architecture.

In looking at some of the early investigations of the digital era of architecture, perhaps one important milestone is the comparison between the croissant studies of Enric

¹ This portion is entirely borrowed from the essay Bigness by Rem Koolhaas in 1993, with some minor modifications by Jimenez Lai

Miralles and the serial cuts of the Statue of Liberty from Greg Lynn. In both cases, some notion of animated cuts were established - and, in both cases, the drawings established analytical logic that is based on vectors.

Vector continued to play a major role in the early developments of digital architecture. Throughout the early developments of the digital age of architecture, the computing powers were not advanced enough for raster to play a meaningful role yet. Renders would have taken hours - if not days - and the resolution would still be low. Vector, on the other hand, was independent of resolution. Furthermore, accompanying technology such as laser cutters and CNC machines worked with vector files. The early installations, such as the Man O' War (2003) installation by Jason Payne and Heather Roberge, draped catenary linework to physically translate the serial cuts of a massing.

The question of resolutions was able to be advanced during the "hot-cool" debates instigated by Robert Somol in the mid to late 2000s. Low-resolution allowed for a act of distancing to occur - a type of distancing that allowed for abstractions to occur in the shapes of architecture.

The Million Dollar Homepage (2005) by Alex Tew was an early example of the rise of the raster project. At 1000 pixel by 1000 pixel, Tew sold a pixel for a dollar and welcomed anyone to purchase pixels from his website. The Million Dollar Homepage is at once a billboard and a digital decorated shed. In our Super-Manhattan studio, we will subdivide the massive whole into individual parts - not dissimilar to this idea of the deconstructed raster collections.

Today, we have the computing power to generate incredibly large raster images. Perhaps in the zooms or pans of the subdivisions of an oversized object, we might be able to further mull over the status of scale, size, and resolution from a raster frame of mind.

SCHEDULE

09.05 W	Ballot
09.06 R	Studio Introduction
09.10 M	Desk Crits
09.13 R	Thesis Statement Pin-Up & Presentations
09.17 M	Desk Crits
09.20 R	<i>Review of Thesis Statement / Introduction of Assignment 02</i>
09.24 M	Divide & Conquer: The Battle of the Block
09.27 R	Desk Crits
10.01 M	Desk Crits
10.04 R	<i>Divide & Conquer Review</i>
10.08 M	Infrastructures & Typologies
10.11 R	Desk Crits
10.15 M	Desk Crits
10.18 R	Desk Crits
10.22 M	Midterm
10.25 R	Zooms & Pans: Towards a Total Interiority
10.29 M	Desk Crits
11.05 R	Desk Crits
11.12 M	Desk Crits
11.15 R	Desk Crits
11.19 M	<i>Zoom / Pan Review</i>
11.22 R	Thanksgiving
11.26 M	Final Production Mode: Refine and Expand
11.29 R	Final Production Mode
12.03 M	Final Checkpoint Review
12.06 R	Final Production Mode
12.10 M	Final Production Mode
12.11 T	Final Review



Ralph Erskine, Arctic City (1958)

References & Resources:

We will set up a shared google document that contains a very large quantity of architectural, visual, cinematic, philosophy and art references.

Must Watch:

Kung Fury
Still Life with Yum Yums
History of the Entire World, I Guess
Blade Runner
Four Rooms
Delicatessen
Dogville
Akira
Rashomon
Koyaanisqatsi
Metropolis

More References and Resources

Bigness, Rem Koolhaas
Phalanstere, Charles Fourier
Citizens of No Place, Jimenez Lai
12 Reasons to Get Back into Shape, Bob Somol