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GSAPP Summer 2019 MSAAD studio

24.May.2019

URBAN PALIMPSESTS

TAs Marcela Rueda, David Zhai, Ines Yupanqui



Anne Patterson, *Seeing the Voice: State of Grace* | Photo: Esteban Valdivieso, *Grace Cathedral*, San Francisco, 2013
Sota Ichikawa, *Limitless Co-Existence* | Photo: Lexus Exhibition, Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia, 2018

A city is a machine with innumerable parts made by the accumulation of human gestures, a colossal organism forever dying and being born, an ongoing conflict between memory and erasure... an argument about how to live, and evidence that differences don't always have to be resolved, though they may grate and grind against each other for centuries,
- Rebecca Solnit, *Nonstop Metropolis*¹

In cities, successions of diverse occupants and programs inhabit the same space over unfolding epochs. **A palimpsest both erases and accrues**, with layers of time, emergent technological capacities, and political and social change contouring the urban environment. Traces of the past may linger, but stasis is not characteristic of a healthy city nor any vital ecology.

Imagining and working toward new possibility requires belief in the likelihood of change. In cities around the globe today, the ways in which we live merit urgent and thoughtful reconsideration. This is a project with **profound social, creative, and infrastructural implications**. Through design, urban planning, and a critical understanding of past and present realities, we will proactively construct **public spaces for vibrant future civic life**.

Though few residents of modern global cities regularly see or acknowledge it, death is intertwined with almost everything else in life. Human civilizations have historically built around and above the remains of their dead. Over time, especially in dense urban contexts, mortality has been socially and spatially marginalized. As the **visible presence of absence** recedes, a psychic disconnect widens, alienating us from the perspective and sense of responsibility that the consciousness of mortality evokes. Projects in this section will celebrate the coexistence of energetic public life with intimate observation, in spaces that synthesize and support both **spirited everyday joys and critical contemplation**.

¹ Rebecca Solnit, "Introduction," in *Nonstop Metropolis: A New York City Atlas*, ed. Solnit and Joshua Jelly-Schapiro (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 1.

CONTEXT

Manhattan's Lower East Side is an ethnically diverse, gritty, gentrifying, working class, activist, hip, artistic, trendy, historic, chic community – stretching from the southern bend of the East River to the Bowery in lower Manhattan. The dense and vibrant history and future of this eclectic neighborhood will be the context of our Summer 2019 semester.

Projects will transform the 7 linear blocks of **Sara Delano Roosevelt Park**, whose 7.8 acres narrate years of segregation and conflict in the City. Now edging on Little Italy, Chinatown, The East Village, NoHo and the Lower East Side, before the 1811 Manhattan Street Grid Plan was completed, the park served as the second African American burial ground on what was then the outskirts of the city. Before the large influx of immigrants in the 19th Century, slaves endured curfews, discrimination and mistreatment during their lifetime and interment after death was banned within the city limits. Today, the M'finda Kalunga Community Garden commemorates this history. Sara D. Roosevelt Park was built in 1934 and considered “the birth of a new Lower East Side.” Though the present communities unite through festivals, gardens and sports, the park also segregates the region.

Studio projects will reinvent how architecture and public spaces can support both intimate and collective life within the city. This multiplicity will evidence how design may **strategically scaffold the future of humanity**. Ambitious **multi-scalar** projects will translate the existing programs of Sara Delano Roosevelt Park — interweaving public activities with a new form of sustainable cemetery for the 21st century city.



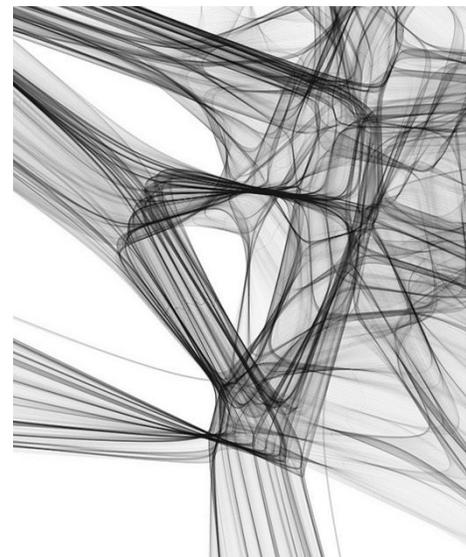
Sara Delano Roosevelt Park, New York City.
1934

Civilizations, at every step of the ladder, have manifested the nature of their beliefs in another life by the way in which they have treated the dead.
- Viollet-le-Duc, Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française

The cemetery in its current form is obsolete and impractical.

In addition to receiving the remains of the deceased, burial grounds have synthesized spiritual conceptions and aesthetic tendencies across time and culture. As such, the urbanism and architectural spaces of death and remembrance embody evolving priorities, shifting practices, and external pressures, including dramatic displacements, replacements, and renewals. Both physically and figuratively, the urban cemetery has oscillated between **central and marginal, celebrated and disregarded, democratic and elitist**. The sinuous motion of the metropolis/necropolis pendulum reflects the **coexistence** of these states, and is perpetual.

The history of the space of the dead in American and European cities have followed waves and oscillations of territorializing and displacement. Nowhere is this more evident than New York City. In Manhattan, land use and health concerns resulted in the outlawing of burial south of Canal Street in 1823 and south of 86th Street in 1851.² New York's 1847 Rural Cemetery Act, responding to urban churchyard crowding, demand for land in the heart of the city, and fears of miasma transformed the historically private and religious work of burial into massive nonprofit businesses. Over the next hundred years, churches and speculators would purchase more than three thousand acres of farmland, staking out pastoral burial grounds in the sparsely populated outer boroughs. The proliferation of new, often



Leonardo Solaas. Mesh Experiments, 2009

² See *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York, 1784-1831*, Vol. 12 (City of New York: New York, 1917), 694; John H. French, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Syracuse: R. Pearsall Smith, 1860), 428.

non-sectarian landscapes of death offered quiet refuge to the tens of thousands of corpses – and accompanying tombstones – disinterred from the heart of the city to accommodate transportation infrastructure projects and real estate development. In Manhattan, hundreds of acres formerly occupied as cemeteries had been repurposed by the late 1800s. According to an 1892 guide, *King's Handbook of New York City*, “the history of New York ... shows a constant record of the pushing of the dead out of place by the living.”³

Engaging ecologically sensible forms of accelerated disposition, new spaces of remembrance will coexist with everyday life. In the nature of the palimpsests’ serial temporality, urban architectures will artfully choreograph the shifting and simultaneity of diverse layers of time, program and occupancy.

“Like art, revolutions come from combining what exists into what has never existed before.”

- Gloria Steinem, *Moving Beyond Words*, 1994

STUDIO ETHOS

Iteration – Limits

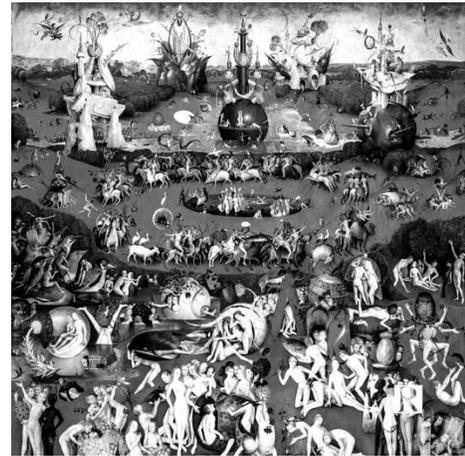
Constraints facilitate productivity. We will explore how systems of relationships inform structures of space and social interaction, how complex phenomena emerge out of precise organizations, and how strategic rules function to promote exploration and surpass perceived limits. Attributes of growth and change will be analyzed and empowered through meticulous investigations of material and data, and their operative, structural, and scalar translations.

Projects will resolve parameters of boundaries, thresholds, and spatial and temporal organizations, while engaging public space and framing extraordinary experiences. The semester will include overlapping exercises—analytical, abstract, theoretical, spatial and tectonic – rapid, episodic searches delineated by a conceptual scaffold that you and your partner define, and toward the development of exceptional, and viscerally compelling space and socio-political consequence.

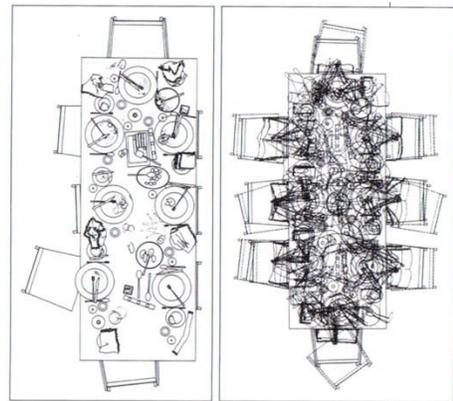
Discourse – Conviction

We take critical dialogue seriously. Our studio is a crucible of intense exploration and exchange. We will assess and provoke cultural fetishes and stubborn nostalgic residues, question dogma, and embrace strong, sometimes conflicting arguments. You will serve as both supporter and critic of your colleagues: broadening your mind with curiosity and productive contamination by the best of your peers, building more intelligence and conviction into your ideas.

Pin-ups will be frequent and lively, start on time, free of distracting devices, and be exuberantly engaged by all. Desk-crits will focus on tangible drawings and models produced. The character of the Studio is courageous, self-motivated, productive, and enjoys the challenge and satisfaction of the sometimes-difficult work that cultivates excellent design.



Hieronymus Bosch. *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Center panel. 1510



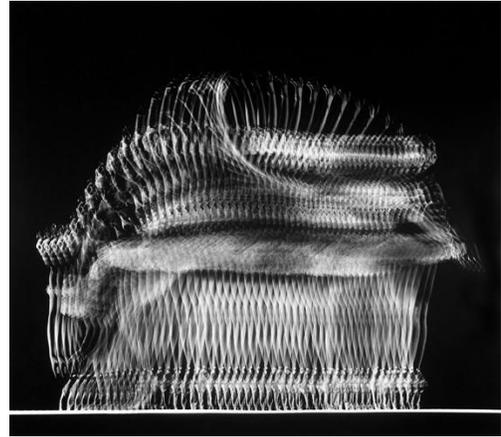
Sarah Wigglesworth and Jeremy Till. *Increasing Disorder in A Dining Table*. 2001

³ “Only the established and powerful corporations of Trinity and a few other churches have been able to resist the demands of modern life and business for the ground once sacred to the dead. Hundreds of acres [in Manhattan], now covered by huge buildings or converted into public thoroughfares, were at some time burial-places; over ninety of which have been thus existed, and passed away. Of most of them even the location has been forgotten...” Quoted in Tanya D. Marsh, “A Short History of Corpse Disposition in Manhattan,” September 16, 2016, 1, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3044516.

Both – And

Design, as a practice, requires discipline and grace, curiosity and tenacity. Our studio is an intellectual space of intensely iterative exploration and inquiry. You will think, make and draw in equal measure, simultaneously, and with open-ended determination. Projects will assert clear conceptual positions that facilitate nonlinear evolution through rigorous exploration, analyses, proposition, and consequence. Indeterminate and liminal conditions of both memory mechanisms and quotidian rituals will be mined for spatial provocation and potential social adjustment. Conceptual and spatial relationships will be explored and scrutinized to inform your design.

You will hypothesize the impact of your project on humanity and the environment. Prove organizational and temporal consequence. And amplify impact by creating a nodal urban infrastructural network.

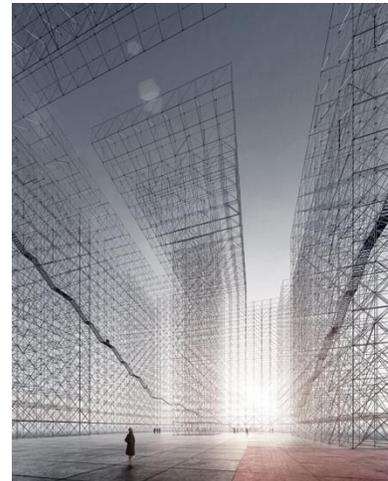


Gjon Mili. *Playing with time*. 1947

Rigor – Imagination

Strong ideas deserve robust exploration and provoke productive cross-pollination. Studio projects will evolve in pairs, while engaging in an evolving dialogue with your peers. The design studio is a space of curiosity, creativity, ingenuity and generosity. Architecture requires choice and the responsibility for consequence. Design necessitates focus and experimentation, analysis and calibration, imagination and vision. Spatial and material innovations will develop in dialogue with the political, environmental, and shared complexities of our time.

The context in which we think affects what we think. The character of the studio, therefore, frames our relationship to opportunity, reflects what we value, and influences how passionately we learn and grow. Students should enjoy rigorous experimentation and prolific production, be comfortable exploring multiple aspects and scales of architecture simultaneously, and be motivated to produce work that is both meticulous and visionary.



Guillaume Mazars Architecture. *Reveal the absence, the un-built*. 2013

Expectation – Proof

Articulating a position and developing an argument will be an integral part of each project. We use language -- spoken, graphic, and built -- with precision and intention. A manifesto helps navigate expectations and articulates a relationship to both current and future social structures and systems.

Architecture is precise. This studio presumes a level of expertise—the possession, within each individual, of both technical capacities and unique abilities that can be exploited to awaken architectural innovation. Here, ‘freedom’ is understood as careful engagement with the contexts that inform your work, commitment to risk-taking, critical experimentation, and rising to the highest fulfillment of potential. Students are expected to work with rigor, dedication, productivity and respect: respect for radical ideas, innovative substance, prolific collaboration, and exquisite creation.



Kenzo Tange. *Tokyo Bay Plan*. 1960

Emergent logics will guide diagnostic explorations. Assertions will be supported by tangible evidence within your work. Effective proof will take compelling and relevant forms and may require methods we have never before seen. Relationships between concept, theory and idea, and the physical exploration, production and performance of a project will be meticulously crafted. Arguments will be lucid. And like all decisions, color will be used with intention.

SCHEDULE

On Wednesday 05 June we will meet in 300 Avery. Bring your portfolios and any other material that you'd like to share as a means with which to introduce yourself to the group.

Beginning Monday 10 June we will have pin-ups to initiate most every week of the semester.

ARGUMENTS
SEMINAR LECTURE
9AM - 1 PM

	MON	TU	WED	TH	FRI	SA	SU
Wk 1	03.June		05.June	06.June			
<i>Reveal</i>	LOTTERY		INTRO 300 Avery	PIN-UP 505 Avery	TRANSCALARITIES	DESIGN-RESEARCH	J
						MATERIAL WKND	
Wk 2	10.June		12.June	13.June			
<i>Materialize</i>	PIN-UP 505 Avery		STUDIO	PIN-UP 505 Avery	TRANSCALARITIES	DESIGN-ANALYZE	U
Wk 3	17.June		19.June	20.June			
<i>Notice</i>	PIN-UP 505 Avery		STUDIO	STUDIO	TRANSCALARITIES	INFRASTRUCTURE	N
Wk 4	24.June		26.June	27.June			
<i>Position</i>	PIN-UP 505 Avery		STUDIO	STUDIO	TRANSCALARITIES	ARGUMENT <i>Why? Where? How? What?</i>	E
Wk 5	01.July	02.July	03.July	04.July			
<i>Translate</i>	STUDIO	MIDTERM 505 Avery	STUDIO	HOLIDAY	TRANSCALARITIES	PROTOTYPE	
			MIDTERM PARADE				
Wk 6	08.July		10.July	11.July			
<i>Test</i>	PIN-UP 505 Avery		STUDIO	STUDIO	TRANSCALARITIES	SPECIFY + TEST	J
Wk 7	15.July		17.July	18.July			
<i>Develop</i>	PIN-UP 505 Avery		STUDIO	STUDIO	TRANSCALARITIES	CONSEQUENCE	U
Wk 8	22.July		24.July	25.July			
<i>Synthesize</i>	STUDIO		STUDIO	PIN-UP 115 Avery	TRANSCALARITIES	INTENSIFY	L
Wk 9	29.July		31.July	01.Aug			
<i>Refine</i>	STUDIO		STUDIO	FINAL 115 Avery		EXHALE	Y
Wk 10	05.Aug		07.July		09.Aug		
<i>Finish</i>	CONFERENCE CONTENTIOUS NY		ARGUMENTS DUE		TRANSCALARITIES DUE	CELEBRATE	

RESOURCES

- Stan Allen, "Mapping the Unmappable: On Notation" in *Practice: Architecture, Technique and Representation*. London, 2009
- Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen*, 2010
- Kate Ascher, *The Works: Anatomy of a City*. New York, 2005
- Cecil Balmond, *Informal*, 2002
- James Corner, *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Theory*. Princeton, 1999
- James Corner, "The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention" in *Mappings*, ed. Denis Cosgrove. London, 1999, 214-252.
- Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair et.al. eds. *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*. Tuscaloosa, 2010
- Alain de Botton, *Religion for Atheists*. Oxford, 2012
- Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces* (1967), *Heterotopias*.
<http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>
- Eric Kester, "Making Light of Death: At Columbia's DeathLAB, The Search for a Cleaner, Smarter Alternative to Burial is a Deeply Serious Matter," *Columbia Magazine*, New York, 2016
- Philip Kitcher, *Life After Faith: The Case for Secular Humanism*. New Haven, 2014
- Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. Ontario, 2014
- Arthur Nersesian, *Dogrun*. New York, 2000
- Karla Rothstein, "Reconfiguring Urban Spaces of Disposal, Sanctuary and Remembrance," in *Our Changing Journey to the End: Reshaping Death, Dying, and Grief in America, Vol. I: Trends in How and Where We Die and Grieve*. Santa Barbara, 2013
- Karla Rothstein, *The New Civic-Sacred: Designing for Life and Death in the Modern Metropolis, Design Issues* Volume 34, Issue 1, p.29-41, 2018
- Luc Sante, *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York*. New York, 2003
- Michael Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, 1992
- Mark C. Taylor, *After God (Religion and Postmodernism)*. Chicago, 2007
- Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, 199
- Pew Research, Religion and Public Life Project, "Nones" on the Rise, the number of Americans who do not identify with any religion continues to grow at a rapid pace. One-fifth of the U.S. public – and a third of adults under 30 – are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling.
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/2013-dot-sustainable-streets-5-infrastructure.pdf>
<http://juanfrans.com/projects/citibikeRebalancing.html>

The truth is that we all live by leaving behind
-Jorge Luis Borges, *Funes, the Memorious*⁴

Karla Rothstein is a practicing architect and adjunct Associate Professor teaching design studios at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. She is the founder and director of Columbia's trans-disciplinary DeathLAB and a member of the Columbia University Seminar on Death. Rothstein's areas of inquiry weave intimate spaces of urban life, death and memory with intersections of social justice, the environment, and civic infrastructure. She is also Design Director at LATENT Productions, the architecture, research, and development firm she co-founded with Salvatore Perry. In this role, she utilizes a deep understanding of the political and practical aspects of realizing built work, and the importance of societal and cultural levers to promote positive change within communities. In 2016, LATENT Productions and DeathLAB were awarded first place in the international "Future Cemetery" competition and DeathLAB's initiative was recognized as one of New York Magazine's 47 'Reasons to Love New York.' In 2018/19 *DeathLAB: Democratizing Death*, a solo show of DeathLAB's mission, design proposals and interviews ran for 8 months at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan. In the Fall of 2018 Rothstein had a solo show at ART OMI and was in residency at MacDowell Colony to support work on a current manuscript. Among other international publications, Rothstein's first single-family house is included in Kenneth Frampton's *American Masterworks* 2nd edition, Rizzoli 2008. LATENT is currently re-vivifying a 240,000 SF / 9-acre former cotton spinning mill campus in the Berkshires - @GreylockWORKS, completing 25 units of new affordable housing for home ownership in Brownsville, Brooklyn, and a meandering private urban oasis behind a translucent faceted façade in Carroll Gardens. Rothstein is known to write in the margins of her books – sometimes profusely and often in ink.

[@studioRothstein @gsappdeathlab @greylockworks @latentnyc](http://www.deathlab.org)
<http://magazine.columbia.edu/features/spring-2016/making-light-death> <http://www.greylockworks.com> <http://www.latentnyc.com>
<http://www.npr.org/2014/12/13/370446879/avant-garde-afterlife-space-shortage-inspires-new-burial-ideas>,
<http://inhabitat.com/heres-what-the-environmentally-friendly-cemetery-of-the-future-could-look-like/>
<http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/12/reasons-to-love-new-york-2016.html#forty-three>

⁴ In *Ficciones* by Jorge Luis Borges, edited by John Sturrock (original publication 1962; English translation, Grove Press, 1962), 83-91.