

**Tatiana Bilbao**

**Architecture Studio V: Re-thinking densification: toward a vertical urbanism**

Monday & Thursday 1:30-6:30

September 9 — December 13, 2016

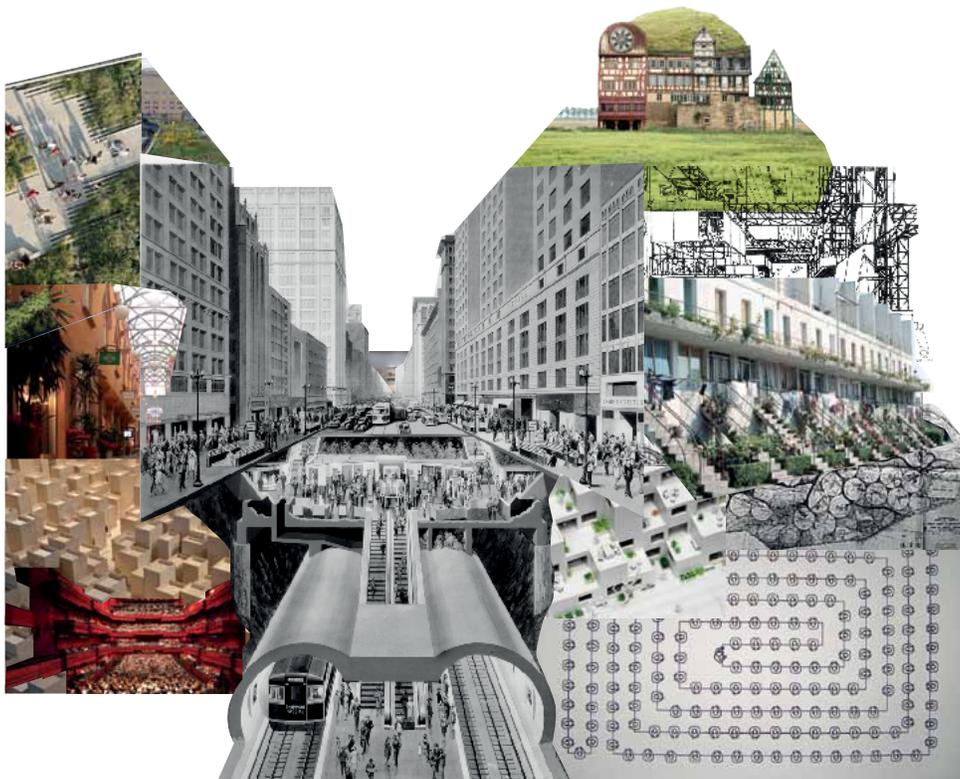
**I.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since 2014, more than half of the world's population lives in cities. Urban dwellers are segment of the global population that will only continue to increase. Cities will continue to evolve into densely populated areas. For that reason, cities of the future need to admit a gradual transformation, the unpredictable shifts in spatial and social structures are intrinsic to organic growth. At present, the solution of city planners and architects to increase densification is to build more tall towers — for working, for living, for recreation, for everything. Yet these structures do nothing but to isolate their occupants from the urban fabric, from civic life. We are building vertical suburbs, detached from the city. Proposed solutions attempt using a mix of program to generate social activity, but the experience of the street remains at ground level. A true sense of community has not yet been verticalized. As an experimental response to the urban expansion conditions, the purpose of this studio is to think about vertical densification as a response of the urban expansion phenomena.

The focus will be on the translation of urban typologies and civic life, hitherto developed primarily on the horizontal plane, into a vertical dimension. By developing the city vertically even as our existence continues to take place horizontally, the true three-dimensional use of space will emerge.

Through its subject matter the studio will explore relationships between the horizontal and vertical, the building scale and the urban scale, the individual and the collective, the public and the private, and the theoretical and the pragmatic. Such relationships will be developed into a studio-wide group project of a functioning vertical urban environment.



To translate the city into a vertical expanse; the students will select one of the typologies outlined below; make a thorough survey plan and dissect the locus typologies and specific uses, in order to design new possible connections. A taxonomy of a specific urban use: observe and identify components and their functions; track their evolution and its causes; and project these conclusions into a slice of the chance-based compound model.

**Public Institutions** — examples: New York City Hall, New York Public Library, New York City Criminal Court, New York City Supreme Court

**Cultural Institutions** — examples: Lincoln Center, Madison Square Garden, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Art Museum, 9/11 Memorial

**Places of Worship** — examples: Temple Emanu-El, Trinity Church, Islamic Cultural Center, Riverside Church, Lincoln Square Synagogue

**Education** — examples: Columbia University, NYU, Millennium High School, Stuyvesant High School, Nightingale Bamford School, P.S. 257

**Market** — examples: Chelsea Market, Union Square Greenmarket, 82th Street Greenmarket, Astoria Flea Market, Broadway Market, street food carts

**Parks and Recreation** — examples: Sixth Street Community Center, Central Park, Gramercy Park, New York Chinese Community Center, Riverside Park, Battery Park, Four Freedoms Memorial

**Offices** — examples: Midtown, Wall Street, Lower Manhattan

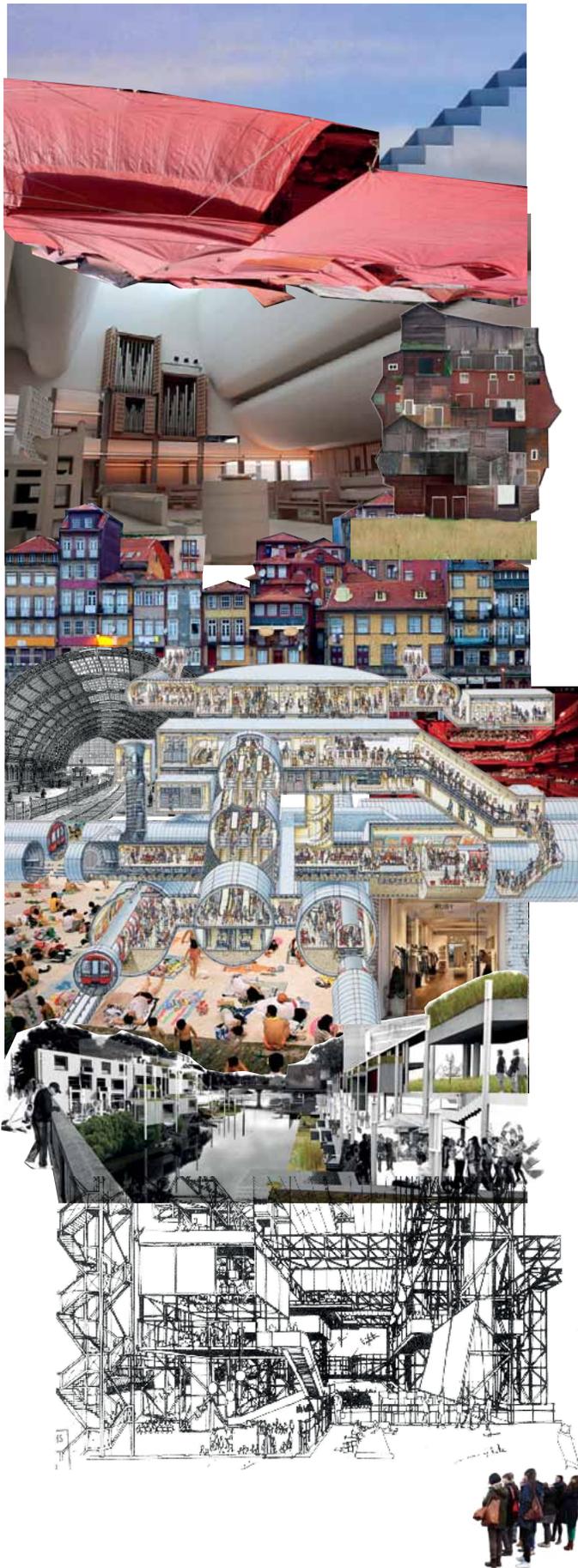
**Housing** — examples: Stuyvesant Town, Superior Ink Condominiums, 15 Central Park West, Brooklyn Brownstones, Amsterdam Nursing Home

**Healthcare** — examples: Metropolitan Hospital, New York Presbyterian Hospital, Mount Sinai Hospital Psychiatric Center Transportation Hub

**Systems of Transport** — examples: Grand Central Station, Port Authority Bus Central, Penn Station, Fulton Center, World Trade Center Hub

**Monumental Gate and the Street** — examples: Brooklyn Bridge, Washington Park Arch, Statue of Liberty, Grand Army Plaza, Columbus Circle

**Facades and Typologies of the City** — examples: Fire escape staircases, water tanks, stoops



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exchange / market

housing

religious

circulation

housing/offices

culture/entertainment

transportation

commercial

public

housing

industrial

### III.

### SITE

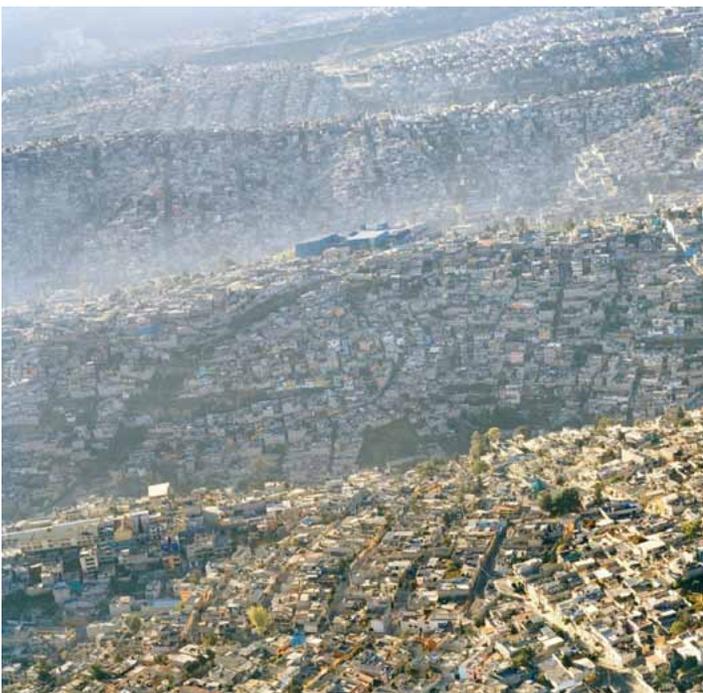
The studio will be focused on vertically reconstructing a representative section of New York City. The translations of the city's civic activities into a vertical form is to be situated on a plot the size of the standard New York sized block, as established by the Commissioner's Plan of 1811, which is 264' by 900'.

Consider conducting a *dérive* of the streets of New York, exploring its areas you do not know, undertaking an archaeological analysis of the different typologies found in your life in the city, combining the exactitude of the existing context with the abstraction or imaginary reproductions of the typologies. Following individual explorations, the aim is to combine each layer into an exquisite corpse collective exercise and build a model.

View this as an opportunity to translate the urban experiences of your everyday environment, the one you know best, into a meditative reflection of what living in a city means today and an exploration into its essence.

As an additional exercise consider the growth of Mexico City. Originally a centralized urban area, with surrounding villages and residential areas, the rural exodus resulting from the Mexican Revolution (1920) catalyzed the rapid expansion of the city which swallowed the peripheral villages. As more people from the Mexican hinterlands made their way to Mexico City in the 1960s, an informal periphery proliferated around the capital. Although this periphery is adjoined to the existing urban fabric, its growth and its needs do not respond the urban core. This process continues today, consuming large tracts of virgin land. Contrast your studies of this Mexican metropolis with New York's planning, growth, form, and civic life.

Even when things appear to be incompatible, the key is to work with this uncertainty and explore the possible connections and relations between the spaces. It is in this ground that we will have to improvise as architects of the future of densely populated urban areas.



## IV.

## SCHEDULE AND DELIVERABLES

The idea of the exquisite corpse is to explore what happened when combining individual typologies in a non-obvious pattern. After the *dérive*'s empirical survey and dissecting the urban behavior of individual local typologies (perhaps extrapolated with a global resemblance, or tied to exclusively local characteristics), the studio will abstract and combine the spatial uses, re-inventing their relationships, forging a dialogue between each student and each space. Archaeologically identified periods, layers, architectural features, social behaviors, and compositions translated into a search to find connections, similarities, archetypes, methods, explanations. Then, the students are to speculate and project an eclectic densified vertical growth... an exquisite corpse building!

**Research (3 weeks)** — During the first section you are to explore New York City, take notes, draw, read analyzing various instances of your selected typology and how they interact with the city. Take a *dérive*, keep track of people's movements at varying times of the day, research original plans and previous uses of the space. At the end of the research period the following deliverables are due:

A layered analysis of one case study example of your typology presented in a graphic manner.

An analytic diagram demonstrating the various public functions and connections to civic life of your typology.

Bas-relief collage. Using the knowledge derived from the study of your typologies make a two and a half dimensional collage of how you hope to translate this typology into a vertical form. This must be handmade and measure at least 3'x3'x4".

**Translation (4 weeks)** — Take what you have learned and translate it into a section, a vertical slice that will fit within the plot size given but still maintains the essence of the city and civic life in a vertical format. At the conclusion of the translation period, you will present your finished designs at the mid-term review whose deliverables shall include:

An analytic, conceptual model of your section (urban scale)

A model for your vertical type section to be completed at the scale of 1:25.

A complete set of drawings for your scheme.

**Mid-Term Review:** October 24th, 2016.

**Combination (7 weeks)** — Use the feedback from the mid-term review to revise and improve your individual schemes. Then, collaborate as a group towards making one cohesive project that expresses a clear hypothesis of the city vertically reconstructed. As a studio, you will agree on the size of the population, large enough to host civic life whilst not too large so as to make your vertical city unrealistic. Combine, split, and graft your various slices into one exquisite corpse to be presented at the final review whose deliverables shall include:

A detailed sectional slice model of part of the building to be completed at the scale of 1:25.

A complete set of drawings including an axonometric drawing of the final exquisite corpse.

**Final Review:** December 13th, 2016.

The following writings are a small sample of works whose preoccupation is civic life. Some of these are historical, tracing the development of the city at present. Some are theoretical, proposing new spatial and social means for citizens to inhabit. Others are literary, stories of people's lives in the city. They are all provided for your benefit as you begin thinking of how to analyze the existing city or develop its new vertical typologies.

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Scolari, Massimo. "The Tower of Babel: Form and Representation." In *Oblique Drawing: A History of Anti-Perspective*, translation by Jenny Condie Palandri, 359-374. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012.

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