Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
Advanced Studio V – Section 007, Fall 2017
Monday + Thursday 1:30pm – 6:30pm, 600 Avery Hall
Option Studio: **A City Inside a Building**
Subtexts: 1. As Normal As Possible, 2. Bigness, Again

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A City Inside a Building
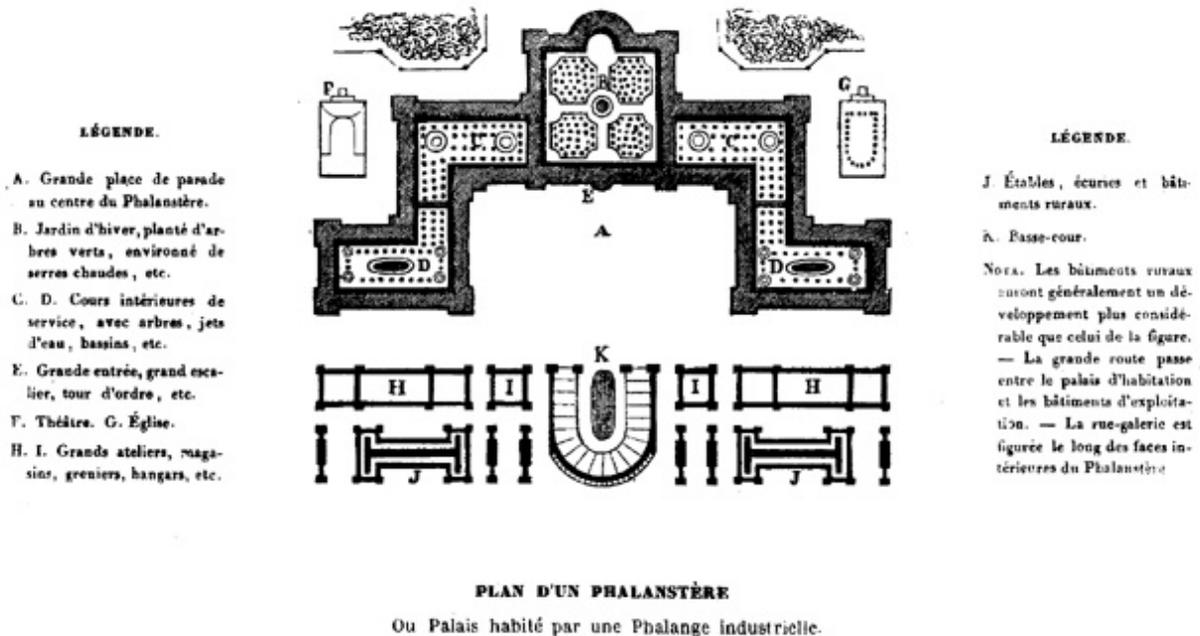Subtexts: 1. As Normal As Possible, 2. Bigness, Again

Illustration of Charles Fourier's Phalanstère

Studio Project

This studio will investigate the effects of a city inside of a building. We will compact the town of Barrow, AK (~4500) into one single building. As the northernmost point of the United States, Barrow endures extreme climate conditions. Learning from Whittier, a southern Alaskan city that is a city inside of one building, one can easily identify the many positive attributes of living in one collective building in extreme conditions. For instance, heat-loss efficiency, energy conservation, artificial light, and political organization are just some of the potential advantages of a project like this.

Site

Barrow, AK is the northernmost human settlement in the United States. 60% of the local inhabitants are of native Alaskan heritage, and have been living continuously in this location for thousands of years. The other 40% is largely working in the petroleum industry. With no roads leading up to this town, the only way in and out of Barrow is by airplanes. This condition makes goods extremely expensive – and drives locals, even those with full-time jobs, to sometimes hunt and gather.

The Phalanstère, an idea initially written by Charles Fourier in the 19th Century, was a proposal for a fictional city with 500-2000 people living inside of one architecture. Many architects have taken on this idea of "city within building" and produced projects with this in mind, including Unite d'Habitation, Marina City, or the Hancock Building in Chicago. The idea of the Phalanstère became a philosophical position that considers an economic, social, and political entity that required all citizens to work at the best of their abilities in order to survive. In such remote and autonomous locations such as Barrow, AK, we will explore the effects of this thought experiment.

Subtext 01: "As Normal As Possible"

What does it mean for something to be normal? Conversely, what defines madness? Without standards that allow a measure of normalcy, it is nearly impossible to define something as being out of place. "Normal" is a difficult moving target – it is highly contextual to time and space. Something typologically normal in the 1920s would not be normal in 1980. What is normal in 1980 in Los Angeles also may not be so normal in Tokyo 1980. Normalcy is a complex agreement amongst a large number of people, the same way that grammar and cadence are specific to the time and space they live in. A different way of considering the topic of normalcy is the idea of context - in some ways, context may not be only physical, but also cultural.

Architecture as Language

Architecture for Quatremere-de-Quincy operated as a language and in its origins there is a recognition of formal type and its essential role that needed to be expressed and understood by society. Sylvia Lavin writes that for Quatremere-de-Quincy the issue of architecture in its development from past forms is its development from its historical type which he distinguishes operates more like language. Architecture becomes an influence on the society and urbanity that needs to be educated on its own forms through the transmitting role of the building and its purpose through architecture and typology.

Mildness and Civilization

"Normcore", a movement that occurred in the early 2010s, was intended to mean "finding liberation in being nothing special." Predicted by K-Hole, something about the aesthetics of Sienfeld suddenly really important. A TV show about "nothing", the backdrop, fashion and lifestyle became a design project to measure to probable "average" of New York in the 1990s. In looking at brands like Warby Parker, Everlane, or COS, something about a subtle nothingness communicates the thrill of "not cool".

Politics of Normal

Having the message of being an "independent" "centrist" 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.

Subtext 02: "Bigness, Again"

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. 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.

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]

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[1] This portion is entirely taken out of the essay Bigness by Rem Koolhaas in 1993

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Assignment 01: Analysis

1. <u>Program</u>
Graphically analyze the amenities of Barrow AK. By comprehensively and accurately documenting the existing land-use, zoning, and other infrastructural components of the city, it will offer every answer as to how large our single building will likely contain. Understanding the demographic, average family size, proportion of commercial, residential, institutional, industrial or heavy industrial spaces, we can distribute these parts inside of one building intelligently. How is the economy of this town structured? Or politics?

2. <u>Climate, Geography, and Other Environmental Factors</u>
What are the natural conditions in this region of the United States? Average temperature, wind currents, water currents, precipitation, day hours and night hours of winter and summer seasons are only some of the basic information that defines this physical geography. The local flora and fauna partially supports the townspeople – what is the cycle of life around Barrow? How much petroleum is there left, and how quickly or slowly should Barrow begin the transition from an oil-based economy to something else? Additionally, how have humans already begun the process of preparing for climate change? Will there be a bigger seaport, or other infrastructure?

3. <u>Technological Precedents</u>
How do people already shelter themselves from extreme conditions? Does "R Value" even mean anything for the International Space Station? How have humans engaged with perpetual daylight or constant darkness? An average cruise ship can host a range of 3000-5000 people, which is close to the total population of Barrow, AK. How is the interior of a cruise ship organized, and what is the relative size of such an object?

4. <u>Architectural and Urban Precedent</u>
Here is a shortlist of buildings that contain other buildings, or even possibly cities:

Begich Towers Condominium, Anton Anderson, Whittier Alaska, 1953
Kowloon Walled City, Hong Kong, - 1989
Torre Velasca, Ernesto Rogers, Milan Italy, 1958
Hancock Building, SOM, Chicago
Marina City, Bertrand Goldberg, Chicago Illinois, 1964

Cité de Refuge, Le Corbusier, Paris France, 1933
Mirador Housing Project, MVRDV, Sanchinarro Madrid Spain, 2001-2005
Trelick Tower, Erno Goldfinger, London England, 1972
Habitat 67, Moshe Safdie, Montreal Canada, 1967
Burj Khalifa, Smith-Gil, Dubai UAE, 2009
SESC Unidade Pompeia, Lina bo Bardi, Sao Paolo Brazil, 1986
Lingotto, Matte Trucco, Torino, Italy, 1923
Hashima Island, Japan

It would be helpful to understand the effects of urban density (high or low):

Macau
Manilla
Tokyo
The Vatican City
Monaco
San Marino
Dubai
Las Vegas
Los Angeles

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Assignment 02: Proposal

1. Thesis
   What is the central message of your project? One way of answering this
   question is the question of "normalcy". Is there something in particular that
   can be considered "normal" that your project will work on? The range of
   normalcy can be rather wide, but it should also be extremely focused – is it
   about a color, a materiality, a typology, a lifestyle, a politics?

2. Whole
   What is the massing of your project? Is it *hot*? *Cool*? *Boring*? *Lazy*? *On*? *Off*?
   Something else?

3. Parts
   What are the compositional techniques? Are they well-fitting? Ill-fitting?
   Loose-fitting? Or some other strange 3D jigsaw puzzles? Using the
   information learned from assignment 01, how large should this building be,
   and comprised of how many parts?

4. Sense

What is the general sensibility of your project? Is there an unspoken feeling communicated without words? In one single square image, are you able to produce the effects of this sensibility?

Assignment 03: Project

1. <u>Model</u>
   At roughly 48" x 48" x 48" (or smaller), this physical model will offer great photography opportunities.

2. <u>Drawing</u>
   One 96" x 96" wallpaper will allow teams to zoom-into the possible life inside the project.

3. <u>Movie</u>
   At 3'00" or less, it would be helpful to have a YouTube-ready video that compacts and captures all of the ambitions of the project. In some ways, the video will outlast the photograph as you would not need to present the project ever again – yet your presentation will live on for as long as YouTube exists.

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Final Deliverables

1. One Very Large Model (48"x48"x48")
2. One Wallpaper of a Composite Cut (96"x96")
3. One Movie, 3'00" or less
4. (One collectively bounded book, 150 pages or less)

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SCHEDULE

09.06 W	*Ballot*
09.07 R	*First Day of Studio / Assignment 1*
09.11 M	*Pin-Up of Assignment 1*
09.14 R	Desk Crits
09.18 M	*Review of Assignment 1, commence Assignment 2*
09.21 R	Desk Crits

09.25 M	Desk Crits
09.28 R	Desk Crits
10.02 M	*Pin-Up of Assignment 2*
10.05 R	Desk Crits
10.06 F	Transfer Dialogues
10.09 M	*Review of Assignment 2, commence Assignment 3*
10.13 R	Desk Crits
10.16 M	Desk Crits
10.19 R	Desk Crits
10.23 M	*Desk Crits*
10.26 R	*Desk Crits*
10.27 F	**Midterm**
10.30 M	*Desk Crits*
11.02 R	Desk Crits
11.06 M	*Desk Crits*
11.09 R	*Desk Crits*
11.13 M	Desk Crits
11.16 R	*Production Checkpoint*
11.17 F	*Transfer Dialogues*
11.20 M	*Desk Crits*
11.23 R	Thanksgiving
11.27 M	*Final Checkpoint*
11.30 R	Desk Crits
12.04 M	Final Review Week
12.08 F	**Final Review[2]**

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[2] italicized lettering indicate the probable dates that Jimenez Lai will be in New York.

Visual References
David Hockney
Alex Colville
Philipp Schaerer
Filip Dujardin
Job Floris
KGDVS
Point Supreme
Norman Kelley
FALA Atelier
Chris Ware
David Jimenez Iniesta, María Ángeles Peñalver & Javier Jimenez Iniesta
Aristide Antonas
kooz: arch
Sam Jacob

Additonal References
Andrew Kuo
Alex Lin (Studio Lin)
Chamber Gallery
K-Hole
Metamodernism

Cinematic References
Grand Budapest Hotel
Life Aquatic
Royal Tenenbaums
Blade Runner
Delicatessen
Akira
Dredd
Idiocracy
Kung Fury

Other References and Resources
Bigness, Rem Koolhaas
Phalanstere, Charles Fourier
12 Reasons to Get Back into Shape, Bob Somol

https://suburbanstats.org/population/alaska/how-many-people-live-in-barrow