

# THE FORM OF DENSITY II

*Columbia GSAPP Spring 2018  
Advanced Studio VI  
Syllabus*

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## THE FORM OF DENSITY



### 1. THE FORM OF DENSITY

Paris is the densest city in Europe, and one of the five densest in the world. Yet, for being such a highly built-up landscape, Parisian density is far from unbearable or unlivable. In fact, it is even viewed positively. Density is an endogenous trait of Haussmann's Paris, which covers 75% of the capital city.

The urban fabric of Paris provides us with an answer to the question, "How do we create positive density?" through all levels of its formal singularity. There is so much we can learn today from the history of the city's layout, blocks, and buildings.

At a time when the issue of demographic growth reveals the true extent of human, land, and financial needs that arise from the the grouping of urban and suburban elements into greater metropolitan complexes, it is more important than ever that we develop the tools to be used in the creation of this dense urban factory.

This studio class will investigate the relationship between urban form and density on the basis of the

experiences students will garner from two current projects in Paris.

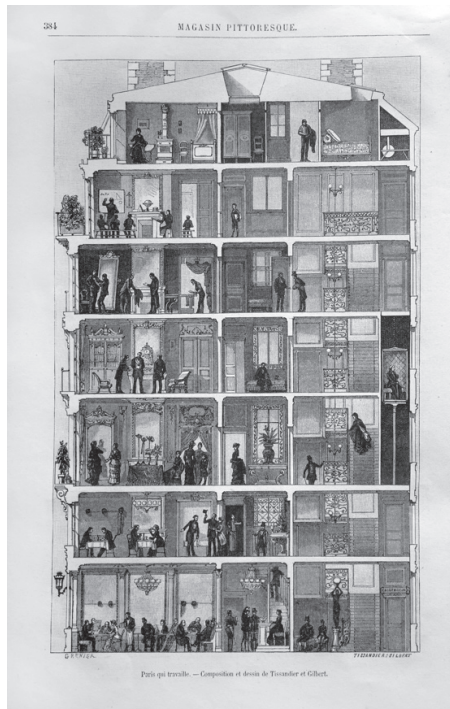
The goal is to establish a reciprocal link between the architecture and the city, and to thereby consider the architectural project as part of a larger composition where each piece expresses the values of the whole.

This is not an urban planning class, or a dogmatic exercise in the notion of context. Throughout this semester, we will erase the limits between the different scales and disciplines to place the architectural project once again at the center of urban challenges and opportunities.

*"We realize that architecture only constitutes one aspect of a more complex reality, or a particular structure. At the same time, for being the most recent verifiable data of this reality, it represents the most concrete perspective possible for dealing with this challenge."*

A Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, trans. L. Venuti, Opposition Books, Cambridge, 1984. p. 29

## METHOD: THE ARCHEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE



### 2. THE ARCHEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

Archeology is the scientific study of past cultures and ways of living through an analysis of their material vestiges. It is a science that ranges from art history to anthropology, ethnology, paleontology, geology, ecology, the physical sciences, and beyond.

Archeologists work at the intersection of all these disciplines. They must understand their essential nature to interpret the results yielded by objects.

With the same acuity, architects dig through the layers of the present, looking for the traces of questions that will give birth to the future. They search for visions of the future that they will design in function of their sensibilities.

The term “*project*” which etymologically means “*throwing something forward*” contains the entire ambitions of our profession.

The key to a project’s success resides in the lucidity of its vision, or more precisely, “*in the basis for the question that engenders this vision.*”

All students will participate in this process of “*archaeological research.*” Students will be asked to put forth a series of questions that, based on the contemporary debate around the concepts of resilience, frugality, identity, beauty, appropriation, and connectivity, will demarcate the intellectual territory that legitimizes their projects.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND STUDIO



### 3. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The goal of this studio class is to develop a critical perspective that will help students to assume a clear, subjective posture in their design process. The underlying notion is to consider an architectural project not simply as a response to a need, a function, or a program, rather as a tool for civic and political engagement.

The class will alternate between theory and practice.

The theoretical segments will explore three avenues:

- the architecture of the city;
- the autonomy of form;
- narrative development.

### 4. THE STUDIO

In practical terms, the project will be applied in a Parisian project using an extremely realistic approach. Students will be provided with precise programs, urban planning regulations, accessibility requirements, and fire safety regulations for the site. Students will start with “*a real framework*” to learn to step outside it, to find their own freedom within this very constrained system.

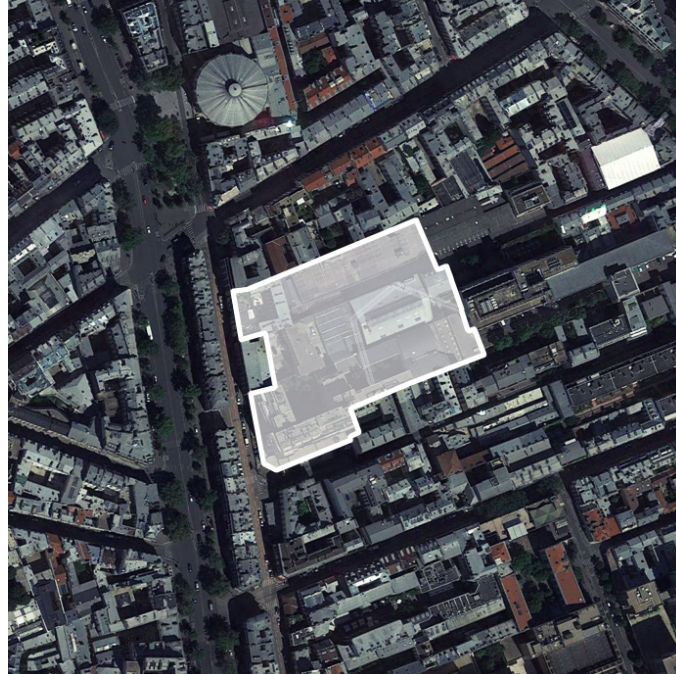
The elements that students will have to submit will be the same as for an architectural competition:

- analysis of the main issues and challenges, and the conclusions
- model of the project in its site
- images of insertions
- site plan at 1:500
- plan for the ground and intermediate floors and facades at 1:100
- technical details at 1:20

## THE RENAULT GARAGE - PARIS 11



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### THE RENAULT GARAGE - PARIS 11

100 rue Amelot  
75011 Paris, FR  
Size: 8,000m<sup>2</sup>

The site located at 100 rue Amelot/2 passage Saint Pierre includes various building typologies:

- a former garage with a parking lot
- a warehouse
- a late 60's housing building
- a 19th century Haussmann-style building

The future removal of the garage and warehouse offers the students the chance to rethink the entire plot. Students will be asked to design an ensemble of housing units, offices, and commercial spaces on the empty parcel while keeping the 19th century building.

### Organization of the studio class

Students will split up into groups of approximately 6 students to analyze the site and produce shared documents and material including physical and 3D models, a historical analysis, and a materiality study.

Then, students will work in groups of two on a design proposal for the entire plot that takes into account the site's regulations and rules, the program, and their own narratives.

At the end of this process, each student will provide an individual design of one or several buildings within the urbanization and architectural response by his/her two-person group.

## SCHEDULE

### 7. SCHEDULE

**Jan 18 - Feb 30 Studio Introduction and Analysis**

**Feb 30 - Feb 22 General massing proposal - Group of two (4 weeks)**

Scale 1:1000 to 1:200

Short text and abstract image

Axonometric views expressing the volumetric aspect

Program repartition

Master plan 1:500 expressing the organisation of the solid/void

Plans and sections 1:200

Images

**Feb 23 Mid Review**

**Mar 05 - Mar 16 Kinne Travel and Spring Break**

**Mar 20 - Apr 13 Architectural proposal - Group of two and individual (4 weeks)**

Scale 1:1000 to 1:50

Short text and abstract image

Axonometric expressing the volumetric aspect

Program repartition

Master plan 1:500 expressing the organisation of the solid/void

Plans and sections : 1:200

Facades 1:100

Construction drawings 1:50 to 1:10

Materiality

Images

**Apr 17 - Apr 26 Final Review preparation (2 weeks)**

**Apr 30 Final Review**

### 8. KINNE TRAVEL

The Kinne Travel Fellowship will take the students to Paris. It will serve as both the conclusion of the general massing proposal, and as an introduction to the individual part of the project. The visit to the site will provide students with the opportunity for in-depth analysis (through pictures, layouts, and environmental drawings) so that they can begin working on the materiality, facades, and thereby create a closer relationship with the surroundings.

Several on-site visits will also be organized to clarify the theoretical segments of the class at the beginning of the year by using actual examples of Haussmann and contemporary Parisian urban development.



## REFERENCES

### 09. SELECTED REFERENCES

#### Readings :

**LAN**, Catalogue of the Hausmann exhibition at “Pavillon de l’Arsenal”  
To be released in January 2017

**LAN**, Traces, 2013

**Jacques Lucan**, Composition, Non-Composition : Architecture and Theory in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, 2012

**Aldo Rossi**, The Architecture of the City, 1982

**Ivor Samuels, Philippe Panerai, Jean Castex**, Urban Forms, The Death and Life of the Urban Block, 2016

**Camillo Sitte**, The Birth of Modern City Planning, 2006

**Francoise Choay**, The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century, 1996

#### Films :

**Claude Lelouch**, C’était un rendez vous, 1976

**Stan Neumann**, Paris, Roman d’une ville, 1991