

ROOM / not-ROOM

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As the 2nd iteration in a series of studios focused on the room as a physical and social construct across architectural types, our section will briefly bypass the apartment as housing's irreducible "unit". Instead we will reconsider the role of the room and its various potential implications as the conceptual basis for an imaginative architecture, and an interrogation of evolving notions of domesticity. Students wishing to reject the room in this context may try to conceive and argue for its opposite.

Room: Space vs Subdivision

- **room (n.)** *a part of a building with a floor, walls, and a ceiling; the amount of space that is needed for a particular purpose. Etymology: Old English rum and German Raum: "space". Original sense preserved in make room "clear space for oneself" (late 14c.); meaning "chamber, cabin" first applied mid-15c. to chambers within houses.*

A seeming paradox of this term is that it refers both to the idea of space – or enough space – and its partitioning. The evolution of housing continues to operate on this duality, as it reconciles needs for autonomy and density, ie making room for the individual within the collective. If we keep in mind the origin of the word "apartment" (from "appartere" (to partition), in Italian), should we reconsider its role as an intermediate scale of spatial arrangement between individual and city? This position would re-inscribe the room within a lineage of collective living experiments at the origin of modern housing, now finding renewed vigor in our sharing economy's a priori rejection of ownership and family.

Room: Social and Spatial Unit

- **room (n.)** *all the people in a room, as in "the room stood up".*

As Pier Vittorio Aureli argues in [The Room of One's Own](#), the introduction of the room in architecture paralleled the emergence of individual subjectivities within domesticated societies. Far from an archetypal form as Louis Kahn would have it, the room was an invention responding to a need to separate specific uses, and evolving notions of privacy and degree of social access, whether across gender or class divides. As we have learned from [Robin Evans](#), architecture for a long time consisted of matrices of interconnected rooms: cellular thoroughfares. Even the introduction of the corridor – initially the galleria – came in the guise of a room, eventually mobilizing universal accessibility and compartmentalization. Now enshrined in building codes organizing space according to egress and fire separations, the room and corridor persist, inviting realignment with a desire for new collectivities.

Room: Action and Opportunity

- **room (v.)** *to occupy rooms, especially with another. room (n.)* *scope, opportunity.*

As designers of contemporary housing, you will be challenged to develop your own approach to the room, its consequences, corollaries, opportunities and potential opposites. As a studio section we will investigate drawings and models that explore and communicate the tension between individual and collective experiences, and the inherent actions implied by the verbs to room and to house. This design research will be grounded in an understanding of housing types, and relationships across scales, from furniture, to architectural element, to unit, to building, to city.