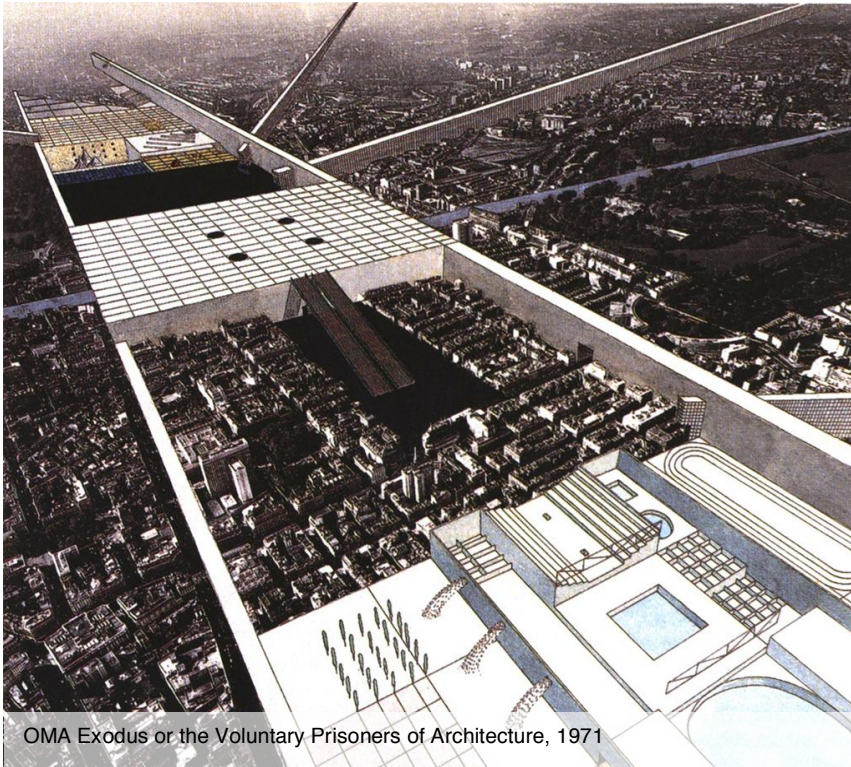


Borderline_Detroit

The frontier is sort of a void, a narrative symbol of exchanges and encounters. Passing by, an architect suddenly appropriates this “in between space” and builds a great edifice on it...The Architect’s drive to cement the picket fence, to fill in and build up “the space in between,” is also his illusion, for without knowing it he is working toward the political freezing of the place
Michel de Certeau, *The Practices of Everyday Life*



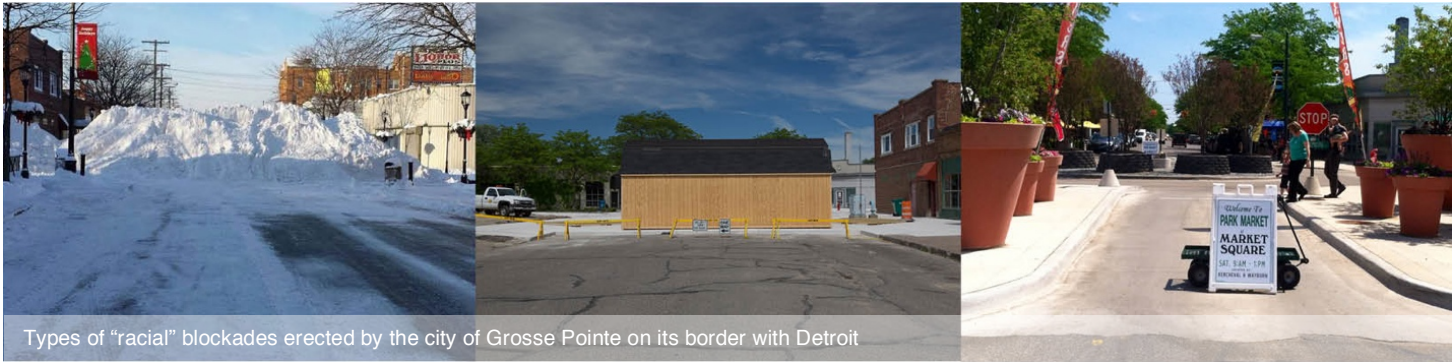
Provocation:

Borderline_Detroit considers the architectures of being in or living on the border—as city, as racial other, as migrant, as outlaw, as poor, as agent. As abject frontier, Detroit represents the northern doppelganger of the contested southern border dynamic between Tijuana/San Diego; with the exception that Detroit harbors the inequalities between so-called first and third worlds within its own municipal boundaries. For us, there will be many ways to think about the concept of “borderline.” As a limit, the “borderline” forms the occupiable zone of land between two countries, for example between U.S. and Canada or between two districts, like Detroit and its neighbors Grosse Pointe and East Pointe. As a state of being, borderline also demarcates the boundary between the normative and the obscene, the indecent, the illegal or the insane. Thus a “borderline” delimits place, society and subjectivity, it also constitutes a space in between interstitial space of suspension, tension and possibility.

OMA Exodus or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture, 1971

In the age of globalization, mass migration and digital connectivity, border walls are no longer being constructed or fortified to fend off military invasion, despite the recent jingoistic chants of “BUILD.THE.WALL!” Instead, as Wendy Brown writes: “these walls target non-state actors—individuals, groups, movements, organizations, and industries” such that “the new nation-state walls are part of an ad-hoc global landscape of flows and barriers both inside nation-states and in the surrounding post-national constellations, flows and barriers that divide richer from poorer parts of the globe.” Enforced with visas, passports, and RFID chips, borders no longer need walls; the walls have become the decorated sheds of national pride. With these caveats in mind, the studio will focus on Detroit, once among the world’s greatest manufacturing cities with the highest per capita income in the U.S. and now the posterchild for rust-belt urban decay, as a zone between the international borders of two nation-states and the local borders that divide its territories according to race and class. Reimagining Detroit to mine the utopian and dystopian possibilities of the city’s architectural and urban future, the studio will develop architectural propositions that will take the form of videos and drawings for two projects “The Zone” and “The Commons” sited on Belle Isle along the Detroit River.

Conceptualizing Detroit as a border, the studio will study the spatial and architectural implications of its frontier condition where in recent years the suspension of local sovereignty in favor of privatization of its water infrastructure and public spaces, for example, have transformed civic and everyday life. A large swathe of the city’s downtown, for instance, is in the hands of two billionaires: Dan Gilbert, of Quicken loan fame and owner of the Cleveland Cavaliers, who maintains a portfolio of 90 buildings, and the late scion of Little Caesar’s Pizza Mike Illitch, whose organization has staked a multi-billion-dollar claim to two square miles. On its internal borders, neighboring cities such as Grosse Pointe have constructed “racial blockades” in the form of cul-de-sacs and barriers to separate predominantly black Detroit from wealthy white enclaves. As an international border, Detroit is a conduit for more than \$120 billion of cross border trade, but unlike other national borders Detroit is home to the world’s only private crossing—the Ambassador Bridge. Within the borderline condition of Detroit the studio will explore different pressures and modes of resistance to the privatization of public space and infrastructure by imagining other architectural/urban scenarios.



Types of "racial" blockades erected by the city of Grosse Pointe on its border with Detroit

As a site of multiple, overlapping, or nested forms of sovereignty, where domestic and transnational jurisdictions collide, infrastructure space becomes a medium of what might be called extrastatecraft—a portmanteau describing the often undisclosed activities outside of, in addition to, and sometimes even in partnership with statecraft. Keller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*

Proposition:

Beginning with "Borderlines/Borderlands," **Borderline Detroit's** first three weeks will research contemporary border conditions around the world—the UN buffer zone on Cyprus, *maquilladores* (free trade transnational factories) of Ciudad Juarez/EI Paso, the Jordan/Syria Berms, the Shannon Airport duty free zone and others. We will also examine how architects have explored the condition of the border by reviewing OMA's *Exodus or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture* and *Checkpoint Charlie* Berlin project, Estudio Cruz's *Learning from Tijuana*, Rael San Fratello's *Border Types*, Lateral Office's *Banking on the Border* and rvtr's *The Crossing* to name a few.

The studio will for the remainder of the semester focus to two overlapping projects "The Zone" and "The Commons" that speculate on the future of Detroit. Belle Isle, designed by Fredrick Law Olmstead, has historically served as a civic bellwether; from the site of the 1942 race riot to being given to the state of Michigan during the city's 2013 bankruptcy. Once proposed as a micronation by Larry Sperlich, the former CEO of Chrysler, the island has served as the local frontier for the city. We will explore Belle Isle's future by conceptualizing two border conditions on the same site: one, "The Zone" will explore the future of privatization by designing a Free Trade Zone (FTZ) and the other "The Commons" will explore the future of the public space, an architectural assemblage held in common.

Pedagogy:

The studio will have a series of tutorials with [Carson Smuts](#) (GSAPP/MIT Media Lab) that introduce techniques of data mining, visualization, and spatialization through parametric modeling. With specially developed software for the studio, students will sift through social media feeds and other relevant resources related to various cross border traffic in Detroit. These topological models developed in Rhino with Grasshopper will allow these systems and phenomena to be studied in temporal magnitudes. This rich body of research, parametric and analog modeling techniques will be refined through a site visit to Detroit to engage in further on-site research.

For the first half of the semester, the studio will also be structured around a series of seminar discussions with three critical thinkers in architecture on questions of borders, sovereignty, and rights: *Keller Easterling*, *Jordan H. Carver* and *Andrew Herscher*. We will supplement the three seminars through short weekly readings that will be discussed at Thursday studio meetings. Critical to these conversations will be to parse key concepts of "border," "sovereignty," "privatization," "public space" and so on, as well as to debate key ideas. To that end, we will begin by learning the art of debate in order to hone skills of argumentation—both verbal and visual (i.e. in your presentations). Debates about specific topics will continue through the semester. For the second half of the semester, we will also focus on the art of storytelling in order to develop conceptual narratives for each project.

Studio Travel (required):

The studio will travel to Detroit from **11 – 15 October, 2017** where we will visit various sites and meet with key individuals, firms and organizations, including:

- [We the People of Detroit](#) – community group engaged in fighting privatization of the city
- [Bedrock Detroit](#) – real estate company owned by Dan Gilbert with extensive holdings downtown Detroit
- [Hantz Farms](#) – world's largest "urban farm" assembled from vacant lots; owned by a financial services conglomerate
- Tour of the Detroit River + Belle Isle
- Meet with architects and artists experimenting with new forms of practice
- Tour the defunct Packard Assembly Plant and newly established Shinola Assembly Plant

Schedule (draft):

SEPTEMBER	NOVEMBER
7 – first meeting [mw/tl]	2 [mw/tl]
11 [mw]	6 [mw]
14 – group review [mw/tl]	9 – group review [mw/tl]
18 [mw]	13 [mw]
21 [tl]	16 – ¼ REVIEW [mw/tl]
25 – ¼ REVIEW [mw/tl]	20 [mw]
28 [tl]	23 – group review [mw/tl]
OCTOBER	27 mw
2 [mw]	30 – group review [mw/tl]
5 – group review [mw]	DECEMBER
9 [mw]	4 [mw]
11 - 15 – DETROIT TRIP [mw/tl]	7 [mw/tl]
16 [mw]	11 – FINAL REVIEW
19 – group review [mw/tl]	
23 [mw]	
26 - MIDTERM [mw/tl]	
30 [mw]	