

Archive of Absence: a gradient of life and death

The truth is that we all live by leaving behind
-Jorge Luis Borges, *Funes, the Memorious*¹

individual – community

This studio will study strategic change – spatial and temporal transformations within a dense, collective civic body, and immersive individual experiences. Ritual human occupations, precise materiality, and formal calibration produce a spectrum of perception and participation across time. Work will be optimistic in the pursuit of elevating public life within New York City through projects that are impactful in the face of diverse contemporary realities.

collection – engagement

A library's collection allows us to retain and recall. Its higher purpose is to inspire and enlighten. Provoking engagement with the limits of mortality and our ethical responsibility for the future, cemeteries are also custodians of stories. Both constructions aspire to uplift humanity. They collect in order to engage. Explored simultaneously, they will form an impermanent Archive of Absence threaded with the vibrancy of everyday urban life.

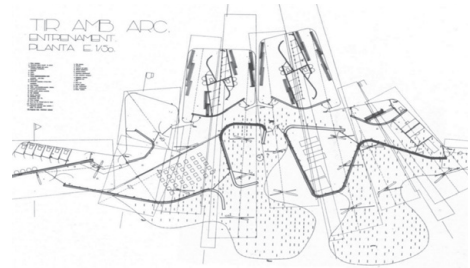
The cemetery, in its most familiar form, is obsolete and impractical. The urban public library merits fresh thinking and rebranding. This semester, we will address both. Spaces for death - architectural 'memoryscapes' – will coexist with spaces for life. Together, they serve as a barometer of evolving culture and a scaffold for interpersonal urban dynamics.

presence – absence

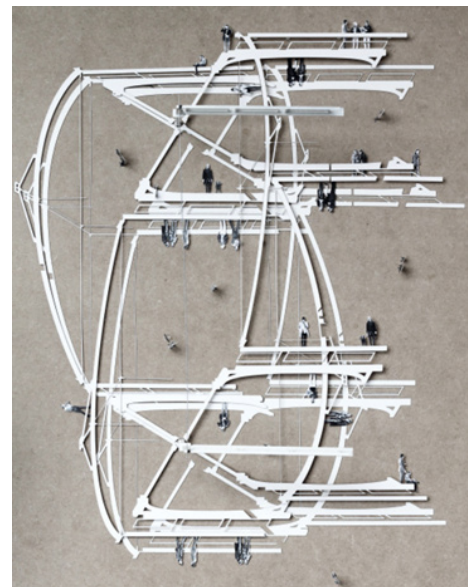
Dualities are dynamic entities comprised of two parts – or, a single substance expressed in two differing approaches. Dual constituents may be complementary, in opposition, or both at the same time. While seemingly discernable, their components are inseparable, each defining the other in a shifting gradient of presence and absence. The range of possibility embodied in energetic co-existence will unfold through rigorous investigation of multiple aspects and states of relationships.



Olafur Eliason_Your memory of now_closing_2017



Enric Miralles & Carme Pino, Olympic Archery Range, Barcelona, 1991



Analytic of Arches_Lam Nguyen Tram, 2013

legacy – vision

Contesting what are considered socially acceptable structures of organization, adjacency, duration, and access, assertions of corporeal urban existence will push beyond prefabricated or maudlin socio-emotive preconception. Proposals will be woven into the city fabric, provoking transformative reverberations into the evolution of the everyday. We will define legacy to facilitate a future that is at times masked, at times overt, and continually informed by the bodies that inhabit it.

building – landscape

Through the Archive of Absence, students will reinvent how public spaces can support intimate and collective life, as well as remembrance, within the city. This multiplicity will evidence how design may simultaneously honor the legacy of the past while supporting the future of humanity. Ambitious multi-scalar projects will translate the existing programs of Sara Delano Roosevelt Park — engaging the northern 3 blocks, and interweaving a new form of sustainable cemetery for the 21st century city.

iteration – limits

Constraints facilitate productivity. We will explore how systems of relationships inform structures of space and social interaction, how complex phenomena emerge out of precise organizations, and how strategic rules function to promote exploration and surpass perceived limits. Attributes of growth and change will be analyzed and empowered through meticulous material investigations and their operative, structural, and scalar translations.

Projects will resolve parameters of boundaries, thresholds, and spatial and temporal organizations, while engaging public space and framing extraordinary experiences. The semester will include overlapping exercises—analytical, abstract, theoretical, and spatial – rapid, episodic searches delineated by a conceptual scaffold that you define, and toward the development of exceptional, and viscerally compelling space.

discourse – conviction

We take critical dialogue seriously. Our studio is a crucible of intense exploration and exchange. We will assess and provoke cultural fetishes and stubborn nostalgic residues, question dogma, and embrace strong, sometimes conflicting arguments. You will serve as both supporter and critic of your colleagues: broadening your mind with curiosity and productive contamination by the best of your peers, building more intelligence and conviction into your ideas.

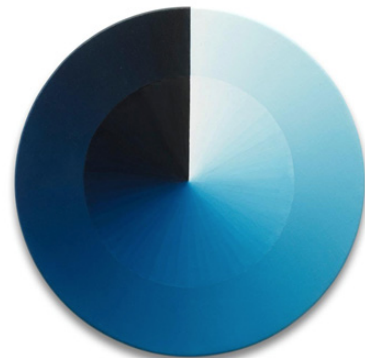
Pin-ups will be frequent and lively, start on time, free of distracting devices, and be exuberantly engaged by all. Desk-crits will focus on tangible drawings and models produced. The character of the Studio is courageous, self-motivated, productive, and enjoys the challenge and satisfaction of the sometimes-difficult work that cultivates excellent design.



Eva Hild_ceramic_external - internal, 2009



Jason Hopkins_Abhominal_Biostructure2



Olafur Eliasson_colour experiment no. 69
cyanometer, 2014

both – and

Design, as a practice, requires discipline and grace, curiosity and tenacity. Our studio is an intellectual space of intensely iterative exploration and inquiry. You will think, make and draw in equal measure, simultaneously, and with open-ended determination. Projects will assert clear conceptual positions that facilitate nonlinear evolution through rigorous exploration, analyses, proposition, and consequence. Indeterminate and liminal conditions of both memory mechanisms and quotidian rituals will be mined for spatial provocation and potential social adjustment. Conceptual and spatial relationships will be explored and scrutinized to inform your design.

You will define a collection and its questions. Determine its duration. Articulate means of engagement with the local community. Hypothesize impact of your project on humanity and the environment. Prove experiential and temporal consequence. And amplify impact by creating a nodal amenity within a larger urban infrastructural network.

rigor – imagination

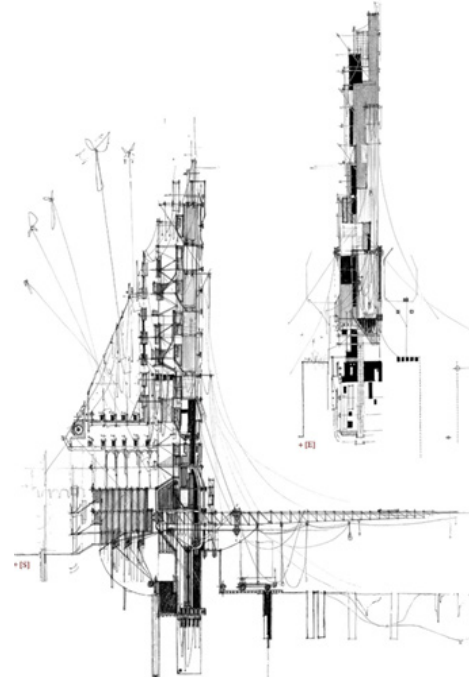
Strong ideas deserve robust exploration and provoke productive cross-pollination. Studio projects will be independent and individually driven, while crafting an evolving dialogue with your peers. The design studio is a space of curiosity, creativity, ingenuity and generosity. Architecture requires choice and the responsibility for consequence. Design necessitates focus and experimentation, analysis and calibration, imagination and vision. Spatial and material innovations will develop in dialogue with the political, environmental, and shared complexities of our time.

The context in which we think affects what we think. The character of the studio, therefore, frames our relationship to opportunity, reflects what we value, and influences how passionately we learn and grow. Students should enjoy rigorous experimentation and prolific production, be comfortable exploring multiple aspects and scales of architecture simultaneously, and be motivated to produce work that is both meticulous and visionary.

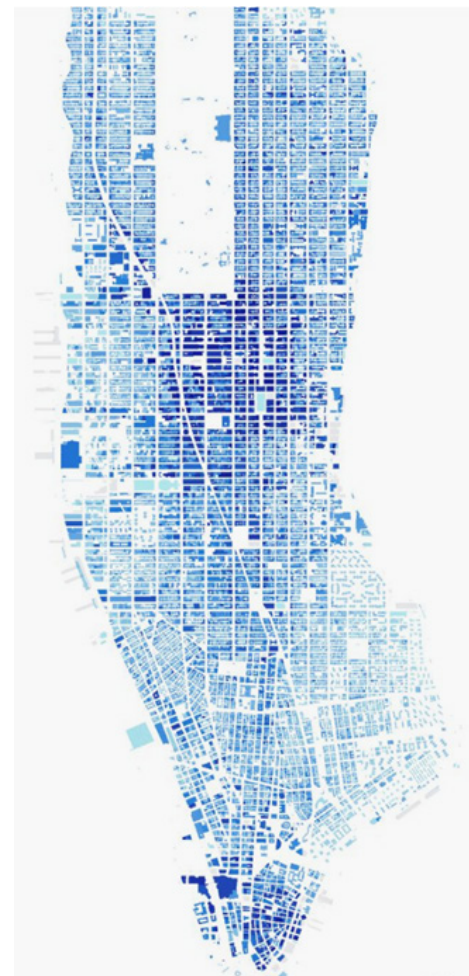
testing - refining

The cyanometer was invented by both Horace-Bénédict de Saussure and Alexander von Humboldt in 1789 to measure the blueness of the sky. In 2014, Olafur Eliasson analyzed pigments and J.M.W. Turner's paintings to isolate and study gradients of light and color, producing a series of cyanometer-inspired works, exploring spectrums – from black to blue to white and from black to yellow to white.²

Duotone – while not constrained, each student will explore representation techniques in black, white and one other color, always with intention.



Mnemonic Landscape_Barry O'Shea_2013



Radical Cartography_Land Value_Bill Rankin, 2006

specificity - discovery

Sara Delano Roosevelt was FDR's wealthy mother. When the park named in her honor opened in 1934, it was structured as 7 distinct zones, with separate playgrounds for boys and for girls. In the spirit of both—and, the building-landscape you design will be part of re-considering the 4-block program. True to the park's original intent, projects will provide "playgrounds and resting places for mothers and children"³ -- and for men too.

Projects will reinvent how public space can support shared life and death in the city, while buoying the park's existing programs including Tai Chi, sports fields, the Golden Age Center for senior citizens, vendors markets, the Lunar New Year Parade, Dumpling Festival, a bird garden and playgrounds. Interwoven with these activities will be a new form of cemetery for the 21st century city.

expectation – proof

Architecture is precise. Our studio presumes a level of expertise—the possession, within each individual, of both technical capacities and unique abilities that can be exploited to awaken architectural innovation. Here, 'freedom' is understood as careful engagement with the contexts that inform your work, commitment to risk-taking, critical experimentation, and rising to the highest fulfillment of potential. Students are expected to work with rigor, dedication, productivity and respect: respect for radical ideas, innovative substance, prolific collaboration, and exquisite creation.

We will work exactly with number, scale and measure. How many lives may be recorded here? How much space does each life occupy? and for how long? How are stories shared? Transformed? Forgotten? How does the architecture facilitate an engagement with the scale and complexity of human lives and the city?

Emergent logics will guide diagnostic explorations. Assertions will be supported by tangible evidence within your work. Effective proof will take compelling and relevant forms and may require methods we have never before seen. Relationships between concept, theory and idea, and the physical exploration, production and performance of a project will be meticulously crafted. Arguments will be lucid. And like all decisions, color will be used with intention.

TECTONICS

Pat Arnett, PE, Principal at Robert Silman Associates Structural Engineers will be joining us for three working sessions: one before the Midterm and two in the second half of the semester. Students must have physical models and printed, dimensioned drawings to instigate constructive dialogue and advance conceptual and tectonic aspirations. No straight line can be struck between inspiration and proposition. Work will be iteratively imbued with the essence of intent, yet must undergo significant metamorphosis toward maturation. Codes and structures are embedded in conceptual and theoretical purpose, but must be precisely translated toward proposition.

DATES

We will meet on Friday 25 January at 2pm in 300 Avery. Bring something physical — made prior to this term — that is the result of your effort and makes you proud, with a backstory that you'd like to share with the group.

Your first pin up will be on Wednesday 30 January in 505 Avery. The room is available to you at 1:30. Please be prepared to begin at 2pm. Subsequent pin ups before the Midterm are scheduled for Friday 01 February (505), Monday 04 February (505), Friday 08 February (505), Monday 11 February (505), Wednesday 20 February (505), Friday 01 March (505).

The Mid-Review for our studio will occur Wednesday 06 March (115 Avery). Please be prepared to begin at 1pm.

Post-Midterm pin ups will be on Wednesday 27 March (505), **03+05 April Structural (3/4) Review.** and Wednesday 17 April (505).

The Final Review will occur on Friday 26 April (Ware Lounge). Be prepared to begin at 1pm.

After the final review you will work as a team to prepare a collaborative exhibit of our studio's work at the End of Year Show. **EOYS will open on Saturday 18 May.** All students should plan to be in NYC through this always-exciting event.

Please refer to Core II Schedule for all other dates and studio-wide requirements.

¹ In Ficciones by Jorge Luis Borges, edited by John Sturrock original publication 1942; English translation, Grove Press, 1962, p.83-91

² <https://olafureliasson.net/archive/artwork/WEK108989/colour-experiment-no-69-cyanometer#slideshow>

³ The Living New Deal: Projects / New York / NYC / Sara D. Roosevelt Park, <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/sara-d-roosevelt-park-new-york-ny/>

REFERENCES

In addition to the studio-wide Bibliography, the following suggested References / Resources may be useful to your research and the critical positioning of your work.

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<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/664/the-room-of-requirement>
- Vidler, Anthony.** *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, 1994

Karla Rothstein is a practicing architect and adjunct Associate Professor teaching design studios at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. She is the founder and director of Columbia's trans-disciplinary DeathLAB and a member of the Columbia University Seminar on Death. Rothstein's areas of inquiry weave intimate spaces of urban life, death and memory with intersections of social justice, the environment, and civic infrastructure. She is also Design Director at LATENT Productions, the architecture, research, and development firm she co-founded with Salvatore Perry. In this role, she utilizes a deep understanding of the political and practical aspects of realizing built work, and the importance of societal and cultural levers to promote positive change within communities. In 2016, LATENT Productions and DeathLAB were awarded first place in the international "Future Cemetery" competition and DeathLAB's initiative was recognized as one of New York Magazine's 47 'Reasons to Love New York.' *DeathLAB: Democratizing Death*, a solo show of DeathLAB's mission, design proposals and interviews is currently on display at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan. In the Fall of 2018 Rothstein had a solo show at ART OMI and was in residency at MacDowell Colony to support work on a current manuscript. Among other international publications, Rothstein's first single-family house is included in Kenneth Frampton's *American Masterworks* 2nd edition, Rizzoli 2008. LATENT is currently re-vivifying a 240,000 SF / 9-acre former cotton spinning mill campus in the Berkshires - @GreylockWORKS, completing 25 units of new affordable housing for home ownership in Brownsville, Brooklyn, and a meandering private urban oasis behind a translucent faceted façade in Carroll Gardens. Rothstein is known to write in the margins of her books – sometimes profusely and almost always in ink.

<http://www.deathlab.org> @studioRothstein @gsappdeathlab @greylockworks @latentnyc
<http://magazine.columbia.edu/features/spring-2016/making-light-death> <http://www.greylockworks.com> <http://www.latentnyc.com> <http://www.npr.org/2014/12/13/370446879/avant-garde-afterlife-space-shortage-inspires-new-burial-ideas>, <http://inhabitat.com/heres-what-the-environmentally-friendly-cemetery-of-the-future-could-look-like/> <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/12/reasons-to-love-new-york-2016.html#forty-three>