

# Dimensions



*Dimensions* is the annual, student-produced journal of architecture at the A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning.

*Dimensions* seeks to contribute to the critical discourse of architectural education by documenting the most compelling work produced by its students, fellows, and visiting lecturers.

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# Dimensions

<b>04</b>	<b>Letter from the Editors</b>
<b>06</b>	<b>Foreword</b>
<b>08</b>	<b>Wallenberg</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Patria o Forastero</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>Nowhere</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>Neither Here Nor There</b>
<b>36</b>	<b>Architecture Student Research Grant</b>
<b>38</b>	<b>Architecture for Loneliness</b>
<b>44</b>	<b>The Dialogue between Drawing Machines and Human Ambience</b>
<b>50</b>	<b>Jean-Louis Cohen</b>
<b>56</b>	<b>Peter Eisenman</b>
<b>62</b>	<b>Michael Meredith · Hilary Sample</b>
<b>68</b>	<b>Thesis</b>
<b>70</b>	<b>The Chantespeak</b>
<b>82</b>	<b>Metastatic Metropolis</b>
<b>90</b>	<b>Pneumatic Futures</b>

<b>100</b>	<b>Casting Doubt</b>
<b>108</b>	<b>Aeriform Ecologies</b>
<b>118</b>	<b>A Monument in Two Dimensions</b>
<b>128</b>	<b>Fold Out Couch</b>
<b>134</b>	<b>Noun Things</b>
<b>142</b>	<b>The Yada-Yada</b>
<b>152</b>	<b>Venice Biennale Foreword</b>
<b>156</b>	<b>Four Sites in Detroit</b>
<b>158</b>	<b>Stan Allen</b>
<b>164</b>	<b>Marshall Brown</b>
<b>168</b>	<b>Pita &amp; Bloom</b>
<b>172</b>	<b>Venice Biennale Afterword</b>
<b>174</b>	<b>Fellows</b>
<b>176</b>	<b>Placeholders</b>
<b>186</b>	<b>House Party</b>
<b>196</b>	<b>Some Views of Triumphal Arches</b>
<b>206</b>	<b>Postscript</b>





The Wallenberg studio honors the legacy of one of Taubman College's most important alumni through an overall theme for the final undergraduate studio, focused on a broad humanitarian concern, explored through propositions put forward by studio section faculty. Each year we ask: what is architecture's relationship to the humanitarian; how does architecture take up a position in the world? In 2015—through the framework of "Participation"—we explore how architectural interventions may participate in larger projects of social change, political activism, or cultural reform and how these propositions of the early twenty-first century might participate in the history of architecture's disciplinary projects. Through architecture, we are able to ask questions of the immediate physical present and the long history that created it.

#### **2015 WALLENBERG STUDIO AWARD**

*Contested Ground: Unearthing  
L'Enfant's Washington*, Grace Alli

*Patria o Forastero: A Vessel of  
Reconciliation*, Genevieve Doman

#### **HONORABLE MENTIONS**

*A Chapel in a Lake. A Lake in a  
Labryinth*, Lauren Grizbowski

*Preface*, Jamie Waxter

*A Land of Possibilities*, Stella Zhang

In this volume of *Dimensions*, three projects from the 2015 Wallenberg studio were selected as representatives of the research, analysis, insight, and design that goes into this semester's work. Genevieve Doman's *Patria o Forastero: A Vessel of Reconciliation* illustrates the consequences of the breakdown of United States–Cuba relations and endeavors to mediate these tensions created by political forces. Tyler Suomala's *Nowhere* is an original creation of spatial relationships based on Da Vinci's sketches and capolavori, taking on an analysis and synthesizing in order to step into the realm of the vaguely familiar. Yurong Wu's *Neither Here Nor There* is sited in a familiar landmark with a design manifestation that is fantastical, using a narrative to drive the design.

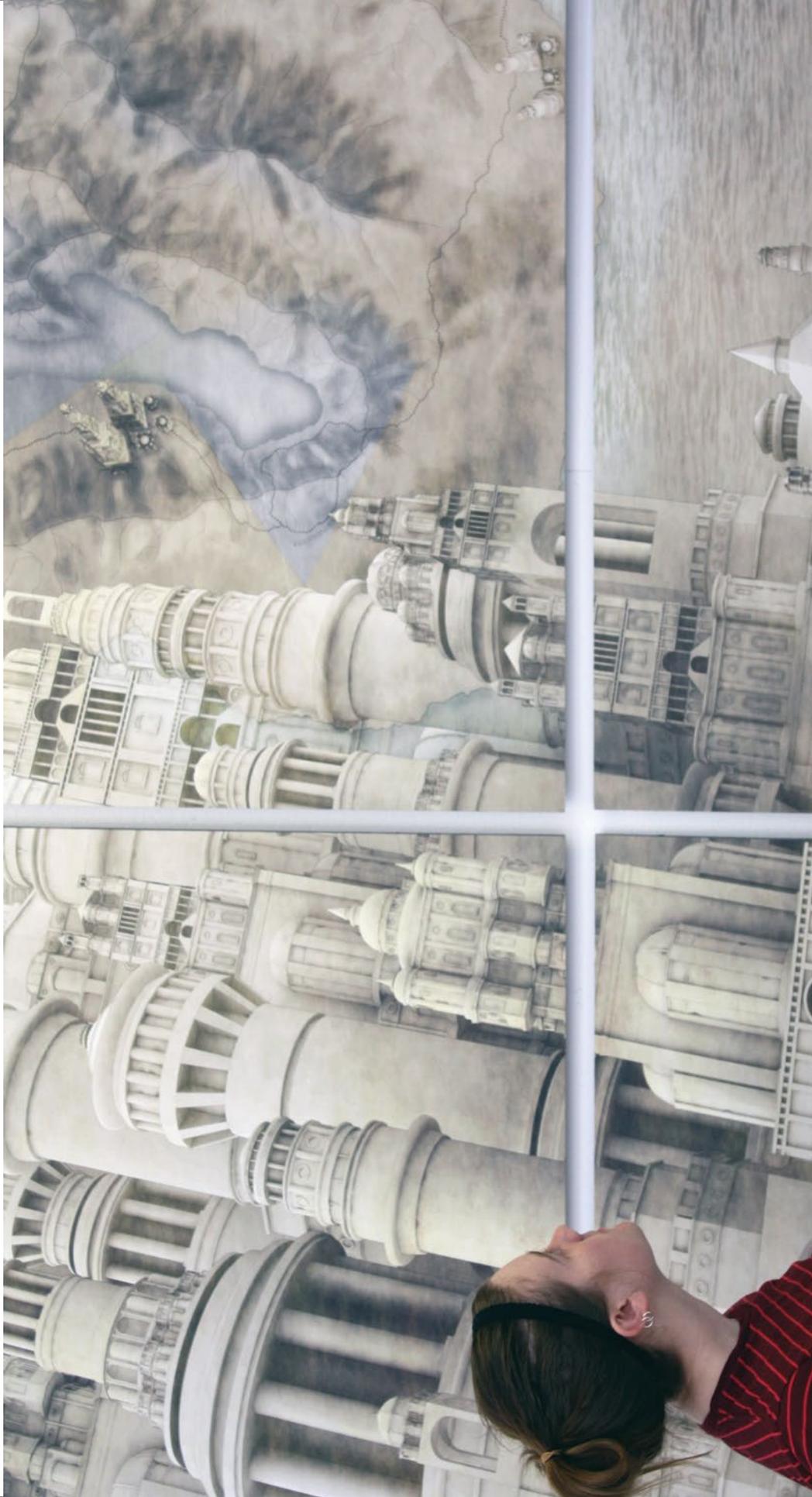
#### **FEATURED PROJECTS**

*Patria o Forastero: A Vessel of  
Reconciliation*, Genevieve Doman

*Nowhere*, Tyler Suomala

*Neither Here Nor There*, Yurong Wu

# Wallenbergs





Leonardo Da Vinci is one of the most studied figures in history, but for the most part, these studies have existed in an ongoing cycle to clarify and familiarize his work. They have been singular and codified, pursuing definitive conclusions. Conversely, this project pushes Da Vinci's work through a contemporary lens of defamiliarization in an effort to speculate on its latent potentials. In doing so, the studio environment aids in the disruption of previously stagnant studies. The result is *Nowhere*—an undefined and uncategorized collective that challenges the way in which we see our own world.

**TYLER SUOMALA**

# Nowhere

## NOWHERE

Is a new way to participate with Da Vinci—it denies the obvious and celebrates the alternative and unrealized. As a foundation of production, each scenario first attempts to see his work in an unfamiliar way.

### REMOVAL OF THE PRIMARY FIGURE

By ignoring the subjects of nearly all previous analyses, one is able to connect Da Vinci's constructed landscapes.

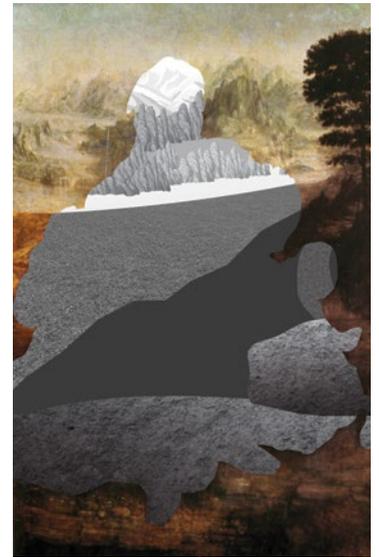
It was clear in studying Da Vinci's paintings that he had a continued interest in the imaginary landscapes that he constructed in the backgrounds. Over a 40-year span, he authored miraculous paintings with similar backgrounds. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the literature and research focuses on the figures of the paintings, with little mention of Da Vinci's landscapes. Removing the figure from the painting and completing the hidden landscape forces one to see Da Vinci's artwork from an unfamiliar perspective. As an extension of this study, each painting was assumed to exist within the same landscape. Through careful observation of the natural elements located in the paintings, relationships were formed and a landscape was created, affording each painting its own territory, that can be traversed in the capriccio.

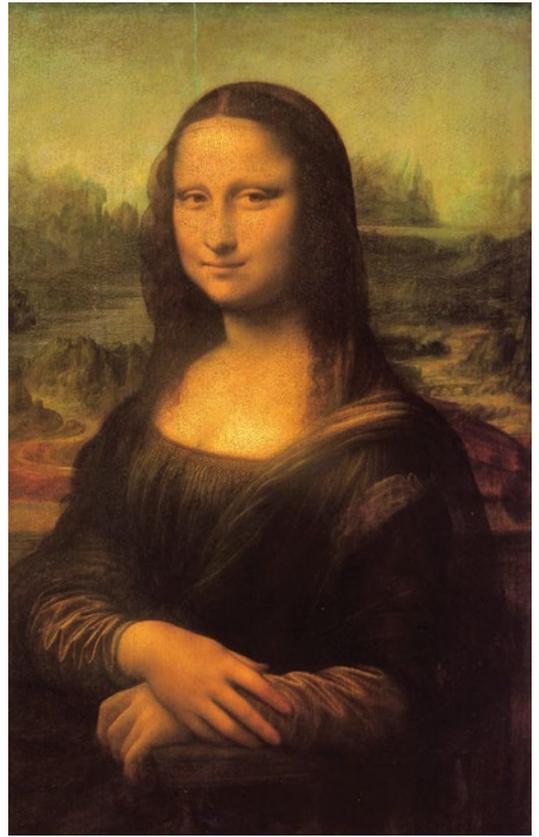


*Madonna of the Yarnwinder, Da Vinci, 1499–1507*



*The Virgin and Child with St. Anne, Da Vinci, 1503*





*Mona Lisa*, Da Vinci, 1503–1517

## CONSTRUCTION OF SPACE AROUND BODIES

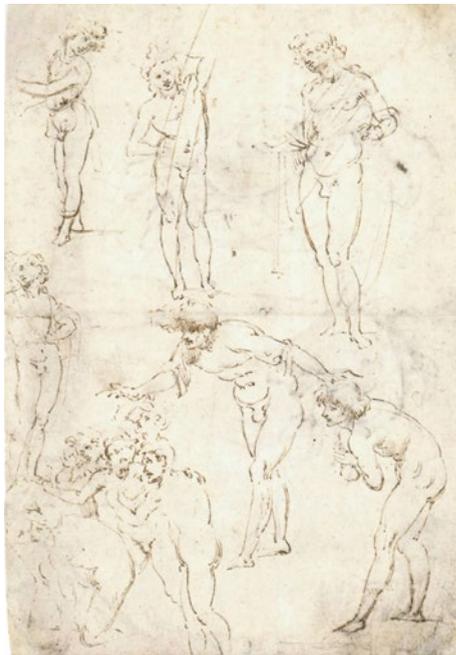
By assuming that all bodies exist in the same scene rather than as separate studies, one is able to produce unfamiliar spaces.

The literature surrounding Da Vinci's figure sketches is focused on clarifying and connecting each figure or group of figures to specific works of art. Thus, each figure study is assumed to be independent of other figure studies existing on the same page. Challenging this assumption requires a disregard for the common process of spatial construction. Instead of designing a space and filling it with figures, one must begin with the figures and then design the space. The result is a series of unfamiliar spaces that cannot truly be defined or categorized by any existing typologies.



Original figure sketches by Da Vinci and an edited version showing space surrounding the figures.







## AGGLOMERATION OF ARCHITECTURE

Through specific proliferation and organization of Da Vinci's less realized concepts, new relationships and perspectives are produced.

Research into Da Vinci's notebooks revealed a deep appreciation and imagination for the study of architecture. Since Da Vinci did not author any physical architecture, his concepts existed solely within the

confines of his notebooks for the past 500 years. Initially, his studies were translated into three-dimensional digital structures, allowing his work to be experienced in an unfamiliar fashion. Later, the isolated structures were combined, manipulated, multiplied, and organized through processes inspired by Da Vinci's ongoing interests.

Da Vinci's interests with height inspire the left end, explorations with symmetry stimulate the central scene, and military and defense concepts motivate the right end of the capriccio. Furthermore, the landscape produced by the removal of the primary figures appears near the center and is populated by Da Vinci's architectures and the spaces produced



Capriccio drawing capturing all aspects of the project.

within the figure studies deform select surfaces of the capriccio.

The triumphal arch seems to sufficiently depict the situation that has surfaced by simultaneously presenting itself as an obstruction and a passageway. One could consider its coherence as a collective monument of architecture while approaching the passageway that

presents the opportunity to see and understand Da Vinci's work from an unfamiliar perspective. ■

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*Acknowledgments:*  
I would like to thank all of my colleagues in James Michael Tate's Wallenberg studio for producing an incredible, collaborative environment. I also would like to thank my professor, Tate, for his mentorship and guidance, and my wife for her continued support.

# Peter

Peter Eisenman is an internationally recognized architect and educator. As the principal of Eisenman Architects, he has designed large-scale housing and urban design projects, innovative facilities for educational institutions, and a series of inventive private houses.

Eisenman was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 2004 Venice Architecture Biennale. *Popular Science* magazine named Eisenman one of the top five innovators of 2006 for the University of Phoenix Stadium for the Arizona Cardinals. In May 2010, Eisenman was honored with the Wolf Foundation Prize in the Arts, awarded in Jerusalem.

From 1967 to 1982, Eisenman was the director of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York City, which he founded. He is currently the Charles Gwathmey Professor in Practice at the Yale School of Architecture. Eisenman's academic career also includes teaching at Cambridge, Princeton, Harvard, and Ohio State. Previously, he was the Irwin S. Chanin Distinguished Professor of Architecture at The Cooper Union, in New York City. His many books include *Eisenman: Inside Out, Selected Writings 1963–1988*; *Written into the Void, Selected Writings 1990–2004*; *Tracing Eisenman*; and *Giuseppe Terragni: Transformations, Decompositions, Critiques*.

2004 was the year, the Yale School of Architecture was the location, Peter Eisenman was the teacher, James Michael Tate was the student. It was in the context of a required first year course titled "Introduction to Visual Studies" and it was through a series of PowerPoint presentations and analytic drawing exercises that the teacher went about discussing ways of seeing, reading, and positioning architecture...

# Eisenman

with James Michael Tate



Peter Eisenman arrives in Rutgers apparel to join former student and current lecturer James Michael Tate for a *Dimensions* game day interview. Disciplinary trajectory served as an undertone for the talk following Eisenman's lecture on the "Loss of Authority" given the day prior. Rutgers lost the game, 49-16.

**D29** Peter, last night's lecture addressed the lack of authority and a current state of disciplinary stagnation. How does instilling knowledge of the past aid in progressing the discipline?

**PE** We have to first understand what the use of history is. What is the use of precedent? I was on a jury where the students were supposedly designing an urban plan. Most of them were worried about the high rise housing blocks. I said, if you're interested in an urban plan, why don't you take an urban block? Take the Marseille. It is already there. There are a thousand variations of that. Pick one, put it in

a block because the block is going to affect the urban plan, not the unit. What are the models that we are using? What are the authorities? That is what I was trying to talk about last night.

**D29** In architecture it has gotten harder to form a singularity regarding shared disciplinary values. It seems this understanding is no longer autonomously passed down within the profession, but is largely impacted by media. Is media to blame for this halt in architectural order?

**PE** The culture that has passed on in the media is thin and the culture that's passed on to the discipline is thick. Media has to bring things down to the level of the every day. The University of Michigan does not have to do that. Learning how to deal with media is important, there is no question about it, but that's not architecture, that's something else. Learning about architecture is very clear. Learning about media is also very clear.

Romantic images are the media. What do you think Nazi propaganda was? It was all about scoring romantic imagery of Teutonic maidens, people in leather boots, and God knows what. There is a whole culture of understanding what media does through its use of romantic images. And what happens when romantic images start to become the discipline, then you get Bjarke Ingels.

**JT** This is a really big issue for Peter and his school of thought. It has a lot to do with the fact that perspectives distort form, they are pictorial, and tend to be undisciplined. The drawings he's referring to are based on parallels and promote ways of seeing and reading architecture that are different from how we literally perceive objects and spaces in perspective. They aren't about what is obvious in a project, and the viewer has an intentionally detached point of view, a critical distance. In my own education Peter introduced me to the possibility that a particular kind of

knowledge and ideation can and has historically resided in certain types of representation; insider dialogues. My relationship to looking at and pursuing architecture through drawings, models and other works of representation changed drastically when I took his class.

**D29** Have architecture representational techniques become diluted with the evolution of architectural software?

**JT** Peter's discretionary biases take a position on architectural values. When first introduced to the approach it can be difficult to grasp for a couple of reasons. Today we are more likely to associate orthographic projection drawings with technical rather than conceptual aspirations. The status of such drawings is further complicated because they are usually extracted from digital models rather than delineated through projection, constructed as he says. Also, because software like Rhino has an isometric view, and probably because we are familiar with parallel views in video games and apps, our contemporary relationship to the disciplining aims of such drawing techniques and conventions is changing.

**If Bjarke Ingels is a daddy, then we are in big trouble. If you don't know that, then we are in even bigger trouble.**

**PE** That's right, exactly. The teachers who push this are teachers that have nothing much to say, so they let you continue with the images that you know already and don't disturb you. You don't have an orthodoxy, an authority, or anything to rebel against. You've got to kill Daddy. If Daddy's already been emasculated, then you're really in trouble. What I worry about, in the academic world, is that there are no daddies. If Bjarke Ingels is a daddy, then we are in big trouble. If you don't know that, then we are in even bigger trouble.

**D29** What should we, as the next generation of architectural students, do to seek out or cultivate new authorities?

**PE** All I know is if I were you and somebody said, "What would be the first thing to do?" I would read a book. I wouldn't go look at a building; I'd read a book because reading is not the experience of the building and the experience of the building is not going to help you once you see it and say, "Wow, this is great. I'd like to do one like this." If you don't know how to do it, seeing it isn't going to help. I've been working all my life—I showed those two slides: one of Terragni's Casa del Fascio, the other of the villa in Montagnana by Palladio. I have been working to understand what I first saw in 1961 and I just published a book on Palladio.

So to me, if you said, "What is the first book to read?" I would figure out what your interest is and there are a lot of great books. First of all, I would think, before architecture I'd want to read some great literature, like *Moby Dick* or *As I Lay Dying* by Faulkner or *Remembrance of Things Past* by Proust or *Gravity's Rainbow* by Pynchon. I can run you from the eighteenth century to the twenty-first century. I know the value of reading as opposed to not reading. Because if you can't read or haven't read, you don't know the

difference between this junk in this newspaper and another newspaper. It's all the same. It's all media. I'm training people to be experts. I want experts. I'm only interested in students who desire—because why at a great university like Michigan should we have someone who is not interested in being an expert? This is a school of experts that we are training. There is a certain authority that is necessary to train experts and that authority does not exist in the media. You guys are very privileged to have that possibility to be here and therefore it is your responsibility to yourselves to make use of the fact that you have this privilege—you are here as opposed to Nebraska, Kansas, or Arkansas.

**D29** Alongside representation, a push towards fabrication at Michigan has really shed a spotlight on the school in recent years and is a camp that is increasingly championed in academia, both in this institution and internationally. Is the ascent of technological presence at odds with disciplinary authority?

**PE** I think one of the most difficult things in the world is designing a chair. I have tried it several times. I can't do it. Fabrication would not help me. I promise you. Then I would have to understand, "Why was I designing a chair to be able to be fabricated? I mean why do we need another chair?"



Aren't there enough chairs around that are good chairs?" For me, the best chair is a chair that I can look at; not one which is comfortable but that looks comfortable. Fabrication does not help you with that at all. We had a lecturer come in from France, another one of these parametric fabrication guys. And he said: "Do you realize I could make 50,000 iterations of this chair?"

**JT** "And no two would be the same."

**PE** I said, "Oh my God. Stop at one."

**D29** The right one.

**PE** No, no. There is no right one; they are all awful from the get-go.

**JT** But you have to be able to judge.

**PE** You have to be able to judge. If you don't put anything in the machinery, you are not going to get anything out. And therefore, what good is fabrication if you cannot design? Most people who cannot design are interested in the experience because that's the cover. "Well, you're going to have this great experience in this fabricated parametric chair." It is dumbing down of our student body. I mean, when we are all interested in shop and auto mechanics, forget it. And we are interested in the populace seeing that we can build things with fabrication tools? It's actually a way of employing more people who do not have the intelligence to design.

**D29** The University of Michigan's architecture program is in a current state of transition with the search of a new dean. If fabrication is not the answer in progressing the disciplinary knowledge of students, how do you think an architectural institution should be structured?

**I would have thought that an architecture school is about two things: composition and performance.**

**PE** So education is concerned with whether you want to be a chef. You first of all have to know what a good meal is. You have to have been around and eaten a lot of different meals and understand what that means before you can do it. It does not mean you have a fabulous kitchen or the latest equipment. The fact that you asked me that question tells me how insidious the fabrication issue is.

I would have thought that an architecture school is about two things: composition and performance. In other words, as an architect you have to learn about the discipline, i.e., composition. You have to design something. Then you have to perform. You have to be able to build it, sell it to the clients, present it in a public form, etc. I believe that students ought to be interested in both—composition and performance.

**JT** When I entered architecture school, composition and form were unmentionable words outside of a couple of teachers. In the past few years the word seems to have lost its taboo status, but maybe that's primarily a condition of my specific colleagues and group of friends. If one's work is going to deal with issues of form and discuss things through representation then engaging problems of composition seems unavoidable. I am of the opinion that how one studies and mobilizes historical artifacts, how one identifies, revisits, and works through specific examples and problems from the past within a contemporary mindset, is largely about commenting on previous or existing models through composing and making a project.

I think students are attracted to or put off by the level of investment that is demanded of a certain systems of projection and visual communication. Many students find it a frustrating experience to not make representational images that lack immediacy, that are generally consumable. Essentially Peter's courses make a very clear point that who you're having a conversation or discussion with matters in architecture.

In his case, an architecture school is about pedagogical exercises compared to preparing someone for the profession. While images can be powerful and seductive, his analytic methods are largely in support of studying and abstracting issues concerning form, becoming more aware of architecture, breaking it down, organizing, and repositioning its internal problems. Students who constantly ask and can't wait to make renderings (perspective images) tend to irritate Peter, and they similarly consider his formal analysis course the equivalent of taking medicine.

**PE** What I find about Michigan students is that they are well-versed in a lot of these techniques when they come to Yale. They do very well because they have had a good education. That education has nothing to do with fabrication. Nothing. The fact that they can perform better because they have fabrication, that's fine. But composed better? I don't know. In music schools, there is a split between composition and performance; they are two different animals. If you want to be a performance animal—and I don't think that that's a problem—then you should be interested in fabrication. But if you are interested in composition, fabrication isn't going to help you.

When I was in high school, kids who were not going to college took auto mechanics and shop. College preparatory kids did not do that. I was wondering how fabrication is different from shop and auto mechanics. So I do not know what is disciplinary about fabrication. When you say, "We have become more interested in these new toys that we have," I say that is okay. But who is teaching what goes into the toy? The toys do not produce anything. That is what I was actually talking about last night when I was talking about experience, because if you are not designing the vehicle for experience, then what are you doing? In other words, you cannot predict experience and then assume that the digital, the parametric, the fabrication is going to solve your problem. I find

If I say to you right now, “Write a sonnet,” and you never have read a sonnet, you couldn’t do it. The sonnet is like producing architecture. How do you learn to do a sonnet? You read a lot of sonnets, you go to see a Shakespeare play. Then somebody says, “Shakespeare, that’s for the masses. The real sonnets are in Wordsworth.” Right? You have to have that kind of sophistication.

that there are fewer and fewer students able to really understand what it means to design in architecture.

And we are interested in the populace seeing that we can build things with fabrication tools? It’s actually a way of employing more people who do not have the intelligence to design. So what the Peter Eisenman curriculum is about is that the more you know, the better you are going to be able to design and then use the fabrication machine.

**D29** How does composition begin enact a form of architectural knowledge?

**PE** Look at the people in the music department. There are two kinds of people in music departments: people who are going to direct orchestras, score music, etc. and the others that are performing and they use instruments. Okay, performance has to do with fabrication let’s say. In other words, the kind of instruments, how you can use it and make instruments use instrumentality in different ways. But both composers and performers listen to music and they start by understanding what it means to make music. If I say to you right now, “Write a sonnet,” and you never have read a sonnet, you couldn’t do it. The sonnet is like producing architecture. How do you learn to do a sonnet? You read a lot of sonnets, you go to see a Shakespeare play. Then somebody says, “Shakespeare, that’s for the masses. The real sonnets are in Wordsworth.” Right? You have to have that kind of sophistication.

**JT** So Peter, sometimes I’ve heard people say, “Oh, that’s just composition.” So how would then

within a school do we continue to say, “Hey, if you don’t know composition...”

**PE** Well, if you can’t defend that, you’re in trouble. If you don’t know what a sonnet is, I mean the students from Michigan, because of the nature of the school and the quality of the people that come here, have got to be able to know what a sonnet is and its equivalent in architecture. And they have to be conversant.

**D29** Authority, in large, has to do with a perceived lineage of applied architectural education and knowledge. How does mentorship play a role for both of you in the sense of your current academic roles as educators?

**JT** One of the most interesting statements Peter said in my own education was about Piranesi’s Campo Marzio plan. He said, “The parts no longer relate to the whole.” And then we see for the next two centuries people trying to pick up those parts and saying, “Okay, what do I do with these parts now?” And I think increasingly probably one of the things that’s starting to bubble or re-emerge since the *Deconstructivist Architecture* show at MoMA—since the digital passing through—we are starting to work through potentially a new approach to a part-part relationships that might produce unfamiliar wholes.

**PE** The question of producing the unfamiliar whole is very interesting. That is what was promised by the digital, but it didn’t produce that because we don’t know how to write the algorithms to produce part to part relationships. All the algorithms that are written are for part to whole.

So there you are on the forefront of thinking, but you don’t know how to do the algorithms.

**D29** What about Rowe’s influence on your work?

**PE** Colin Rowe was a great mentor. I was very privileged to have two summers with Colin, 90 days and 90 nights two times doing nothing but listening to Colin tell me about architecture. I had a great education. I had to get out from under that though. It’s a huge weight. I think Jim Sterling and I are the only two people of his students that have gotten out from under and the rest suffocate. But I think that there is no question that Colin Rowe produced an energy for me that allowed me to go—that’s what good teachers do. He was a little over-much, but a good teacher knows how to mediate between input and stepping back. I always liken it to learning how to dance. Learning and teaching and working is always dancing back and forth; it’s never (*explosive sound*).

**JT** I tell my students all the time that 20 years from now, if you’re still doing the same thing that I’m doing, and you’re not commenting on what I laid in the foundation, then I have done a bad job.

**D29** That’s interesting that you are concerned with not only how your students perceive the past, but also how they apply it to further their own future endeavors. We spoke to Jean-Louis about his relationship to disciplinaryity. He says it is, “More than a discipline, it should perhaps be viewed as a field of enquiry, in which scholars are trying to work with different blends of methodologies.”

**PE** I don’t think there is any such thing as architectural research. That is why architects in schools are poor because they can’t get government funding—there’s no such thing as research. Either you perform or you compose and research is neither performance nor composition. If you can’t do either, then you are an art historian. I go to the opera and there is always somebody sitting next to me going, “Ooh, ah.” I’m thinking,



...The impact of the course changed the way the student thought about and worked on architecture. The teacher was without question the most difficult the student encountered in his formal education, it was definitely tough love. However, twelve years later, the durability of the concerns and content delivered in that course endures and is relevant to the former student's set of architectural values. The student is now a young teacher. His approach is significantly influenced by the experience in 2004. He holds a tremendous level of respect toward and is forever grateful to his teacher.

“What’s going on,” because I’m tone deaf. I like going to the opera. I read the translations, I listen, I look at the scenery. I may take a nap. But I don’t know anything about opera. That doesn’t mean I shouldn’t go. But some people who have studied music can go—really, it’s important to them, and when you read the commentary on the opera in *The New York Times*, I think to myself, “Where was I? I didn’t hear that or see that.” You read this detailed text and you realize that there is a level of expertise in everything we do.

**D29** So how do you approach topics of architectural history?

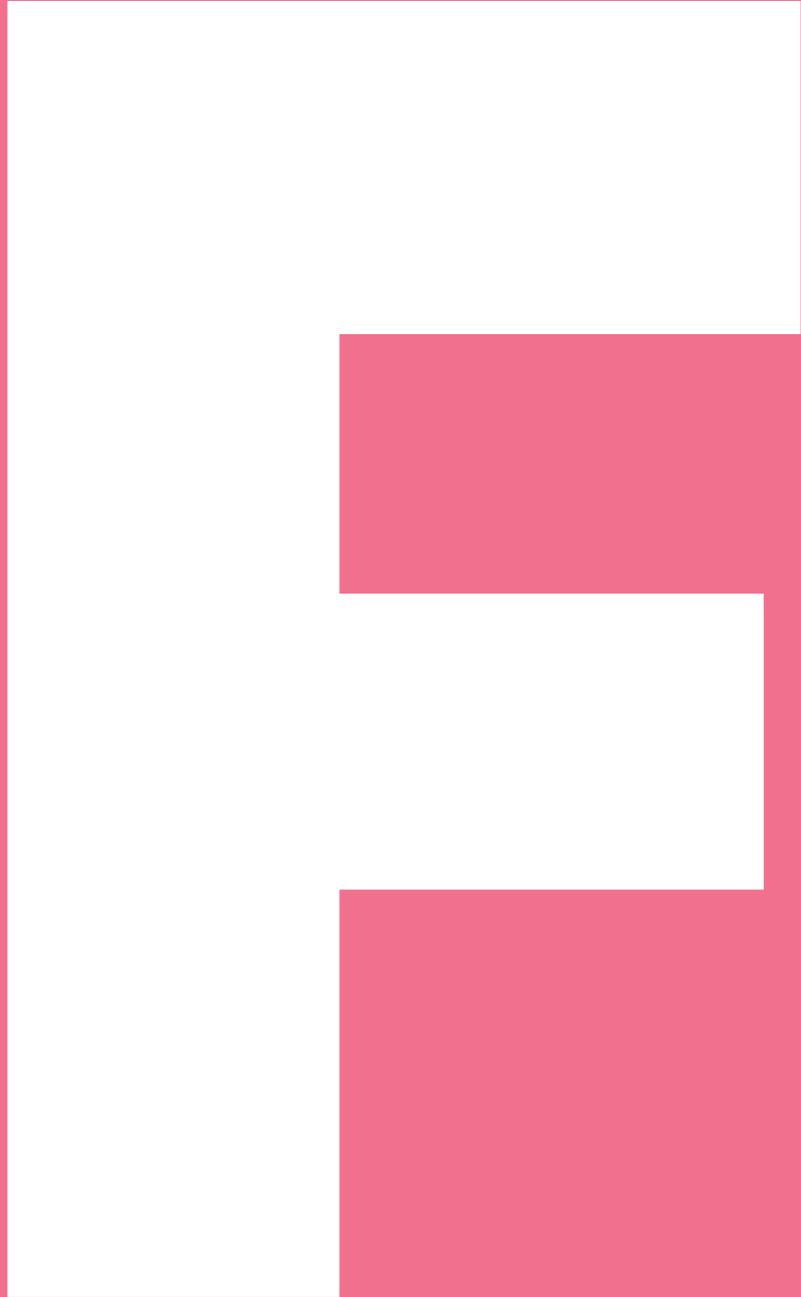
**PE** In my book on Palladio, I write, “I am not an historian. I am an architect looking at Palladio in architectural terms.” I can’t look through the history. I am not interested in the footnotes and archival research. That’s not what I do. I interpret Palladio for my students.

As Colin Rowe once said to me, “Facts—historical truths, facts, dates—are like sacks. If you don’t fill them up with values, they won’t stand up.” So Colin used to tell the story, in 1760 or somewhere around there, the rulers of Genoa decided that they wanted to sell the island of Corsica to the English. They no longer wanted to own Corsica, which is an island next to Sardinia, in the Mediterranean

Sea. So they went to London to sell Corsica in 1760 to the Brits. The Brits said, “No, we don’t want it—the price is too high.” So on the way back to Genoa, they stopped in Paris and the Parisians said that they would buy Corsica. Now a fact of history. Little Napoleon, who was born in Corsica in 1769, had the Genoese been able to sell Corsica to the Brits little Napoleon would never have become a general because in order to get into the British military academy Sandhurst, you had to be of noble birth. Little Napoleon became a French subject, went to the *École Militaire*, became a famous general and changed the course of history. Only because the Genoese were not able to sell Corsica to the Brits. That’s what Colin Rowe calls history. So accidents that happen because certain things don’t happen. I think that is what I’m interested in: What about the accidents that happened or didn’t happen that caused things to happen in a different way? Therefore, I am not interested in historical rhetoric. The historical record doesn’t tell you anything but certain facts. But the facts are not facts; they are only the gloss on the reality. ■

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Interviewers: Yezi Dai, Michal Ojrzanowski,  
Gideon Schwartzman  
Photography: Salam Rida



# Fellows

Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning offers three fellowships in the areas of architectural research and instruction. Fellows spend a year at Taubman College, teaching three classes as they pursue their fellowship interests.

## **DESIGN / MUSCHENHEIM FELLOWSHIP**

The Muschenheim Fellowship offers design instructors early in their career the opportunity to develop a body of work in the context of teaching. Muschenheim fellows play a significant role in the definition of studio culture while pursuing their own creative endeavors. Proposals for the Muschenheim Fellowship focus upon the development of a specific project individually or with students, outside of teaching or center upon a particular set of pedagogical themes to be engaged in the studio context.

## **PROJECT / OBERDICK FELLOWSHIP**

The Oberdick Project Fellowship facilitates the development and realization of a significant exploration

into some aspect of architectural speculation and production. Fellows are provided with resources for the execution of a project that may take the form of an exhibit, publication, installation, or any other material construction. Projects may range from the exploration of emergent building, fabrication, and environmental technologies to the realization of architectural works and endeavors typically unsupported within conventional models of practice.

## **RESEARCH / SANDERS FELLOWSHIP**

The Sanders Fellowship supports individuals with significant, compelling and timely research dealing with architectural issues. Research could dwell within architectural, urban, landscape, or cultural history or theory; architectural or environmental technology; or design studies. These agendas could emerge from recently completed doctoral dissertations or other intense and rigorous research format. The fellowship will support both research and the development of research-related curriculum.



# Some Views of Triumphal Arches

I cannot tell you where the project begins or ends. Initially it was important to identify the point of origin and the end; draw a line, attempt to make things clear and definitive, figure it out. But there were only starting points, lots of them. There was no way to draw a continuous line that added everything up. Things enter, they exit, and sometimes they return. That part—the part about things that return—this project has something to do with that.

In the gallery, everything points to, refers to, and comments on other things inside the room and outside of it. For a long time, it was possible to make simple associations and combinations; this plus that, this minus that, and this times that. But this began to develop a more complex position on things when that became both-and. When questions about the continuity of architectural thought, historicity, and what precedes or supersedes arose, this began to contradict that. Along with contradiction came ambiguity, and later, about the same time I entered the

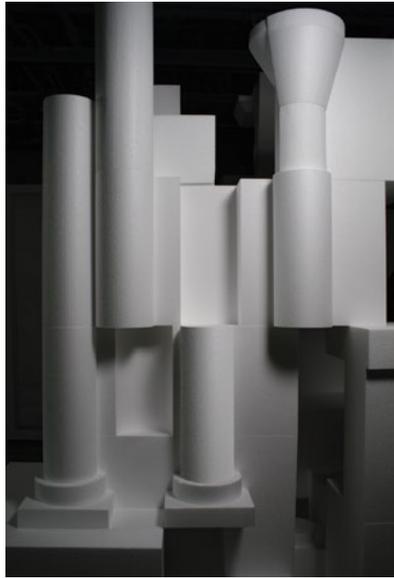
discussion, both-and welcomed even more stuff in. It was a very liberating moment where this and that—creative practice and history-theory—went their separate ways. It has been a mess ever since...

History and precedent are two terms that are often associated with my work, but I'm increasingly hesitant to use either. How I understand and use things from the past does not line up with how professional historians work with historical material and that word precedent, its connotations and associations, well, that word makes a lot of architects anxious. Sometimes people say I am misbehaving or misreading, but I am just trying to make architecture.

The idea that someone would label it as 'mis' anything is so essentialist. It does however seem problematic that within our contemporary field, that drawing on history, having a disciplined approach to architectural design, is often labeled as a frivolous navel-gazing activity, not only in the profession, but also within our academic institutions.

James Michael Tate is a decedent of the mythical gods Juno and Janus. Born to Terry and Tammy Tate on the first day of the first year of the 1980s, he is the banner-bearing pupo of the "Eighties" and link between Generation X and the Millennials. Tate comes from Texas and was raised on MTV, but he has lived most of his adult life passing through Alabama, New York City, Connecticut, California, and Michigan at this moment... It's as if he's searching for the ghost of Charles Moore. Tate's work confronts architectural history through creative practice. He understands history as an intellectual rather than stylistic problem, and champions the need to continually discipline the discipline. Architecture's histories are after all too important to be left to professional historians alone! He is invested in how architects act on our received inheritance. His teaching focuses ways of mobilizing historical references for design pursuits, in other words, new ways of being old school.

**JAMES MICHAEL TATE**

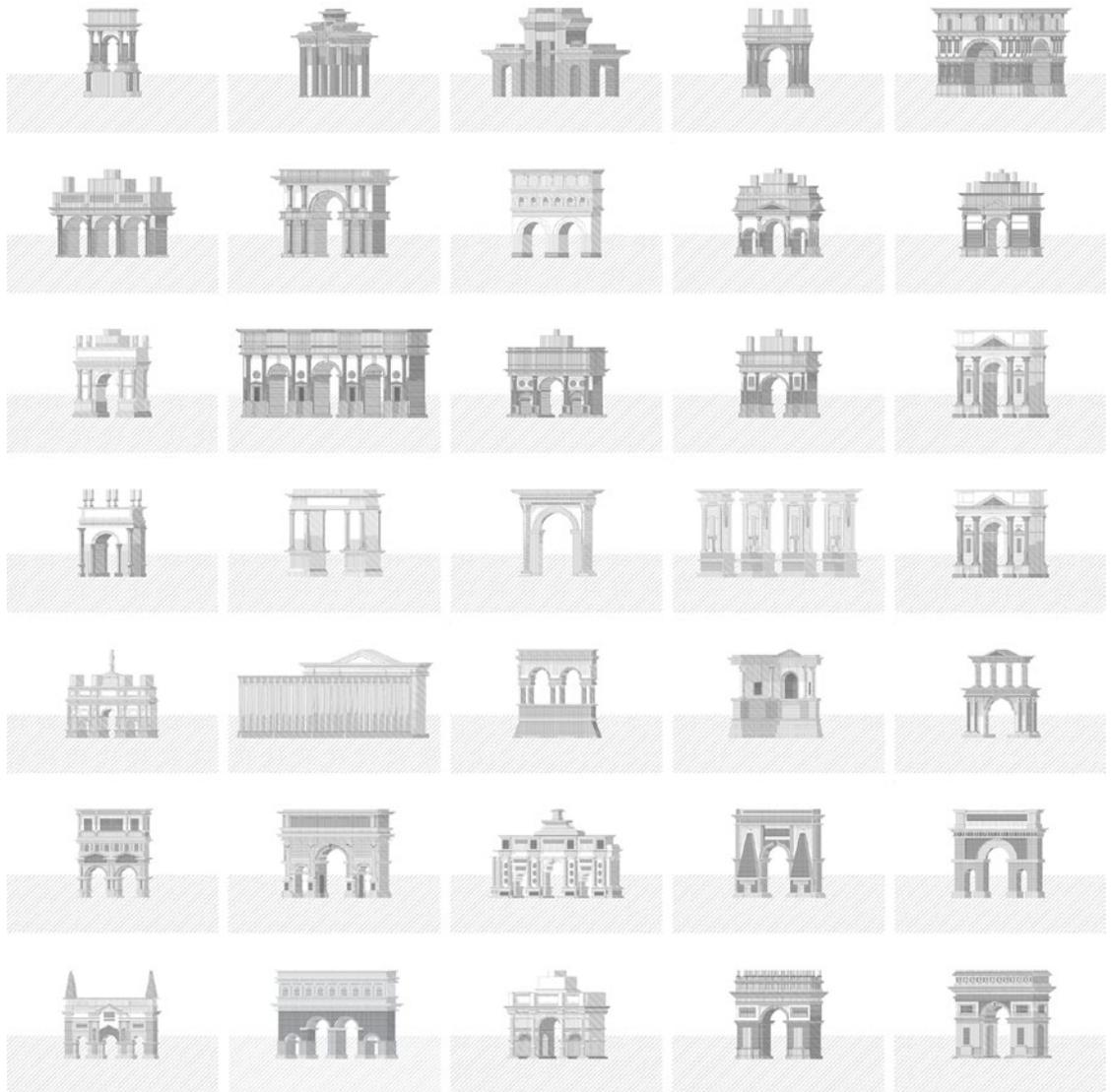




*Some Views of Triumphal Arches* builds upon a set of ideas about the activity of interpreting received architectural artifacts and histories through design—composition, technique, and description. The work proposes that architectural history is too important to be left to professional historians alone. I believe the ways designers mobilize historical references to produce contemporary architectural thought is distinct because of our responsibility to make design proposals. Forms of analysis and translation are a necessary but endangered activity in our field.

The installation positions and places value in architecture as a discipline, an intellectual framework and body of knowledge that exists in a state of ruins, a dense pile of rubble. We are in a moment when nothing is intact. The design of history through the contemporary practice of architecture is an act of disciplinary maintenance. It is a lot like rummaging through the garbage. It is less than ideal, but it is our collective inheritance. One thing I have discovered while sifting through the heap: it is less natural and more artificial; synthetic things persist!

Everything I collect and sort through has been abandoned by others: models and proposals that did not go according to plan. A bunch of discarded ideas that are broken into fragments and pieces. Nothing is whole, but there are a lot of holes in things, lots of gaps between things. Some moments are recognizable and familiar. A lot of it is weighty and monumental, but fractured. Even the most solid material is relatively unstable. From a distance it looks like stone, it has an aura of permanence, but upon closer inspection it is stagecraft, pure theater.



I am motivated by the activity of rethinking and reorganizing old broken parts, it both constrains and propels the work. While the fellowship installation is incoherent as a singular whole, it intends to be cohesive, a precise mess of orders upon orders and shape shifting identities that place different ideas in relation to each other within a common scaffold.

The investigation raises questions of coherence and difference with an interest in talking about, arguing and positioning, the same object in different ways or different objects in the same way. The work is an architectural project that operates discursively by picking up,

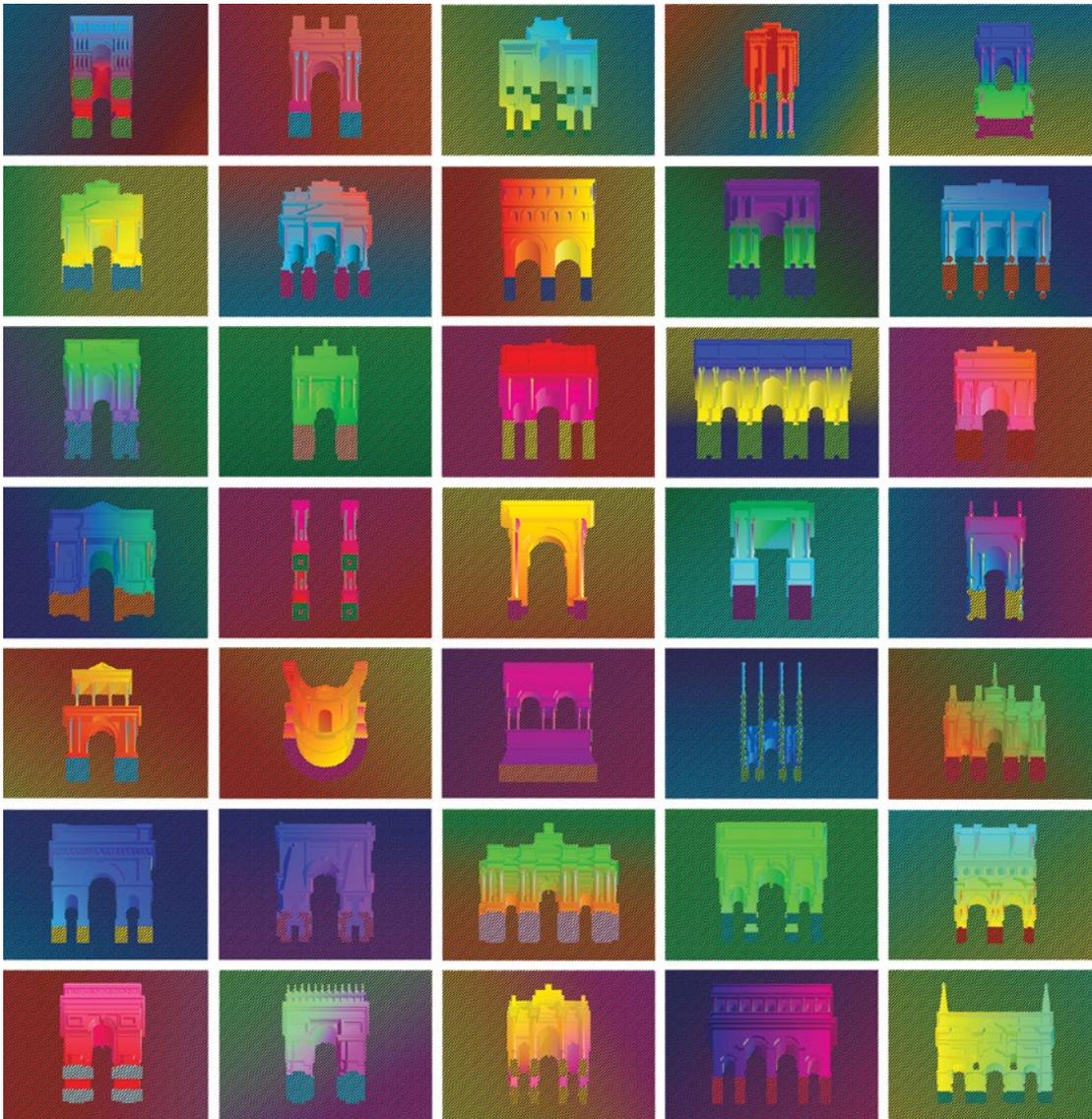
problematizing, and working on disciplinary issues and interests. It is likely architecture has never been coherent, only representations that suggest the possibility of something true and meaningful. Despite this, I still feel obligated to all of this old stuff. It seems necessary to subscribe to or have faith in the dense pile of parts. They almost add up to something!

### WHOLE PARTS

Parts are scattered around, some are small, some are medium, some are large, and some are extra-large. While some are just pieces, some appear or suggest wholeness. It is hard to tell if they were ever in any kind of order,

if their sorting and organization is deliberate or ad-hoc. Some things about them suggests hierarchy—controlled and rule based—but a lot of them just divert attention away. Some parts have qualities of being overly determined, others are indeterminate. The articulation and characteristics of each part are worked on through devices that promote both literalness and abstraction.

In the project, recognizable parts are proliferated, each refers in some way to the archetypal source, and the relationships between the parts is specific but not absolutely defined. Much of the work explores different ways of playing and performing parts



in relation to other parts, reorganizing parts in different ways, and potentially producing unfamiliar wholes. The inclusion of hot glue guns among scattered piles of parts encourages visitors to directly interact with and contribute to the composition of the work.

### DISCURSIVE HISTORY

In my practice and teaching, making architectural work is largely based around using contemporary situations to revisit old problems, discovering different ways of playing old things in new ways. My activities usually require being extremely diligent about some things, and releasing control over

other aspects. The fellowship project is invested in the idea of learning from and looking at history through the practice of architectural design. What does it mean to attach ones work to issues that are historical to the discipline? To invoke old discourses, old terms as a site of investigation? Reading through close disciplined study and looking at things through expedient reception are becoming a necessary aspect of how I go about working on a project. To this end, the installation attempts to build onto, reorganize, combine, and swerve existing things and received histories. Why start with something new when there is so much existing material

to work with? Instead, my practice experiments with ways of seeing old things anew and new ways of being old school.

The rumors are true that everything in the installation is based on excerpts from historically significant texts and projects. If asked to choose between confronting the weight of history versus the anxiety of being original, I will take the first. Being liberated from the problematics of architecture seems like an awful situation.

The project focuses a lot of attention on the act of disciplining and situating work in the discipline. It considers the idea of putting something into a

longer disciplinary context as a means of inserting and situating work within a set of recurring conversations. While these are primarily internal to architecture, they ultimately have the ambition to turn abstract ideas into materialized concepts in the world. The installation argues that architecture works through how various, even categorically different pieces and thoughts, might come together and be in conversation, if only for a passing moment. The project aims to articulate a contemporary attitude and approach to collecting and acting on various inherited histories simultaneously as a critical and productive design tool in the discursive cultural practice of architecture.

## REPRESENTATION

Everything in the room is a representation of a representation, nothing is original. Each representation of the representation tries to argue for something. Each asks or calls something into question as much as it produces a physical space. Old projects, new delivery. The discipline of architecture is a dense collection of drawn lines that are constantly counter-positioning themselves, constantly redefining the discipline, it is primarily the representation of a thing.

Through the informal use of architecture's formal language and the material choices of foam, paper, paint, and sharpie marker, the project explores the creative potentiality of representation and reality, constructing and ruining, archaeology and speculation as informing one another intellectually and as a formal organization strategy. This is also achieved by making the foam arch occupiable, complimented by a wall

drawing that exceeds the size of people in the gallery. Drawings and models participate in our contemporary image culture. Drawings and models in this project are both bigger and smaller than they should be. Their odd scale attempts to confuse and delight the viewer's inability to draw a distinction between the conceptual and physical inhabitation of architecture.

## REFERENCE

The intervention positions ready-mades, sort-of-fake artifacts, remakes, and studies of various relative sizes alongside one another into a loosely organized ensemble. Throughout the piece, obsessive adoration and reverence is countered with moments of disregard and ambivalence toward the authenticity of the source material. Visitors are confronted with moments of obsessive control—order—and moments of being irrational—ad-hoc or non-hierarchical—sophisticated and unsophisticated.

The project explores ways of producing contemporary work that uses the work of other architects as its primary point of departure. The work done during the yearlong fellowship attempts to be wholly unoriginal yet partly strange through its reorganization and representation of existing content. References make their way into the work in both direct and indirect ways. The idea of starting with existing things that have associations, whether referring to things we know well or things we have forgotten, exist as thoughts, visual artifacts, and ways of making drawings, models, images, and texts. I am both deeply involved and removed from the work presented. The tension and play between my roles as collector, editor, translator, and designer are important.

## ARCHETYPE

It is satisfying to typecast things. The yearlong investigation included a daily ritual of collecting and drawing the principal facade of one triumphal arch: drawn or standing somewhere in the world at some moment in time. This activity was done in parallel with a more careful disciplined study of the various and often competing ways triumphal arches have been theorized and used throughout historical time both within and outside of the architectural canon. A lot of attention was given to the ability to adopt different positions, the various different ways of talking about and producing different discussions around typological objects. Using triumphal arches as a typological muse, the work considers ideas about archetypal forms and the production of monumental form through fragmentation.

While the intervention is composed entirely of fragments, it attempts to be understood as a totality, an unfamiliar whole. ■

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I take it as my responsibility to push architecture somewhere. Ours is not a moment of harmony, it is not our task to restore things to some perceived ideal state. Our inherited fictions give us a tremendous opportunity to concurrently tell and expand upon what were once discrete micro-histories, ultimately mixing them up into new agglomerated confections. Maybe the discipline was always intended to be a collection of parts that periodically reorganize within a field whose limits are subject to contexts that are inherently unstable.

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# Dimensions

