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## THE PARALLEL SCHOOL

**DRAFT Version May 30, 2017, to be updated.**

*Synopsis: This architecture design studio is the third installment in a series of option studios that reconsider the architectural school as a type ripe for reinvention. Students will work in pairs to design prototypical architectural school buildings within hypothetical sites and volumetric envelopes based on prominent schools of architecture in the US. Through analysis of historical and contemporary architectural schools – both buildings and programs – students will propose new physical formats for working and learning environments that extrapolate on current changes occurring in architectural education. The Parallel School will be engaging, inclusive, porous, interconnected, and optimistic, forging new connections across academic, disciplinary and geographical boundaries.*

*The studio will emphasize a variety of skills and means of representation, including conceptual thinking and diagramming, formal invention, digital media, and physical models. The pace of the studio will initially be very fast, with a goal of achieving comprehensive designs by the midterm, followed by a period of refinement and representation.*

### **Preamble: Globalization of Architectural Education**

1868... 1873... 1881...1895... 1911... 1937... 1938... 1953... 1980... 1988...2008... 2014: the story of architectural education in the United States is one of successive waves of globalization, or at least of pedagogical influence across national borders. The first five of these dates (1868-1911) signal the introduction of seminal French and to a lesser extent German ideas, through the teachings and influence of deans of the schools of MIT, University of Illinois, Columbia and the GSD. Names such as Ware, Schermerhorn, Hudnut, Ricker, Warren, and Duquesne now linger as ghosts, reminding us through the rooms and buildings after which they are named of their influence as Deans and founders of schools. But their influence was, with some exceptions for those in search of a more home-grown national identity, such as Ricker in Illinois, largely imported.

Until just before the arrival of Walter Gropius to Harvard's GSD in 1936, much of architectural education was modeled on the teachings of the Ecole de Beaux Arts in France, where students learned largely through copying neo-classical styles. The next wave came from Germany. Along with Gropius, a variety of other former Bauhaus faculty including Marcel Breuer, Moholy-Nagy, and Mies Van der Rohe, emigrated to the US just before the Second World War, transforming architectural education in a country already receptive to architectural modernism. The importing of architectural influence from Europe continued with such figures as Josep Lluís Sert's arrival as Dean of the GSD in 1953, and of Bernard Tschumi at GSAPP in 1988, to name a few.

The last dates in our list – 2008 and 2014 – the founding of GSAPP's global network Studio-X by former Dean Mark Wigley, and the school's continuing global engagement under Dean Andraos – heralds a more complex flow of information and influence across national boundaries and a continual re-thinking of the products, discourse and mission of an architecture school. Alongside foreign outposts of major universities in places such as the Middle East (eg US schools in Qatar, Technion in NYC), an increasing number of architecture students – such as many of you - are traveling across borders to complete your education.

### **Corollary of Globalization: Social, Disciplinary and Academic boundaries.**

Our studio begins at this moment of complex and multi nodal trans-national interconnections. However, it also begins with a parallel story closer to home. As perhaps a corollary of

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globalization, architecture schools since at least the Great Depression began turning their attention to their immediate surroundings, considering the potential social impact of architectural education. In the last few decades, initiatives such as the Yale Building Project (1967), the Rural Studio at Auburn University in Alabama (1993), and various Design-Build programs at a variety of schools, have engaged with their communities through student-led building projects.

These seemingly opposite tendencies of architectural education – towards the global and the immediately adjacent – could be broadly understood as part of a larger set of changes that are extending architectural education beyond the confines of schools of architecture. These include an increasing heterogeneity and specialization of the profession, and an expansion of the discipline to connect to new fields, resulting in new labs, programs, and the incorporation of other disciplines within architecture schools, or collaborations with other departments. In addition, changes in means of production are placing schools at the forefront of some technologies, generating an interest from and new partnerships with other fields and industry. As a result, schools of architecture are reaching more and more beyond their academic boundaries: across disciplines, to local communities and to industry, and geographically in ways unimaginable when the first architecture schools in the United States looked across the Atlantic Ocean at France.

#### **Design Problem: The Parallel School**

So why then, do we still study and teach architecture in spaces that have not evolved significantly from the Beaux-Arts atelier? While acknowledging that schools such as the AA or GSAPP provide progressive architectural education despite – or some might argue irrespective of – the historical buildings in which they operate, the studio will assume some level of causal relationship between architecture and human activity, ie influence of the building's design upon the architectural education within it.

**ANALYSIS:** The studio's aim is to conceive prototypical architectural schools that extrapolate on current changes occurring in architectural education. In parallel with some brief readings about the history of architectural education, students will work in pairs to analyze important contemporary schools of architecture. You will consider both their buildings and their programs, with a goal of identifying spatial, organizational and conceptual armatures for eventual reformulation.

**AREA OF FOCUS:** Each group will select a specific aspect, space or programmatic element of the school you are studying to focus on. These aspects will be reconsidered for their capacity to sponsor interaction, and produce new identities, organizations, and formal possibilities. Whether you select the fabrication lab, school library, spaces for gathering, spaces for display, circulation spaces, the studio spaces themselves, or other aspects you discover, you will propose a new hypothetical proto-school that exaggerates the importance of that particular aspect, transforming it from constituent element to overarching conceptual framework. Our primary goal is to propose radical reformulations of the way in which architects learn and work, and design corresponding spatial implications.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:** Once you have developed your focus on aspects of the school, you will be challenged to develop your design in response to a series of abstract design frameworks, assigned by lottery as a series of percentages (eg 60% formal / 40% informal). These frameworks, which are open to wide interpretation, include degrees of:

- formal vs informal
- individual vs. collective
- continuous vs. discontinuous
- closed vs. open

Once assigned, students may elect to work with two or more of these frameworks, and evolve these into your own parameters. The goals of random distribution by lottery are to challenge you to

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consider issues outside of your comfort zone and to develop an encyclopedic approach to the problem across the studio, resulting in a shared yet diverse body of work.

#### HYPOTHETICAL SITES:

Another lottery! At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> week, students will indicate your order of preference for a series of hypothetical sites and volumetric envelopes based on prominent schools of architecture in the US. While the sites will share similar buildable volume, hypothetical campus settings, and hypothetical Northeast US climate, they will vary in proportion and other aspects. These aspects will be closely related to existing schools of architecture (eg SCI-ARC is a long and low linear bar, while Yale is a tall building on an urban block). The primary goal of working within a hypothetical site this semester is to maintain a level of abstraction in your prototypical design of a school. As a "Parallel" school, your design will operate somewhere between diagram and reality, type and instance, and between place and placelessness.

Regardless of area of focus, design framework, or hypothetical site, your Parallel School should be engaging, inclusive, porous, interconnected, and optimistic, forging new connections across academic, disciplinary and geographical boundaries.

#### Studio Organization

Students will work in pairs. Students will be expected to research, read selected readings, develop clear concepts and strong diagrams, use digital media, build physical models in series, produce articulate and engaging representation, and develop conceptually innovative designs for radical buildings. Either Eric Bunge or Mimi Hoang will generally be in studio once to twice a week, with scheduled overlaps for internal pinups and reviews (see exceptions in schedule). Our Teaching Assistant Sebastian Cilloniz will be in studio twice a week, overlapping with Eric and/or Mimi once a week.

NOTE: Our midterm will be outside the typical midterm week. Both mid-term and final reviews will be supplemented by pdf submissions as follows (see schedule for more detail):

- Mid-term pdf submission Wednesday July 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Mid-term Monday July 10<sup>th</sup>
- Final Review: Thursday August 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Final pdf submission booklet\*: Tuesday August 8<sup>th</sup>

\* conceived of as a Prospectus for your Parallel School, addressing some of the comments from the design final review jury by revising or adding drawings, photographing models etc.

*Students selected for this studio should come to class on **June 1st with** your portfolio (for us to understand your educational background), and graphic information about your previous architecture school (for the first research exercise).*

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## STUDIO SCHEDULE

**VERSION 05/30/17, TO BE UPDATED AS NEEDED.**

### Week 0

6/1

First class: Students introduce your own undergraduate architecture school, with drawings, images and anecdotes. Research and readings assigned.

### Week 1

6/1 – 6/8

#### RESEARCH: Architecture schools

Assigned 6/1; Pin-up 6/8

- a) Choose one or more of the following precedents (architecture school *building and program*)
- Architectural Association, Bedford Square, London
  - TU Delft + BK City, MVRDV and others, Delft
  - The Bartlett, Wates House (recently renovated by Hawkins/Brown), London
  - Confluences, Odile Decq, Lyon
  - Cooper Union/41 Cooper Square, Frederick A. Peterson/Morphosis, New York
  - Cornell, OMA + others, NY
  - Daniels School of Architecture, NADAA, Toronto
  - FAU, Villanova Artigas, Sao Paulo
  - GSAPP/Avery Hall, McKim, Meade & White, New York
  - GSD, John Andrews, Cambridge, MA
  - Illinois Institute of Technology, Mies Van der Rohe, Chicago
  - SCI-ARC, Gary Paige Studio, Los Angeles
  - Strelka Institute, OMA/AMO, Moscow
  - Universita della Svizzera italiana, Amr Soliman and Patrik Zurkirchen, Luigi Fontana, Mendrisio
  - Yale, Paul Rudolph, New Haven

In pairs of 2, analyze and diagram (ie. re-draw in your own graphics):

- Degree programs structure & organization: departments, disciplines, research labs, number of students per department or degree program with a primary focus on one precedent, plus others depending on the framework of your analysis.
- General building size and relation to site.
- Building areas and organization: classrooms, labs, workshops, auditoria / lecture halls; administration; library, support spaces.
- Identify a space type and/or architectural element / armature that is essential to shaping the educational environment and modes of interacting (skylight, ramp, stair, balcony, desk, pin-up board, facade).

These analytical drawings will follow a studio graphic template, with the goal of uniting visual representation across a diverse range of precedents. It is essential that all graphics are redrawn – no copying/pasting of research materials.

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***Pin-up: Thursday. 6/8***

Deliverables: PPT/PDF presentation comprised of 11x17 sheet layouts. Each sheet should clearly identify a theme or aspect of the precedent. Presentation will be both digital (projected) and pinned up.

**Week 2: PROTO-SCHOOL**  
6/8 – 6/15 Assigned 6/8; Pin-up 6/15

Within a pre-determined dimensions (to be assigned), build a series of iterative physical models that test ideas about the spatial structure of your proto\*-school. You will be working within an abstract volumetric region (you could think of it as a potentially infinitely sized building, or a corner of a building, etc). You may \* proto = not yet/before, almost, ie, a diagrammatic conceptual model that is internally coherent, and does not attempt to “solve” all design problems. To be further discussed in studio.

***Pin-up: Thursday. 6/15***

Deliverables: models, photographs of your models taken with varying light sources, and sketches.

**Week 3: PARALLEL SCHOOL**  
6/19 – 6/22 Assigned 6/15; Pin-up 6/26

On 6/15 we will conduct a mini-lottery. Students will indicate your order of preference for a series of hypothetical sites and volumetric envelopes based on prominent schools of architecture in the US. You will work on the design of your Parallel School with a primary focus on physical models, supplemented by 3d and 2d drawings.

***Pin-up: Thursday. 6/26***

**Week 4: Development**  
6/26 – 6/29 Assigned 6/26

Develop your design with primary focus on drawings, towards a pre-midterm submission.

**Week 5: Pre Mid-Term Submission**  
7/3 – 7/6 Note: EB/MH out this week. Pre-midterm submission (emailed pdf): Wed 7/5.

***Pin-up: Thursday. 7/5 (with SC; email pdfs to EB/MH)***

**Week 6: MID-TERM REVIEW**

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**7/10-7/13**

**MIDTERM 7/10**  
Desk Crits 7/12, 7/13

**Week 7: Development**  
7/17 – 7/20 EB/MH out

Desk crits with SC; email progress pdfs to EB/MH 7/19 for email and/or Skype feedback.

**Week 8: Development**  
7/24 – 7/27

Desk crits with EB or MH 7/24; desk crits with SC 7/26, 7/27

**Week 9: DESIGN FINAL REVIEW**  
7/31-8/4

Desk Crits 7/31  
**FINAL REVIEW 8/3**

**STUDENT PARALLEL SCHOOL BOOKLET SUBMISSION: Tuesday. 8/8**

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