

## Session A Overview

*“Attack current conditions in a manner that will change them.”*

*- Siegfried Kracauer*

*“It’s easy to say we need recyclable, sustainable technologies, old and new—pottery making, bricklaying, sewing, weaving, carpentry, plumbing, solar power, farming, IT devices, whatever. But here, in the midst of our orgy of being lords of creating, texting as we drive, it’s hard to put down the smartphone and stop looking for the next technofix. Changing our minds is going to be a big change. To use the world well, to be able to stop wasting it and our time in it, we need to relearn our being in it...”*

*-Ursula K. Le Guinn, Deep in Admiration (2017)*

This semester we will collaborate with the UNI Project ([www.theuniproject.org](http://www.theuniproject.org))—a non-profit that creates learning environments in public spaces across New York City—to design, build, deploy, test and defend a 1:1 scale prototype intervention intended to facilitate interactive participation in public life.

How we build, how things are made and for whom, reflects the social, economic, and political values of a community. We have the opportunity to help shape those values in our own neighborhoods. Here, on the street, New York’s key urban questions can be explored and tested. This is where in the words of Michael Sorkin, cities are “distribution engines”, separating bodies and power in to distinct tranches, which require a constant vigilance to break down these spatial inequalities in an endless struggle to maintain free, open space that is accessible to all. We’re now living through the broken failures of neoliberal urban planning, where public

benefit has been surrendered in deference to a developer's personal gain. However, with tactical precision, we will apply ourselves to subverting the systemic decisions that have led us to this point, in an attempt to provide an alternate path forward. We can prove that things, ideas, installations can exist in public space only for delight, outside of market forces.

We will begin with Henri Lefebvre's assertion for a shared "right to the city", an essential reading of the urban experience against the privileged inertia of entrenched power, in which a pluralistic collection of citizens must collectively create their city. The temporary activations and assemblages that we develop can lead the way toward an urban environment that provides for the many. In this way, our work should by its own definition be critical, it should merge the social, physical, and experiential, and acknowledge the political ramifications behind architecture and planning in 2018's America.

This course seeks to assert the relevance of the design and fabrication skills at our disposal as potentialities for increased relevance. Through the re-appropriation and re-imagining of existing urban conditions, the student will harness their entrepreneurial spirit to design and fabricate a working prototype that embraces the messy reality of New York. The student will begin by identifying a quality of the urban condition that includes the latent capability for engagement and work toward fabricating an adaptive, responsive and environmentally viable solution. Specific emphasis will be placed on testing and exploring through hands on research the possibilities of detailing and fabricating using unorthodox materials. Formulating a strong guiding thesis idea will be essential to the project's success, but the core challenge for the student will be converting a

strong idea into physical reality, something to be observed, tested and documented.

## Session A Goals

By attempting to capture a broader audience for architectural interventions, a number of questions present themselves and the student will be challenged to anticipate possible eventualities—how will it be used? How can we quickly imbue meaning in our work? How do we engage with different communities? How do we collaborate with outside groups? Fabrication will be considered less from a formal quality, and more from a use, durability, improvisation and public participation viewpoint.

Ultimately the student will come out of the course with a healthy respect for two core concepts: Firstly, an increased skill in the use and applicability of the fabrication skills we have at our disposal for solving design issues using unorthodox materials in unconventional settings; and two, that there is an opportunity for architects to regain lost relevance by inserting themselves through unsolicited proposals into the public consciousness as stewards of urban well-being.

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## Session B Overview

What can architecture accomplish? Is it merely the competent combination of a client's given program, site, and budget? Are we merely the credentialed executors of

assignments? Or worse yet, is society at a point in which it no longer expects anything from us? Do we now have the courage to leave the safety of the assignment and transform ourselves into entrepreneurs and producers? Our goal will be to reclaim the mantle of empowerment. We will form new alliances with groups outside of the architectural aficionado, and imbue our work with dignity and worth to appeal to the non-architect, the average citizen, the neighbor.

Building off the skills and experience gained in the first half of the class, this second session will look deeper into the possibilities of public fabrications to functionally alter everyday urban encounters. What do common materials mean to people? What impact can form have on the reading of a project?

The goal will be to create a proposal for a mobile installation that can accommodate future progress and participation — a malleable first draft that allows a feedback loop with the neighborhood to give back and evolve together. We will push the notion that learning occurs through making, doing, and interactivity; while giving primary focus to the designing of experiences in lieu of objects. How can you engage with a pluralistic public to have them become a partner in your work? How does that experience become fun, easy, and understandable?

## Session B Goals

The temporary final intervention should give you an opportunity to upend the distinctions between public and private. You can temporarily disregard social hierarchies, and choreograph a temporary experience that provides for

alternative social encounters and shared urban encounters. New York is a palimpsest of change on top of change, but your temporary work should guide the permanent into more democratic, open, and acerbic directions.

You will learn to collaborate with outside groups, in a project for real people, re-defining notions of authorship in architectural work. You will explore new models of practice, and leave the course with an understanding of how your own form, program, and material assemblages can change urban experiences.

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I'll be updating this syllabus and schedule with additional assignment information, media, and links as we continue through the semester. Consider this a constantly evolving, living document. We will be using Slack for quick course communications, [please sign up here \(via your @columbia.edu email\)](#).

## Schedule

Session A (9/11–10/16)

Session B (10/23–11/27)

### *Week 01, 20180911 HtUE: INTRODUCTION*

We'll ease in to the semester with an introduction of the high level topics and goals for the course. We will critically engage with past work and position our own strategies for

interventions within the overall larger framework of public works in New York City.



Prior coursework from Chengliang Li and Jiayi Yi

## Reading:

- Jed Perl, “The Connoisseur of the Uncanny”, *The New York Review of Books*, November 2014 [Dropbox]
- Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. (Les Presse Du Reel, Franc; Les Presses Du Reel edition, 1998). Excerpt [Dropbox]
- Thomas de Monchaux, “[How Parks Lose Their Playfulness](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/22/opinion/parks-public-spaces-philanthropy.html),” New York Times, Sept. 22, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/22/opinion/parks-public-spaces-philanthropy.html> [online]

## Assignments:

- **Stranger Experience 01:** In parallel with other assignments, you will also engage in “Stranger Experiences” — a short series of interactions that will provide you with a deeper understanding of the role of spontaneous encounters to shape meaningful dialogue. This will include a meticulous observation of existing public spaces as well as talking and interacting with users of your work.
- **SE01: Without distraction, observe an urban space for no less than 30 minutes.**
- **SE01: See what others do not see. Where do you think the user’s came from? Why?**
- **SE01: Identify a behavior, strategy, habit, rule or object that is of value. Is there something to the design that promotes or deters interaction?**

- **SE01: What can we learn? Explore the space. Is it being used as intended?**
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- **Adaptive Experience 01:** Our first class assignment will use a LinkNYC kiosk as project site. You will be expected to explore the following topics with their installation, such as: Who is the target audience? What are the trade-offs each of us negotiate when occupying public space? Who owns them? Who owns the sidewalk? How do you make the invisible visible? New York is layered with history and meaning built on top of the old. Your work here will form a symbiotic relationship to the host, creating something new and greater than the sum of its parts.

## *Week 02, 20180918 HtUE: Who Owns Public Space I*

As city government cedes control of public works to “benevolent” billionaires or private-public partnerships, what does it mean when a city becomes a collection of viral moments? Public architecture proposals aim for crowdsourced funding, while neighborhood parks languish. What are existing strategies for creating public works in New York and how can architects and planners find opportunities here?



Renderings of Pier 55 by Heatherwick Studios, primarily funded by Barry Diller

## Reading:

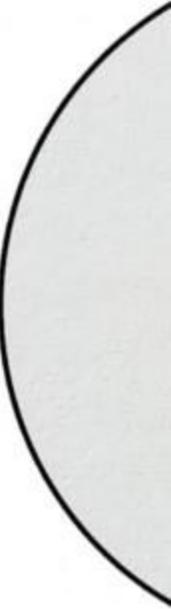
- John Dewey, “Having an Experience,” in *Art as an Experience*, New York, Capricorn Books, 1939. Excerpt “Having An Experience”. [Dropbox]

## *Week 03, 20180925 HtUE: Unsolicited Architecture*

This week we will be joined by Sam Davol, via [wikipedia](#): “the founder and executive director of [Boston Street Lab](#), a [non-profit organization](#) which creates programs for [public space](#). Notable among these is the Uni Project, founded by Sam and Leslie Davol, which brings mobile libraries and other educational programs to public urban spaces.”

Read more about the mission of the Uni Project at CityLab: <https://www.citylab.com/life/2017/04/what-being-a-rock-star-teaches-you-about-practical-urbanism/522714/>

We will also take a look at results from the first Adaptive Experience assignment.



“Transgression results in the enlargement of the accepted architectural domain.”  
from Office of Unsolicited Architecture

## Reading:

- Yes Loitering, “[Yes Sitting, Yes Skating, Yes Music,](https://urbanomnibus.net/2018/03/yes-sitting-yes-skating-yes-music/)”  
Urban Omnibus, March 08,  
2018, <https://urbanomnibus.net/2018/03/yes-sitting-yes-skating-yes-music/> [online]
- Ariel Aberg-Riger, “[What Is Loitering, Really?](https://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/05/what-is-loitering-really/560714/)”, City Lab,  
May 21,  
2018, <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/05/what-is-loitering-really/560714/> [online]

## Assignments:

- **Final Experiential Drawing:** Moving in to the second half of Session A, we will begin preparation for the final. The first component will be an 18x24 drawing that places your intervention amongst the overlapping and systemic spheres of influence present in urban space. These forces can be identified as originating out from user groups, the senescent quality of your installation, city government and regulations, land use speculations, capital and market forces, material progeny, project semiotics, etc. Like Archigram’s Instant City diagrams, we will explore how drawing can visually describe temporal, event-based work.
- **Final Material Mockup:** As we saw with our study of the uncanny, familiar objects in unfamiliar settings can simultaneously both attract and repel the viewer. How can we use that effect to build seemingly foreign installations that can still immediately communicate with a diverse populace? We will explore different materials

(unexpected, fun, commonplace, etc) and test how they could be used in a larger fabrication. We will review a proof of concept material test at the Session A final.

- Each group should take some time and explore a few of the sites provided by Sam. Get a first impression of the physical characteristics and the people that live, work, and play in the area. Think about the limitations imposed on you by the site, the designed trade-offs, and these initial questions of mobility. Start to think about “programs” or an idea to explore further. It’s ok if this has never existed before, because no one has ever done what you’re doing before. The next three weeks will go by fast, so now is a good time to get a head start.

### *Week 04, 20181002 HtUE: The Temporary City*

Through a variety of systems of control—some more subtle than others—the existing city reinforces spatial inequalities and social hierarchies. Temporary architecture has the capability to upend this old order and test new modes of urban experience. By this act, urban design becomes political and can speak to larger issues such as protest and social justice. This requires a re-assessment of the passive architectural practice to one of active engagement.

**NO L**  
**NO TR**

VIOLATORS  
TRESPASSING  
PREMISES

**NYC PO**

OWNERS  
PROSE  
FU

**NO BA**  
**NO CA**  
**NO PE**

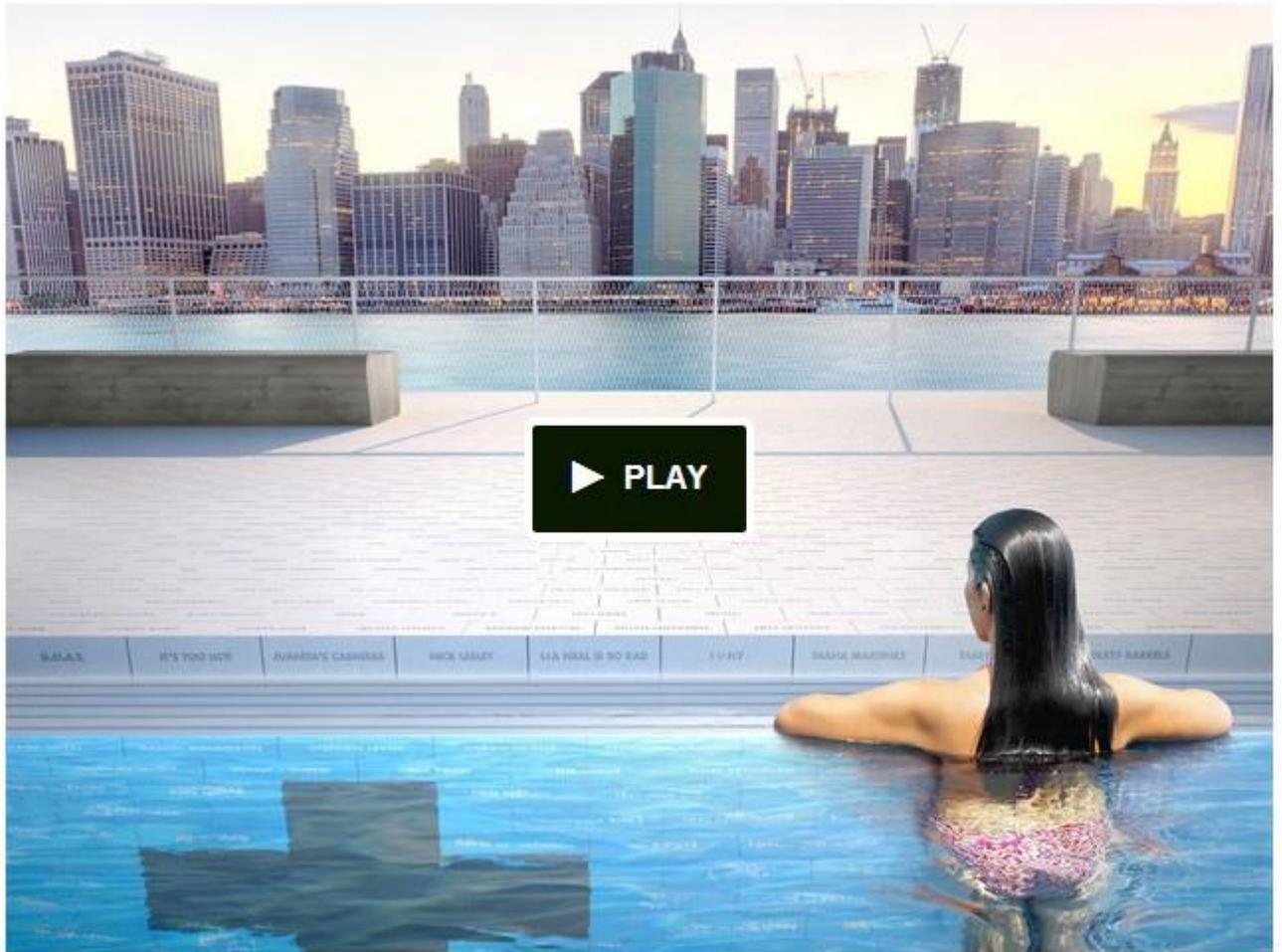
## Reading:

- Henri Lefebvre, “The Right to the City,” in *Writings on Cities*, Blackwell Publishing, 1996 [Dropbox]
- Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (New York : Random House, 1961). Excerpt Part 1, Chapter 2: “The Uses of the Sidewalks: Contact” [https://www.buurtwijis.nl/sites/default/files/buurtwijis/bestanden/jane\\_jacobs\\_the\\_death\\_and\\_life\\_of\\_great\\_american.pdf](https://www.buurtwijis.nl/sites/default/files/buurtwijis/bestanden/jane_jacobs_the_death_and_life_of_great_american.pdf) [online]

## *Week 05, 20181009 HtUE: Kickstarting the Brooklyn Bridge*

We will continue to review the notion of architecture without capitalism and architecture’s historic relationship with neoliberal trends in politics. This has constrained the profession, but it could be liberating for you, as we continue the discussion of collective modes of practice.

We will be continuing our discussion centering on how public space is owned and operated in New York City. We will look at the range of factors that brought about the private trusts and leaseholders that control much of the city’s public parks. While we do not have the money or institutional power behind us, by studying the myriad loopholes and gray areas behind public works, we can strategically use this ambiguity to our own advantage.



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from the +Pool Kickstarter page

## Reading:

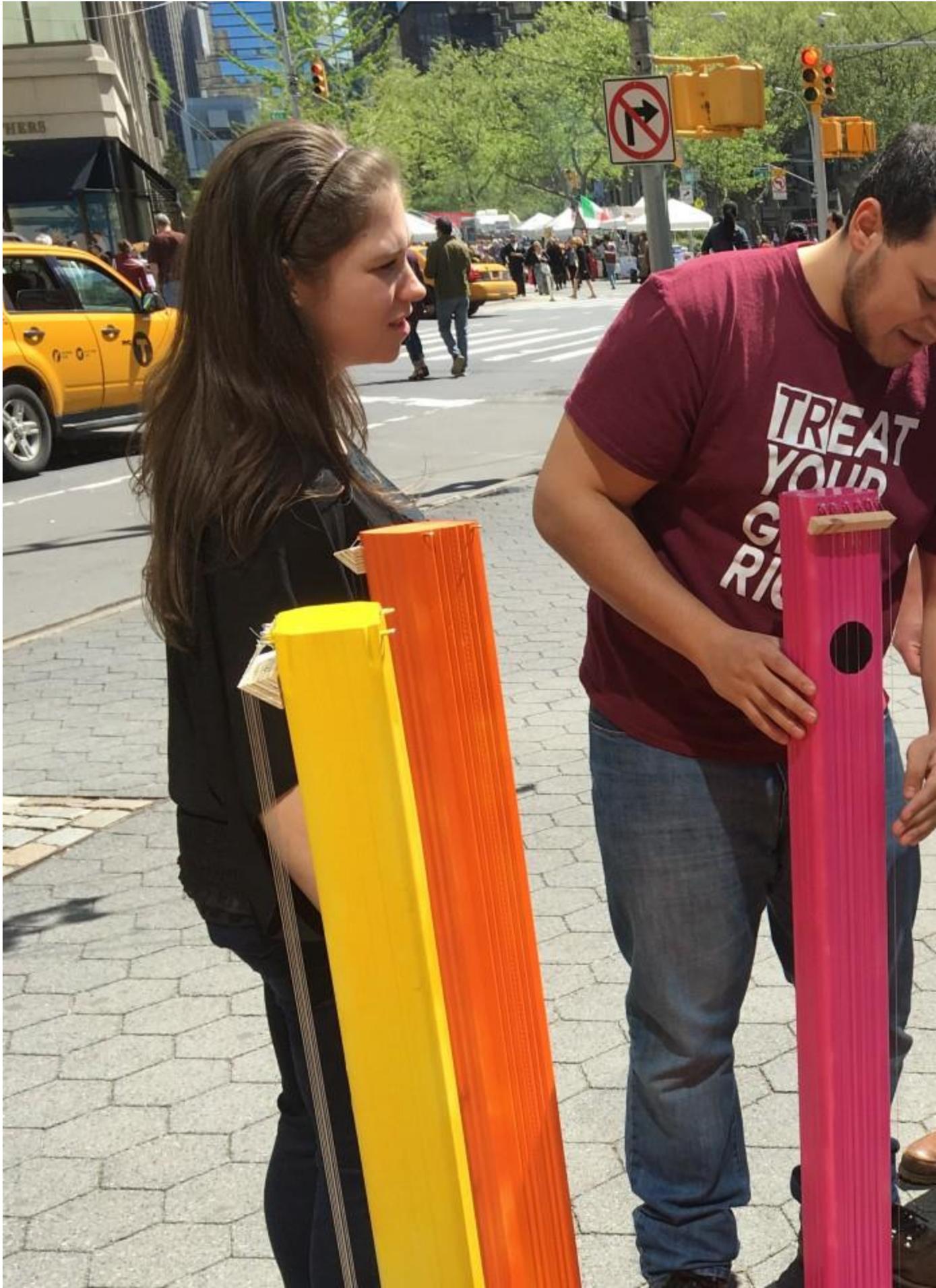
- Ant Farm, “Inflatocookbook”.  
1973. <https://alumni.media.mit.edu/~bcroy/inflato-splitpages-small.pdf>
- Ken Isaacs, “How to Build Your Own Structures”.  
1974. [http://letsremake.info/PDFs/k\\_isaacs.pdf](http://letsremake.info/PDFs/k_isaacs.pdf)

## Assignment:

- **Stranger Experience 03:** In many ways this is the most straightforward, but also the most challenging pursuit. Without the shared, common entry point of asking for directions, you will need to invent your own method for creating a street introduction. Before our Session A final, each group should describe your final proposal to at least one stranger at your chosen site. If any feedback is provided, share at our final. How you “describe” your proposal is up to you – is it verbal, visual, etc.?

*Week 06, 20181016 HtUE: Who Owns Public Space II*

We will begin this class with a hands-on demonstration of a material’s capability to quickly create new types of space.



Previous coursework

## **Reading:**

- Alexandra Lange, “[Against Kickstarter Urbanism](https://designobserver.com/feature/against-kickstarter-urbanism/34008/),” Design Observer, May 2, 2012, <https://designobserver.com/feature/against-kickstarter-urbanism/34008/> [online]
- Adam Greenfield, *Against the smart city (The city is here for you to use Book 1)*, (Do projects; 1.3 edition, December 20, 2013). Excerpt [Dropbox]

## *Session A, Final, 20181020*

An informal session to review progress and discuss ideas raised by your work.

Final Deliverables:

- 1:1 Material Prototype
- Large Format Experiential Drawing

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## *Week 07, 20181023 HtUE: Democratic Materials*

### **Topics:**

- Review project programs from Session A
- Select path to move forward
- Session B Mobility Program review with Uni Project

### **Reading:**

- Allyn Gaestel, “[Things Fall Apart](https://magazine.atavist.com/things-fall-apart-makoko-floating-school),” The Atavist Magazine N<sup>o</sup>76, 2017, <https://magazine.atavist.com/things-fall-apart-makoko-floating-school>[online]
- Marc Dessauce, *The Inflatable Moment: Pneumatics and Protest in '68*, Princeton Architectural Press; 1 edition (September 20, 1999), Excerpt [Dropbox]
- Georg Simmel, “[The Adventure](http://condor.depaul.edu/dweinste/theory/adventure.html),” *Phiosophische Kultur. Gesammelte Essays*(Leipzig: Alfred Kroner, 1919)  
Translated by David Kettler, <http://condor.depaul.edu/dweinste/theory/adventure.html> [online]
- Frederick Engels, “[The Housing Question](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx%20The%20Housing%20Question.pdf)”, (1887 Preface to the Second German Edition) [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx The Housing Question.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx%20The%20Housing%20Question.pdf) [online]

## *Week 08, 20181030 HtUE: Lightweight Urbanism*

### **Topics:**

- “Mobility” as a driving force
- Alternate programs in public space
- Designing or social interaction
- Designing for temporary use

### **Reading:**

- William Whyte, *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, Project for Public Spaces; (March 1, 2001), Excerpt [Dropbox]
- Smith, Philip, Timothy L. Phillips, and Ryan D. King, *Incivility: The rude stranger in everyday*

*life*. Cambridge University Press; 1 edition (October 11, 2010), Excerpt [Dropbox]

- Annette Miae Kim, *Sidewalk City: Remapping Public Space in Ho Chi Minh City*. University of Chicago Press; 1 edition (May 27, 2015), Excerpt “Chpt 1: Seen and Unseen: Ho Chi Minh’s Sidewalk Life” [Dropbox]

## *Week 09, 20181106 HtUE: Holiday, No Class*

Vote! (and continue with final install progress)

## *Week 10, 20181113 HtUE: Living in the Nomadic City*

### **Topics:**

- Finalize project site and program
- Engage with neighborhood groups and users
- Introduce Stranger Experience 3
- Continue material fabrication

### **Reading:**

- B.G.M. de Waal, *The City as Interface: How New Media Are Changing the City (Reflect)*, nai010 publishers (August 31, 2014). Excerpt [Dropbox]
- Arjen Oosterman, *Volume 14: Unsolicited Architecture*, (“Bootleg PDF Version”), January, 2008. Excerpt [Dropbox]
- Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Oxford University Press; 1st edition (October 25, 2007). Excerpt [Dropbox]

## *Week 11, 20181120 HtUE: Resist the Smart City*

### **Topics:**

- Continue installation build
- Review schedule
- Material workshop and fabrication assistance

### Reading:

- Douglas Spencer, *The Architecture of Neoliberalism: How Contemporary Architecture Became An Instrument for Control and Compliance*, Bloomsbury Academic; 1 edition (October 20, 2016). Excerpt, “Chpt 6: Neoliberalism and Affect: Architecture and the Patterning of Experience” [Dropbox]
- Rory Hyde, *Future Practice: Conversations from the Edge of Architecture*, Routledge; (October 11, 2012). Excerpt, “Chpt 12: The New Amsterdam School: DUS Architects”

## *Week 12, 20181127 HtUE: Active and Engaged Citizens*

“Number one: Architecture by doing is architectural beta testing.”

-*DUS Architects*, *Momentary Manifesto* (2013)

### **Topics:**

- Review Intervention on Site
- Test Run
- Choreograph final activation with Uni Project

*Date and Location TK\_Session B Final Review*

**Final Deliverables:**

- Activated installation with Uni Project
- Final Stranger Experience