

Each year, students in their final studio of the BS in Architecture degree participate in the Wallenberg Studio, which honors the legacy of one of our College's most renowned alumni. Through an overall theme focused on a broad humanitarian concerns and explored through propositions put forward by studio section faculty, students explore the transformative power of architecture. This year's Wallenberg Studio theme is:

TRANSITION

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W23



Ernst Haeckel, *Art Forms in Nature*, Plate 83, Lichenes, 1904

In the contemporary landscape of architectural theory and practice, the concept of 'transition' emerges not merely as a temporal intermediary or a fleeting phase, but as a productive interrogation of spatial, cultural and temporal constructs. When we speak of the transitional, we are delving into a realm that challenges architectural dogmas, dismantling binary oppositions such as permanence versus ephemerality, or stability versus flux.

For the Wallenberg Studio's Winter 2024 theme 'Transition' is positioned not as a remedy for contemporary architectural challenges but as a lens—dense, multifaceted, and refractive. It urges a rigorous engagement with adaptive architectural strategies, rapid prototyping, the affordable housing crisis, societal metamorphoses, climate change, phenomenology of transience, and nomadism in the anthropogenic era. Additionally, it opens a dialogue with energy transitions, expanded to encompass human energy and power.

Such transitions, when held against the backdrop of our epoch—marked by environmental precarity, industrial degradation, escalating authoritarianism, and the equivocal ascent of computation and artificial intelligence—necessitate a discerning, critical approach. More than catalysts; they are decisive junctures prompting a reevaluation of architectural practices. In this context, architects aren't merely problem solvers but deep thinkers, contemplative practitioners situated at the crossroads of what's anticipated and what's yet to unfold.

Architectural examples, from the work of Patrick Bouchain and Loïc Julien to the interventions of MUF Architects, Francis Kéré, and Laurie Baker, provide critical anchors rather than prescriptive models. Their works disrupt the hegemony of the heroic architect, suggesting a more collaborative, dialogic, and perhaps even agonistic approach. In their work, the architect's role is reconfigured: less an autocrat, more a mediator; less a master-builder, more an active interlocutor, co-navigating the contested terrains of the built environment.

Each studio will independently dive into the tangible and conceptual layers of the "transitional"—a term anchored in its Latin origins, hinting at journeys, gateways, and in-between spaces. As the transitional, with its myriad interplays of evolution, retreat, and possible progress, prompts a dialogue with the diverse speculative futures that lie ahead, the studios will establish distinct yet intersecting conversations sparked through cross studio programming and workshops, including:

Constancy & Flux: Addressing the relations between ephemeral and lasting practices.

Analogue & Digital: Blending modes of representation to engage in tactical public discourse

Past & Present: Identifying the zeitgeist of our age and the role of architecture in reflecting and interacting with dynamic socio-cultural transformations.

At core, the transitional, as a conceptual scaffold, destabilizes conventional architectural expectations. Neither harbinger of the novel nor a nostalgic ode to the past, it demands a dialectical engagement where processes and endpoints converge, inviting to face the tangible yet transient essence of its discipline.

Course Sections

Zain AbuSeir | zaina@umich.edu

Suspended in Unsettled Sites

Olaia Chivite Amigo | olaia@umich.edu

Trace

Stratton Coffman | stratt@umich.edu

Dirty Work: Designing for Leaky Bodies in a Toxic World

Dawn Gilpin | dgilpin@umich.edu

Terra

Gina Reichert | reginare@umich.edu

Above & Below: Energy, Identity & Power in Appalachia

Anya Sirota | sirota@akoaki.com (coordinator)

Acts of Dissent

Studio Meets: Mon, Wed, Fri 1:00-5:00pm
Balloting: Wed, November 29, 2023