

Studio Professor

**Henri T. de HAHN**

Studio: TBA  
MWF 1:25 – 5:15pm

Teaching: Face to face and occasional Zoom  
teaching (or per VT)

Seminars: TBD

Office hours: MWF 11:00 – 12:00 or by  
appointment

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Collage Photography: Henri T. de Hahn

## INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

*“...What are the relationships between ideas and architecture? Can an authentic and meaningful architecture be developed in our current pluralistic context? How can architecture help us to form an understanding of our cultural context? It is in a context of inquiry that discourse can best be carried out, a questioning before criticism, concerning ideas that establish the foundations of judgments and products in our civilization. Architecture forms a vital part of human culture, and thus we are concerned with the development of architectural ideas, by examining the relationships between architectural intentions and implementations, we may come to a more comprehensive understanding of meaning in architecture and architectural thought...”*

ARCHITECTURE AND ABSTRACTION  
Introduction to Pratt Journal of Architecture

## COURSE CONTENT

In a M. Arch 2 curriculum such as ours, it is assumed that graduate students enter the program with strong foundational design skills in order to engage, to expand to integrate a growing number of complex issues. These issues generally revolve around a variety of architectural, site, structural, technical, philosophical and ethical positions. For me, the building on those positions, is about the “design of space” or “the setting in space” of architectural themes, topics that might be the most important didactic objective in the design studio sequence.

Equally important is to learn how to “conceive a meaningful architectural space” and “build it by giving it physicality;” it is a process, which involves an acute sense of creativity and discipline both at the intuitive and rational levels of design. To learn how to “conceive architecture” is part of a larger question surrounding concepts pertaining to the body of history and theory and are most critical in your journey in the *education of an architect*. To follow this approach means to understand the culture and references surrounding the discipline of architecture. You will be asked to underscore your projects with a deep sense of understanding of architecture.

## **DIDACTIC INTENTIONS**

This first design studio at the M. Arch2 level is tailored to immerse you immediately into complex, self-reflective and autobiographical stands that will enable you to pursue an urban architecture of excellence. Regardless of any design studio level I mentor, I emphasize the trilogy of a **program**, a **function**, and a **usage**; all of which are associated with a **site**, a **structural** system, and sense of **materiality** through appropriate construction and detailing. And while it is important to point out that the *practice* of these topics (program, function and usage) does not constitute the sole purpose of architecture, I believe that they will always exist to create and support something meaningful in architecture.

This proposed approach is to allow you hone your ideas in order to set your project on new complex footings for the advancement of your creativity. All of this to a great extent, and beyond the didactic intentions, is a matter of taste—your sensibility concerning what seems conceptually and perceptually right!

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

During this fall semester, charettes and exercises will favor process without jeopardizing your personal intellectual, aesthetic (formal) and philosophical pursuits. I reserve the right to question the above topics for the sole purpose of understanding your stand and vision. The idea of modern space—its principles, its innovations, and promises—is by now a historical movement. For the purpose of understanding this legacy, you will be asked to contextualize and understand the meaning of contemporary space. In this overall concept, I propose to approach this strategy as follows:

### **Interdisciplinary approach**

Importance will be placed on an approach to architecture based on a inter-disciplinary connection with other design and art disciplines. This approach reaffirms both the College's interest in the student's humanistic education to become an architect, and the ever-evolving nature of our profession that offers rich alternative paths. Either way, it is imperative to recognize and cultivate a holistic approach to the learning of architecture as a necessary part of the student's creativity. Each of you will be encouraged to initiate, develop and strengthen your design process by incorporating new viewpoints, reactions and circumstances to what you already know.

### **Thinking skills**

The design studio will be conducted as an exploration of architectural themes through a way of looking at the world. This sense of observation (and not simply seeing or looking), will lead toward the need for interpretation and vision, and will be based on the choice of your process and overall strategy.

### **Representational skills**

By this time, you already own a basic design process and analog and digital representational skills that enable you to communicate ideas and thoughts graphically and verbally. Yet, we will pursue the limits of what you think may be possible, necessary and desirable in today's climate of a heightened visual sensitivity, often to a fault of overload.

## **FALL STUDIO PROJECTS:**

This fall's studio projects will focus on a rapid sketching charette, a two-week courtyard house, a week section project and an eleven-week robust project of a hybrid building type. Again, the projects are rapid and long but demanding and complex in order to test and hone your skills in a meaningful and professional manner that, for me, is the richness of the best produced architecture.

As Montesquieu, French 17<sup>th</sup> century author and philosopher so eloquently state:

**“The distinguishing feature of great beauty is that first it should surprise to an indifferent degree, which, continuing and then augmenting, is finally changed to wonder and admiration.”**

### **STUDIO LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of the year the students will have acquired the following:

1. How do you raise the problem of context: the integration of the project into a referential frame of intellectual coordinates?
2. How do you raise the problem of the significance of your answer to the project: connections that will be defined by the author's affinities (decisions that are the result of qualitative and quantitative forces)?
3. How do you raise the problem of history and memory: the establishment of potential meanings for the project through systems of analogies?
4. How do you raise the significance of form versus geometry: ontological (nature of being) and epistemological (nature of knowledge) questions?
5. How do you raise the problem of detailing and dimensioning: a *sine qua non* condition of the act of building?

By the end of the fall semester, students will have acquired the following:

1. Awareness of the potential of an architecture in search of poetry, differentiating building from architecture;
2. Mastering what constitutes an idea, a concept, a partie, and a design strategy;
3. Ability to develop elegant programs based on a set of complex and dissonant functional requirements;
4. Furthering of their ability to attribute to a project a clear set of theoretical premises and defined strategies;
5. And an authentic and autobiographical sense of designing their project.