

# COMPETITIONS ARE FOR HORSES NOT ARTISTS

- Béla Bartók, composer

## EDITOR'S NOTE

In late August, I found myself hunched over a small pool—my shoes and hands caked in acrid mud—with a group of volunteers attempting to rescue salamanders from an evaporating bog in the humid backcountry of North Carolina. Far from the palm-wringing anxiety of a summer competition deadline, it seemed like a poignant time to take stock of this system which we as architects have all participated in or at least observed. An analysis of the historical arc and the various incarnations of the competition model reveals a volatile terrain of astounding successes and failures in terms of both ideas

developed and efficacy of the associated labor. Canonical competitions such as the 1982 Parc de la Villette and 1922 Chicago Tribune Tower serve as markers of intense theoretical and aesthetic discourse. Beliefs were at stake. Are such influential provocations present in today's submissions? This issue considers the medium of competitions, offers individual experiences, assigns personal value, evaluates the activity levels within the school, and demands that Paprika! readers consider their own positions within this debate.

## ON THE GROUND

In an August 21 New Yorker profile on DEAN STERN, writer IAN VOLNER suggested that as his architecture had moved from winking at the past to seeking to embody it, the Dean had moved from being a member of the "Grays" to being a "Black."

**9/3**  
"About 700 tons of sodium cyanide did in our site," said ALAN PLATTUS, explaining the China studio's eleventh hour shift of site from Tianjin to Beijing. The studio is approaching the new site with a series of urban analyses.

The MARION WEISS ('84) and MICHAEL MANFREDI studio is working with "Brangelinas": that is, mashups of precedent campus plans designed to uncover new programming potentials.

After an all-too-real discussion of bricks and Hardie board, the SARA CAPLES ('74) and EVERARDO JEFFERSON ('73) studio has begun site research with a focus on technical issues.

The first question of the year at the JONATHAN ROSE (B.A. '74) lecture, "Design like you give a damn": "What is an example of when you should design like you do not give a damn?" The New York developer replied that you need to discover what is important to you, then pursue that.

ELIA ZENGHELIS' studio heard first-hand stories of the AA's marijuana-infused culture of the late 60s, where first year student REM KOOLHAAS was instructed to "pull his socks up." The studio's first assignment is to create "image manifestos" to explore program and public space.

Setting the mood for their Scottish observatories, SUNIL BALD's studio begins with four drawings of spheres and darkness. Many in the studio are quite literally in the Stone Age, researching Neolithic constructions for contemplating the cosmos. Some are even clicking around dark rooms to embody the ultimately engaged space lunatic aficionado, the bat.

Led for the second year by JOYCE HSIANG (B.A. '99, M.Arch '03), the first years commence by designing a study to fit in a 24' cube. Said MICHAEL SZIVOS of the rapid three week timeline, "if you have a problem with the time span for the first project, just go to the bar, have some drinks and complain about it to each other."

Also for the second year, for their studio the Second Years will design an architecture school, but this year at Kean State. Splitting up into groups to conduct site analysis and precedent studies, studio head EMILY ABRUZZO's analyzes the philosophy and pedagogy of MICHAEL GRAVES, in whose honor the school was founded.

**9/4**  
"The person who relished the bombing of Berlin was Hitler, the people who relished the bombing of London were modernists. America didn't get bombed, so we bombed ourselves, we called it urban renewal," said the Dean on the opening of his seminar, Parallel Moderns.

"The battlefield is littered with famous designers who never got built for various sundry reasons," intoned PHIL BERNSTEIN, at the beginning of his required course for third year master students.

WES HIATT (M.Arch '17) concluded his tenure as 6on7's m.c. with, "Drink Like you Give a Damn," a production involving multiple videos projected onto the corduroy. AMANDA IGLESIAS (M.Arch '18) will be this year's 6on7 coordinator.

**9/9**  
JASON MCLENNAN, architect, winner of the Buckminster Fuller Prize, Ashoka Fellow, and founder of the Living Building Challenge, presented his sustainable philosophy at the Divinity School, where he and one other consultant will be designing a "living building" residential community to replace the Canner Street apartments. Practicing what he billed as "the world's most stringent green building standard," McLennan said that whereas they were open to "all different aesthetic paradigms," what made his buildings "radical" was that they actually harvest more electricity, water, etc, than they consume: "Different from the way design used to - still - occurs." Possibly the largest residential building project on campus since the Dean's new colleges, the Divinity School will have designs by January, at which point they will start fundraising. Professedly uninterested in what our school of architecture has to offer, his client, Divinity School Dean Greg Sterling, wants to make a statement with the new building program. Sadly, our school could not take note: the presentation was at Wednesday lunch, a period occupied by mandatory curriculum in the first and second year. The second years were, ironically, in Environmental Design.

Said DEAN STERN, regarding the hour and a half free period the School of Management maintains around lunch so as to encourage event attendance and student activities, "If they can't manage their time, what else can they do over there?"

The Art School plied pbr and paper hats at their reception for the closing of their second year show, which will be up through the weekend.

During PHIL BERNSTEIN's special session of Professional Practice course, when given the choice between A and B, 7% of the students chose G.

AMANDA IGLESIAS, DIMITRI BRAND, ISABELLE SONG, and JAMES COLEMAN, (all M.Arch '18), will be editing Retrospecta 2015-16.

**Corrections:**  
In the 9/3 Fold of Paprika, several alumni, Caples and Jefferson among them, were listed as graduating with M.Arch II degrees. There is no such degree, students in the M.Arch I and II programs both receive a Master upon graduation. Moreover, Ed Mitchell was listed among the professors taking a sabbatical this semester: he is not.

Please send submissions, suggestions, and other inquiries to paprika.ysoa@gmail.com

## FEATURES

### A FLEXIBLE KINK FRINGE THROUGH MERCURIAL WINDOWS

by Daniel Glick-Unterman (M.Arch 17)

**Project Team:** Martin Elliot (M.Arch YEAR?, MIT), Chad Schram (M.Arch YEAR?, University of Michigan) and Daniel Glick-Unterman (M.Arch 17),  
**Competition:** ARCHmedium's Detroit Station for the Arts  
**Brief:** Re-design Detroit's Michigan Central Station. The station is one of the most prolific ruins in Detroit and has the most broken windows of any building in the city.

The priorities of our work in this competition were to contextualize an emerging collective body of research on Detroit; to execute highly specific operations within experimental representation; and to test the capacity of a remote co-production of work. We were not looking for fame or fortune, but saw the competition brief as a context of value systems that were up for debate. The common thread between these motives is emphasis on 'how' to work rather than 'what' the competition asked for.

Our research informed an expansion of the ethical frameworks of practice, enabling us to look beneath the surfaces of situations to uncover hidden agendas and agents, and thereby to reconsider what was at stake within the work.

Three precedents rode shotgun: Luigi Pirandello's '6 Characters in Search of an Author', Rene Magritte's 'The Human Condition', and Richard Barnes' 'Animal Logics'. The final perspective drawing is both a proposal and a representation of a proposal, something like 'a painting in a gallery, of a painting in a gallery, overlooking a landscape'. The drawing stages the ethical-graining of the work within the space of the renovated atrium

of the Station, and also works as a format for viewing the site-plan, program diagram and other representations which have been installed on the walls of the atrium, and are co-produced by local Detroit workers.

Amongst the proposed mediations are: the cloning, modifying and relocating of several of Detroit's racially charged monuments, commissioning a large rug that is a map of Detroit to clad the floor of the atrium, then allocating a portion of the space to local seamsters that continuously update and repair the rug, the production of a robot of Henry Ford's pet dog to be built out of Jaguar engines, giving over a portion of the new Station to local craftsman, and incorporation of a new bike share system.

The competition served as a lens for us to see our work next to projects that were forced to play along with systems that constrain the imagination and limit what architects dare to work on. In this light, the work can ultimately function for us as a tool for the loosening of authority.

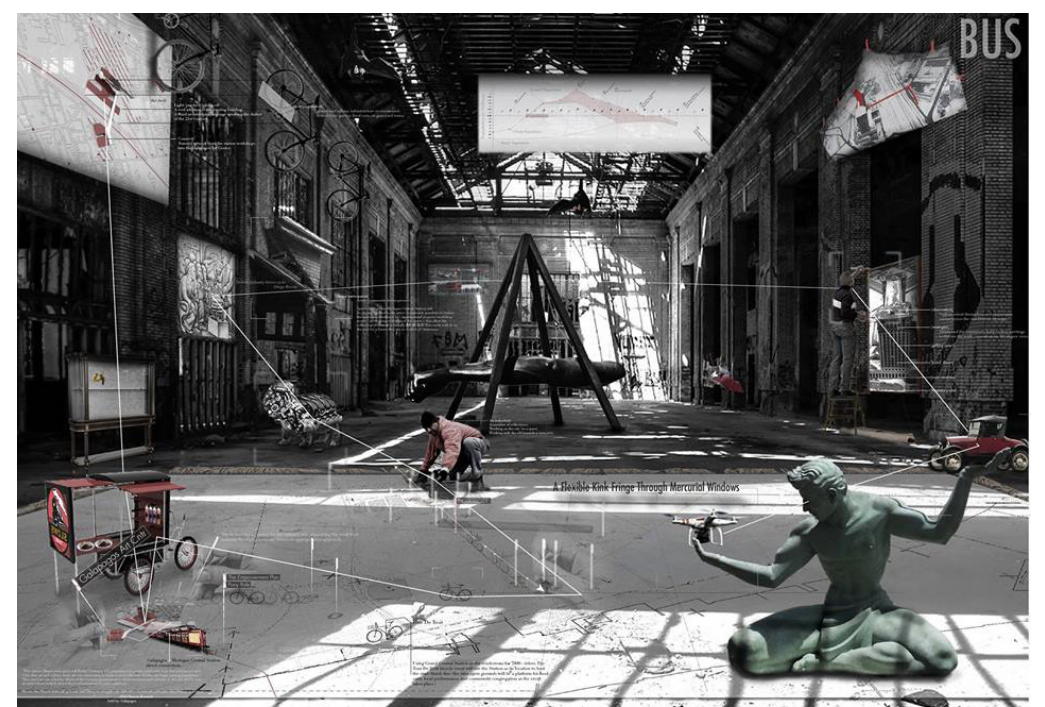
### "GUMBO"

by James Kehl (M.Arch '16)

**Project Team:** Xiao Wu (M.Arch/MBA '17) and Li Kehl (MBA '16), Phaelan Vaillancourt (MBA '16), and Emilio Ilac (MBA '16).  
**Competition:** Urban Land Institute's Hines Competition 2015  
**Brief:** masterplan for a site in Tremé, New Orleans.

Last semester, I participated in the Urban Land Institute's Hines competition—an annual contest that draws over a hundred interdisciplinary teams from American universities to propose creative solutions for the revitalization of urban neighborhoods. The competition's workload was immense.

*continued on back page*



*Peggy Deamer, Assistant Dean, architect, writer, and founder of the Architecture Lobby, took some time to answer questions before she began her sabbatical.*  
 PD:Peggy Deamer  
 CK:Charles Kane, M.Arch '16

**CK:** In your article for the Avery Review titled “The Guggenheim Helsinki Competition: What is the Value Proposition?” you clearly describe your argument but for those that haven’t read it, could you briefly outline your perception of the architectural competition format?

**PD:** It keeps us in a state of playing Russian roulette with our careers with the hope that the free labor we put into competitions will yield the big reward. It’s like gambling and architects shouldn’t base their business model on gambling. We live by that model too much that we could win the competition and become a Maya Lin. The hours that we put into competitions are hours that we throw away. If we were willing to put these hours into something more socially viable and a more visible contribution to the public realm it would do more for both us and the discipline of architecture. This group in London called Assemble, featured in the NY, st simply decided to do their own projects in public spaces. That is an example of transferring hours otherwise spent on competitions to something in the public realm.

**CK:** How have designers and competition organizers consciously or unconsciously contributed to this system?

**PD:** It is a bit of a chicken and egg situation. The competitions holders get press. It is not merely that they want the best design; they get all the media associated with the call for the competition, the stages for the competition, the announcement of the winners. All that is free press for them. It goes well beyond searching for the best design. In a lot of cases, the competition holders get ideas from people that weren’t the winners. For example, if they love the approach of a particular entry, then they simply ask the winners to incorporate this aspect. Therefore, ideas are given away for free. The competition sponsor has nothing to lose and everything to gain. It is worthwhile for them to feed the perception that they can make an architect’s career. Architects love this idea. They believe that even if I don’t win or I am a runner-up, at least it will be in the portfolio.

**CK:** So the sponsors receive free labor, free media coverage and distribute a nominal reward to the few winners.

**PD:** I think we know that the prize money received, never equals the amount spent on being a finalist. They are just crumbs that they throw out in order to indicate that the sponsors know the designers can’t do it for free. One positive thing I mention in the article that when you are working for a firm and you have no opportunity to stretch your own design work and aesthetic, it is important to keep that up. One of the saddest

things for talented people is that they can get lost in the firm. For example, if you want to apply for the Rome Prize, a teaching position or a grant, you don’t have any of your own work to show. So going into the competition knowing that this isn’t about winning, but I understand trying to keep your design muscles dexterous. However, I think it is still better to take your free labor and build or do it in the public realm; it doesn’t necessarily need to be a physical product.

**CK:** You quoted Derek Levitt’s list of “5 Things Architects Should Do Instead of Entering Open Competitions” and you wrote as subtext that architects should attend “community board meetings” or “go to your kid’s soccer game”. Could you elaborate on your point?

**PD:** That subtext was mostly to try to promote a work-life balance and emphasize that not everything has to be architecture related. You just need to be a human being. Be a good mother. Be a good father. Be a good co-op board member. I was trying to stretch his argument that advocates for a work-life balance.

**CK:** In the over 30 years between the Parc de la Villette Competition in 1982 and the recent Guggenheim Helsinki Competition of 2014, do you think that the opinion of these competitions from the perspective of designers and/or the general public has shifted?

**PD:** I do. This is not something that I have ever talked about with other people, so this is my personal. It used to be that design competitions really did give us insight into a changing parameter of architectural aesthetics. With Parc de la Villette, we were interested in what Bernard Tschumi would do—who came from critical theory and had written manifestos—and what an emerging OMA would do. I think there was real, genuine interest in defining architecture at the cutting edge as it was emerging from modernism. At this point, I think the aesthetic field has opened up so broadly, and it is so visible. We all know the capabilities of Rhino and the various computational tools so well that we don’t need to look to competitions to find it anymore. What we learn from competition entries now just seems uninteresting. Going through the Helsinki Competition, we can say “we know that trope, we know that trope”. There really was nothing new. It says something about the field of architecture. Maybe it is so open that avant-garde doesn’t need to come from formal virtuosity. It needs to come from somewhere else—besides formal dexterity.

**CK:** In your article, you mention Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of symbolic, social, and cultural capital and how they are absent from the current competition system. Do you think these concepts could be reincorporated into the competition structure or does one need to look towards other avenues to generate these alternative capitals?

**PD:** Interesting. I wasn’t implying that they

should. He is very critical of capitalism. Absolutely, I think we should all be more astute about how our free labor and contribution to the competition system works within in that. One thing that this article tries to do was to make people aware that the competition is not only about winning but also it is about a larger economic enterprise that has to do with cultural capitalism. We need to be aware of the Bourdieue discourse. In addition, I was trying to say that unlike him there is a possibility for cultural capitalism to work against capitalism—a rhizomatic, Deleuzian concept. I wanted to open up the stage to imply that within the framework there is the possibility of work that disrupts the capitalist system and that is worthwhile.

**CK:** Can we bring these lessons into the discipline and how?

**PD:** Yes. What would be considered avant-garde now isn’t formal dexterity; it is another model of practice (eg. Assemble). That is more interesting to me than the standard competition.

**CK:** You mentioned Assemble. What other groups or areas do see worth taking note of?

**PD:** In my head, I am spending a lot of time with the Architectural Lobby. We are trying to get student chapters and local chapters going. I believe that if you had an extra 40 hours, not spent on a competition, you could be protesting or exploring other models that allow architectural expertise to be deployed in more worthwhile places—an alternate way of contributing to the built world.

**CK:** Do you foresee any way to subvert or alter the competition format?

**PD:** It was interesting to see Michael Sorkin’s alternate competition to the Helsinki one. That is a positive result from the Helsinki competition. I see this as a positive model—an ideas competition without winners. That seems viable, but what paying institution would sponsor something like that? Who would say “we think we want a museum, but would be the consequences of bringing such an institution to a city like Helsinki?” That would be a cool competition and that was what Michael Sorkin was proposing.

**CK:** As emerging professionals, what can we do to change this system?

**PD:** You can approach it in terms of 40 hours. What do these 40 hours do for my career, as opposed to what happens if I win? You need to be much more strategic about the use of your time. Perhaps you want to put something in your portfolio. Say, you gather together five other people because you want to see how you work with these other people. If you want to start a firm with them, it’s a trial. The goal isn’t winning. How does this time further your career goals?

## SURVEYS

Please describe your experiences working on alternative projects and explain how they may or may not be incorporated into your professional career?

I volunteer for the Pennsport Civic Association in Philadelphia where I reside (outside of academic calendar). As a volunteer I sit on the Neighborhood Beautification Committee that is responsible for engaging with the community in several direct ways. Volunteering is a thankless experience but one which is endlessly rewarding and beneficial to ones professional and personal development.  
 - Anonymous, M.Arch '16

Please describe your experiences with competitions and your general feeling toward the competition model.

Competitions for real projects are god-given opportunities for young professionals who are trying to become established but lack built-work portfolio. The idea of competition is absolutely necessary to keep the industry motivated and forward-looking.  
 - Xiao Wu M.Arch/ MBA '17

How do you see competitions being incorporated into your professional career?

Somewhat like fast food. Every now and then.  
 - Justin Oh, M.Arch '16

*Marshall Brown, principal of Marshall Brown Projects, is an architect, urban designer, writer and educator based in Chicago.*  
 We caught him by phone as he walked the streets of Chicago.  
 MB: Marshall Brown  
 CK: Charles Kane, M.Arch '16

**CK:** You recently penned an open letter to the finalists of the Guggenheim Helsinki called “Endgame.” What inspired you to do this and what changed your opinion on competitions?

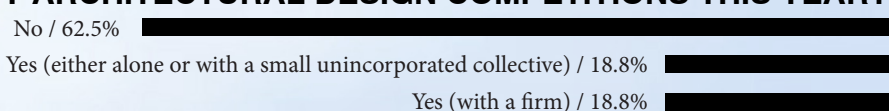
**MB:** I had been asked to speak at a conference held by the Harvard Graduate School of Design that focused on design competitions, and prior to that, I hadn’t been following the Guggenheim Helsinki Competition because I retired from competing a year and half ago when I wrote the essay [“Kick the Architecture Competition Habit”] in The Architect’s Newspaper. I had no interest in speaking about the competition and thought it was an interesting opportunity to start a conversation with my colleagues in the competition about the issues involved in competitions. Experience changed my mind about competitions. I have been practicing for 15 years, and I have participated in competitions ranging from small-scale ideas competitions to ultra-high end, big-budget public projects, such as the Navy Pier in Chicago. A series of less than positive experiences led me to the conclusion that the downside outweighed the possible upside.

**CK:** Proponents of the competition model argue that they are useful for generating ideas, expanding conceptual boundaries, gaining publicity and increasing exposure. How do you consider this argument?

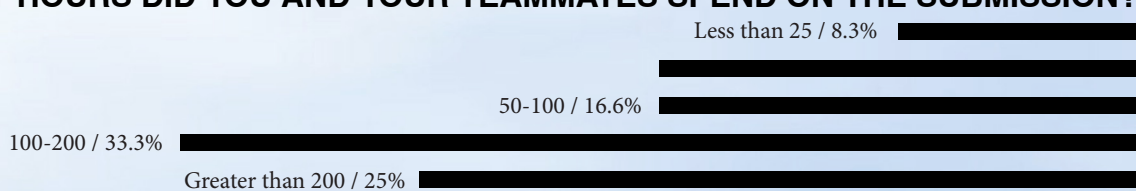
**MB:** When we talk about publicity and exposure, we need to ask the question “publicity and exposure” for who? The clients truly benefit from this. They learned that they could use design competitions for their projects—especially when fundraising needs to be done. When architects are all running to do this work for free and to generate all this imagery—which clients can publish—it is a very advantageous model for marketing. One interesting aspect about the conference at the GSD was that they invited clients to the discussion, and they didn’t deny any of this. That is what they like about competitions. They get a lot of work for a great price.

In terms of ideas, I think that the quality is highly debatable. In historical instances where competitions have brought groundbreaking projects into the world, those ideas were already generated before the competition. Bernard Tschumi’s winning entry for Parc de la Villette or James Corner at the High Line and Fresh Kills, those ideas were generated years in advance. This is the same for Libeskind in Berlin. Now we don’t have ideas being generated, we have spectacle being generated.

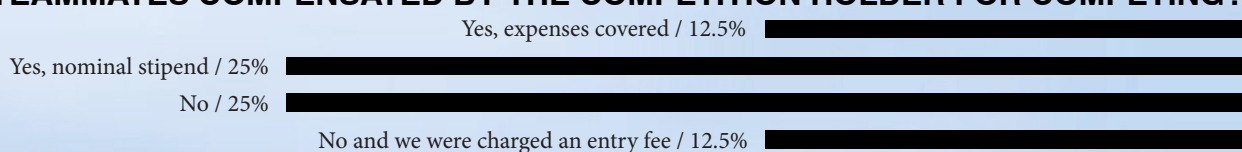
DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANY ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN COMPETITIONS THIS YEAR?



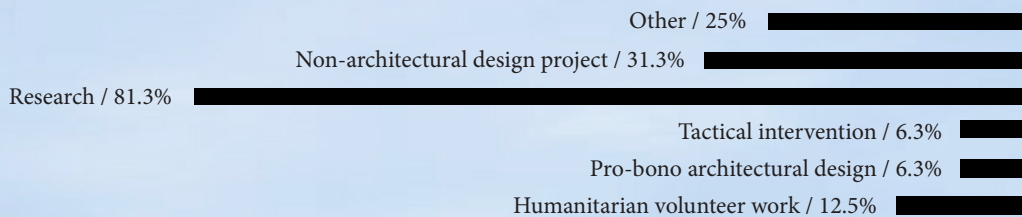
IF YOU DID PARTICIPATE, HOW MANY HOURS DID YOU AND YOUR TEAMMATES SPEND ON THE SUBMISSION?



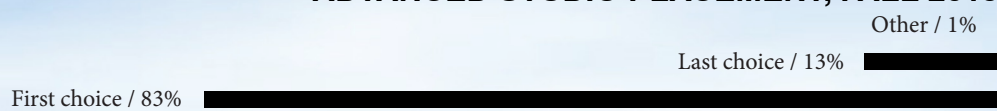
WERE YOU OR YOUR TEAMMATES COMPENSATED BY THE COMPETITION HOLDER FOR COMPETING?



IF YOU DID NOT ENTER COMPETITIONS DURING THE YEAR, DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ALTERNATIVES?



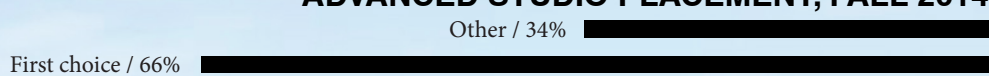
ADVANCED STUDIO PLACEMENT, FALL 2015



ADVANCED STUDIO PLACEMENT, SPRING 2015



ADVANCED STUDIO PLACEMENT, FALL 2014



ADVANCED STUDIO PLACEMENT, SPRING 2014



Participant comments/ concerns about the lottery process:

The show of hands was helpful but could be more streamlined. Maybe the questions could be sent out in advance for comments to the whole group so we can agree on a set? It seemed we spent a lot of time arguing about the questions being asked.  
- Clarissa Luwia, M.Arch '16

Observer comments/ concerns about the lottery process:

Bananas. -Anonymous M.Arch '17  
I don't understand why people don't just send in an honest ranking of their preferences and then M.Arch II's in their second or third advanced studio get placed first. It seems unnecessarily adversarial and divisive. - Jacqueline Hall, M.Arch '17

In particular, the quality of the ideas developed in the large-scale competitions is average at best—specifically where large firms are competing (ie the World Trade Center). What we need to understand is that when competitions get that large, the capital investment required for architects and the money involved has chilling effects on the degree to which architects are willing to take intellectual risks. When you are putting out hundreds of thousands of dollars, of course, you will be a little more conservative about the ideas you put on the table. That is a natural response, so it is questionable if these are the best ideas. If we were able to completely lay it on the table, the ideas are mediocre or average. The quality of images is extremely high, but I don't know if it extends much beyond that.

**CK:** In your mind, there must be an alternative to this system. What important works are being accomplished currently without the assistance of competitions and how are they being accomplished?

**MB:** We shouldn't need other people's permission to generate ideas. If we wanted to work for free, we could do that on our own. However, there are grants and research institutions. The University of Michigan heavily supports design research amongst their faculty. There are a multiplying number of architecture biennales around the world. There is the Graham Foundation's annual Grant Program, the Van Alen Institute, and there are residencies like the MacDowell Colony that support architects and give them space to work. There is no shortage of outlets to support speculative work in architecture and intellectual production in architecture, without exploiting designers. No one is denying the exploitative nature of competitions in architecture, but the excuse for participation is that there isn't another way. I think this a cynical attitude that is pervasive throughout the field.

**CK:** As emerging professionals, what can we do to change this system?

**MB:** Don't participate. Scratch that. I don't want to say "Don't Participate" because I don't think we should tell each other what to do. That is why in my article ["Kick the Architecture Competition Habit"] I said, "I am retiring; I am stepping out of this game. Anyone else who would like to join, you are welcome." I think more of us have to lead by example; especially, if the very talented members of our profession stop participating, it will become increasingly less appetizing across the field.

INTERVIEW WITH CAPLES JEFFERSON

*Sara Caples and Everardo Jefferson, Principals of Caples Jefferson Architects in New York, serve as the Louis I. Kahn Visiting Assistant Professors this fall. We caught up via conference call.*  
SC: Sara Caples, M.Arch '74  
EJ: Everardo Jefferson, M.Arch '73  
KS: Katie Stege, M.Arch/ FES '17

**KS:** Your lecture title, This Particular Time and Place, explicitly references the specificity of now. In the context of your lecture, how do you all understand the specificity of the present?

**EJ:** I have to speak about it in terms of context of work over time. When we started we did simple projects, and we started with a premise, and then we had to build up... we had to see what principles came from those premises. So, for example, when we started to do community work we learned certain things about the community and how do you target that in an architectural language. And we're lucky enough to be able to have mastered a certain architectural toolbox large enough to rummage through that and find formal issues, formal content that could be applied in a very careful way to these community issues. And if over time we developed an approach to that and how to do that, how to make the site specific, because people talk about sites and communities but they're all different, they all have aspirations and all architects work with sites and communities, but the architecture cannot be the same each time. If you're building in the desert it's one thing, if you're building in East Harlem it's another thing, so we're very careful with the artifact that we produce. What we try to do with this lecture is go back and see what we have learned over time what we can apply to other kinds of projects. And that's what This Particular Place and time, where we're at now, what we started, and what we've learned.

**KS:** Much of your offices work focuses on community engagement. How do you solicit work, and how does this model work for you from a business perspective?

**SC:** So I suppose it's no surprise that there is tremendous competition for community work, so there's an enormous amount of competition for the Louis Armstrong museum. We had to beat out 44 other firms. It's usually not called a competition but it's a competitive process with about 2 or 3 rounds of selection. In terms of the financial realities, these commissions are not necessarily lucrative. We have done them by living very marginally, economically, in both our firm life and our personal life because the commitment to work in these communities--underserved by the design profession--was important to us. It became a priority, but it has been very challenging in terms of the economics and it has kept our firm size relatively small. Currently, we're ten people.

**KS:** You talked about how this is kind of a competition model that you get your commissions from. What is your perceptions of the competition model within the architectural community at large?

Do you have an estimate of what percentage of your projects you go through that type of selection process?

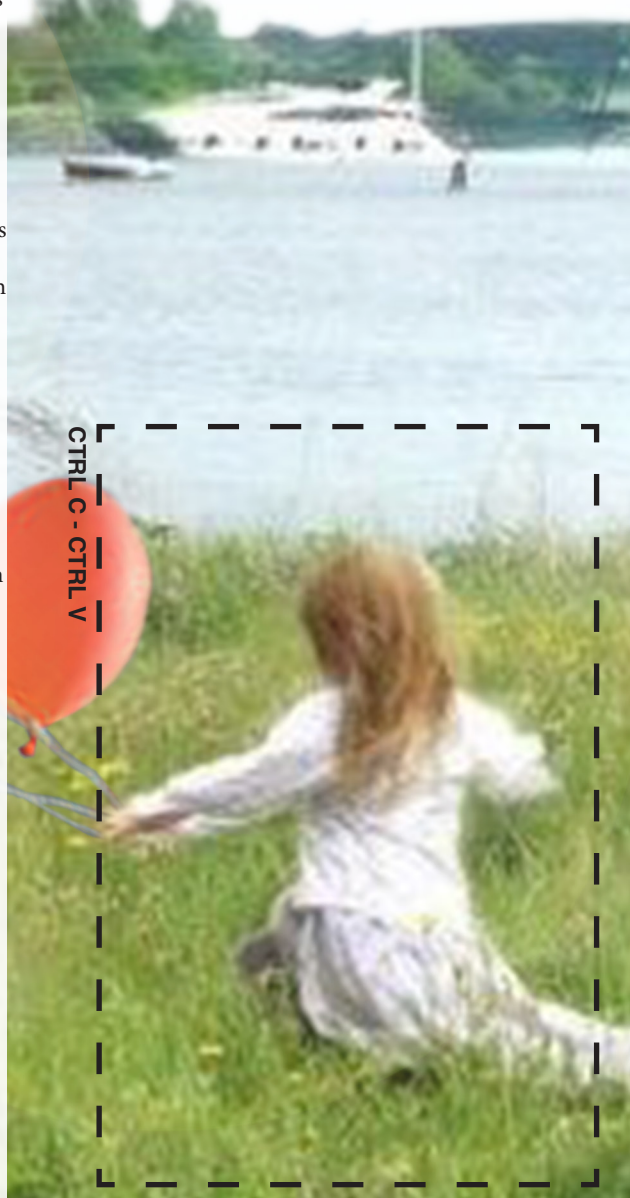
**SC:** Competition is a layered word. Formal competition, where it's an open design competition, we've had schemes published but never built through that process. And Especially when we were younger it was extremely important to us as a vehicle to develop our thinking both before we started our firm when we were working together as moonlighters, and in the first ten years of our firm when we didn't have a critical mass of clients. The problem with that kind of process is that you don't have feedback cycles from the users and to me the actual design process is far more satisfactory and challenging. Very often the reactions that most profoundly changed our ideas or the hierarchy of our ideas came from various stakeholders in actual projects. Because they don't come with an agenda that we expect, we have to respond to these unexpected concerns.

**KS:** As we enter the workforce, if we're interested in this community based work what advice do you have or how might we go about starting to engage with those underrepresented within the field of architecture?

**EJ:** Develop your own approach to architecture and how you think about it. To create objects and buildings, that's what it's all about. We belong to strong traditions, incredible traditions. Bring to the world these beautiful objects that affect the way we see the world. That's our gift and we can't let that negate that because of some limits.

**SC:** Whether it's a home in the Hamptons or a community center in East New York, I see a good building as a good building.

**EJ:** When people say community--the implication of that, the definition of that. All architects work for a community. They're all communities.



The deliverables needed to make a competitive submission—written financial and conceptual narratives, financial models and pro-formas for every building in our proposal, architectural drawings and renderings, and sustainability graphics and strategies—seemed nearly impossible to achieve when considered simultaneously. Factoring in the many brainstorming and planning sessions at SOM, our Q&As at Rudolph Hall with our advisor, Alex Garvin, our mornings spent researching issues pertinent to Tremé, and the multitude of nights dedicated to production, we collectively spent over 350 hours on a submission that didn't receive any recognition. And it was worth it.

I was surprised by my reaction when we found out that we would not be progressing to the competition's second round. For someone who has a pragmatic, achievement-oriented streak, I expected to feel more disappointed about the scarce returns on my investment. In this case, it was the quality of our collaboration, and the friendships created through working together that fully redeemed the experience.

I particularly enjoyed the interdisciplinary makeup of our team. Xiao and I found that our SOM teammates were enthusiastic, sharp, easy-going and funny. They conducted excellent research, dug into everything from the annual revenue generated per bowling alley lane (according to the Bowling Proprietors' Association of America) to community garden statistics for New Orleans. They offered promising narrative ideas and programming suggestions, thoroughly considering the pros and cons of any option. Furthermore, they were quantitative wizards, tackling the numbers and financing mechanisms for our proposal with amazing endurance under tight timelines. Even in my and Xiao's area of expertise, they put forth critical ideas that shaped the graphic and visual story.

Through the Hines competition, I discovered the powerful extent to which multidisciplinary collaboration can enrich the design process and its outcomes. The conversations we had were more optimistic, exciting, and wide-ranging than I ever expected. And although we did not win the competition, I gained something of equal if not greater value—lifelong friends and an eagerness to 'get out there': out of the architecture office, and into communities and cities to engage with real users, clients, and new collaborators.



**I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S NOT GOING TO AN INTERVIEW WITH TANKO HIANG, ARCHITECT OF YALE-NUS COLLEGE**

Interview and photos by John Wan (M.Arch 16)

Across the globe from New Haven, workers put the finishing touches on Yale's new tropical home. Yale-NUS College is Yale's venture with the National University of Singapore (NUS), the Southeast-Asian city-state's only liberal arts college, and one of few in Asia. Established in 2011, the college houses 1000 students and 100 faculty in three on-campus residential colleges: Elm, Cendana, and Saga, all named after trees. A central block houses a sports hall, fitness centre, amphitheatre, multimedia hub, dance studios, laboratories, and a black box theatre. The US\$154 million, 690,000 square-foot campus was completed in July 2015, just in time to welcome students from the Class of 2019.

Undeniably contemporary but drenched in what observers term a 'colonial' look, the campus is a union of disparate, sometimes opposing disciplines: contemporary Asian tropical regionalism meets the familiarity of old-country wood interiors, a tactile expression of the Yale-NUS curriculum, which fuses an American liberal arts education with the best traditions of Asian thought and philosophy.

Singapore-based architectural firm Forum Architects, famed for creating works in a tropical context, has been intimately involved since the project's inception. Paprika! speaks to Forum's founder and principal Tan Kok Hiang to find out more about the design intentions and challenges working on the campus.

**JW:** What is the story behind this project?

**TKH:** To be fair to everybody we should go back further than Pelli Clarke Pelli. This job started in 2008 when we won an NUS competition for residential college on the same site. We'd been working with NUS for a very long time, and completed a major institutional project for them, so they had confidence in us. When Yale got on board (Rick Levin and Linda Lorimer were the most involved in terms of what they wanted for the college) they said that was a good location for them, but the job now grew to about four times the size.

KieranTimberlake and Pfeiffer Partnership were then brought in for their familiarity with Yale campuses and I worked very well with Stephen Kieran, because we both have the same methodology, we think the same way. There was a very good connection. We wanted a contemporary tropical building, and so all our presentations were contemporary in style. There was homage paid to culture of Yale, such as the portal staircase and pedagogical methods manifest in space, but the actual style was very tropical and very modern as you would expect in Singapore.

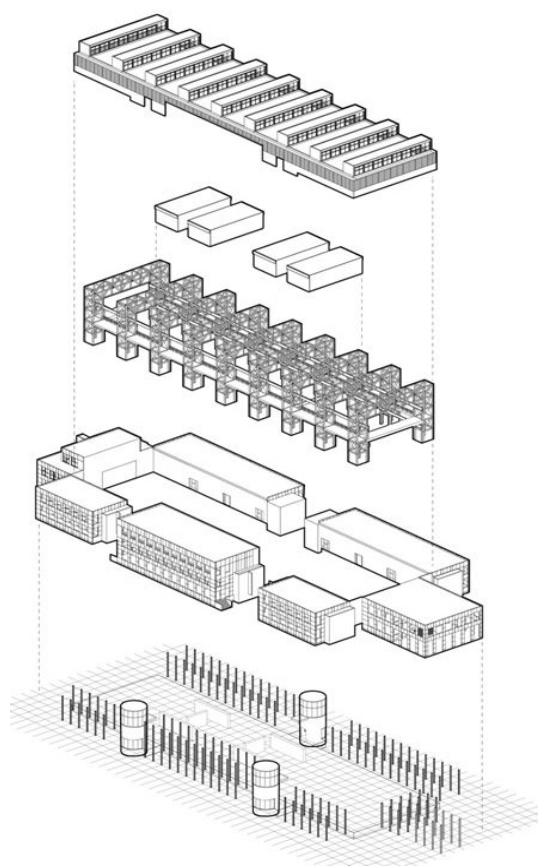
Yale wanted a different direction. They wanted a more collegiate feel. At least, that's how I interpreted it. So Pelli came into the picture. By then we had already formulated the masterplan, the courtyards, the suite arrangements, the sky terraces - everything was pretty firmed up. The plan was pretty much already in design development.

**REFLECTIONS FROM THE CISTERN**

by Luke Anderson (M.Arch '16)

**Project Team:** Peter de Bretteville Architect  
**Competition:** Guggenheim Helsinki  
**Brief:** Design a new museum in the Eteläsatama of Helsinki

Working on the Guggenheim competition the summer of 2014 with Peter de Bretteville was a breath of fresh air amongst high-intensity, high-stakes competitions that you so commonly find in a typical firm. Working at Peter's large library table in the center of his converted cistern house—this unusually sacred spot in New Haven—was the perfect setting to think about architecture. There was a clear hierarchy in the design process from one generation to the next, and it was refreshing to help draft someone else's spontaneous sketches. I believe he designed the whole project in his tiny Moleskine notebook on a flight back from California. While deliberating over his initial ideas, he talked a lot about his time teaching in Hong Kong and



the enormous gantry cranes used in shipping yards. However, the first sketch I saw was of a cylinder, similarly sized to the one we were sitting in. This reminded me that competitions can allow you to design in a very simple and intuitive way: by recalling images and objects stuck in your head.

*The urban considerations to scale it to the harbor and to relate it to adjacent buildings drive the exterior character. The internal strategy was to make a huge materials handling exhibition hall using a gantry crane, which also moves the upper galleries, to allow great spatial variations, light control and manipulation. Internally, the circulation, the perimeter hall and balcony, and the triangle of stairs with adjacent elevators remains visible and facilitates a variety of paths through the exhibition spaces. It is material handling, circulation and light at the service of placing, arranging and viewing art.*  
 -Peter de Bretteville

With the right mindset and without the parameters of reality, I think competitions maintain an important position in architecture.



**PARALLEL PROJECTIONS: A NEW MODEL**

by John Kleinschmidt (M.Arch '16)

Today, quasi-professional competitions like the Guggenheim Helsinki inhabit a bizarre space somewhere between pure ideas and aspirations to build, commodifying architectural ideas as simplistic images. Is there another model?

Kyle Beneventi thinks so. A former New Haven resident who worked for Pickard Chilton, Beneventi is now the 3D Director at The Seventh Art, a branding agency in New York City that primarily serves developers. Like many young professionals with pent-up creative energy, he entered a handful of competitions but was frustrated by their inherent dead-end nature.

"I entered, did my hard work, sent my boards in and even won one, but that was it. I had put forth the initial effort of generating ideas, but didn't have the connections or means to take any next steps." The collective amount of work produced for competitions astounded him. "I saw a wealth of talent and ambition to explore relevant issues that had nowhere to go afterwards."

Not seeing much difference between winning and losing, Beneventi endeavored to provide an alternative to the existing status quo. In 2013, he

started a company called Parallel Projections which administered its first competition in the summer of 2014. Called "Reanimate the Ruins," it focused on generating ideas for the defunct Packard Motor Plant in Detroit, abandoned since 1954. Beneventi's goal was to build interest and support from local stakeholders to pave the way for real, built work.

"There is a misconception that what designers produce is a product and not a process," says Beneventi. "Is there a way to give some credibility back to the designer, to try and make something more substantial happen so you don't just win a couple thousand dollars at best and have a portfolio piece and nothing else?"

In order to transpose the free-wheeling speculation of traditional competitions to a more focused arena, Parallel Projections assembled an advisory team and jurors that included Dan Kinkead, the director of projects for Detroit Future City, the strategic planning initiative unveiled in 2013 (about which Toni Griffin lectured in this school in Fall 2013). Most significantly, Fernando Palazuelo - the developer who owns the Packard Plant - signed on as a juror.

"We introduced Reanimate the Ruins as Phase I and hoped that the relationship with the developer would take shape enough to bring on a Phase II where we could work on getting it built and embrace all the complexities that come with that kind of effort," said Beneventi.

Whereas most jury deliberations are faceless non-events, Palazuelo, local government officials, and esteemed design educators studied and reviewed the top thirty Reanimate the Ruins submissions at an awards gala in Detroit attended by competition entrants.

"He could see that the ideas generated by our competition had value in design, program, and phasing," recalls Beneventi. This dialogue was to be the basis for future work. Unfortunately, due to market pressures and political forces, efforts to enter Phase II have stalled. Nonetheless, this is an interesting development and an intriguing alternative, enough so that Parallel Projections is busy planning its next move.

Inspired by the Packard Plant's near-mythic status as an icon of Detroit's decline and recovery, Beneventi and his team became interested in generating ideas around ameliorating the effects of forced resettlement of squatters in the Torre de David - the infamous tower in Caracas that has stood unfinished since the 1994 Venezuelan banking crisis. However, an ongoing conversation with Alfredo Brillembourg of Urban-Think Tank shifted the focus from icon to issue.

"If we were to push through with our original idea and focus on the tower, it could only ever be an ideas competition," says Beneventi. "By adapting the brief and avoiding the iconic tower, we're opening up the possibility that entrants ideas can become visible to city officials and builders in Caracas and put in motion real solutions to a relevant issue, rather than simply produce beautiful images."

Pelli felt the overall massing could be better and he suggested significant improvements to the masterplan by introducing a total of five towers as opposed to the original three in the masterplan. Pelli's firm was also asked to design the exteriors of the buildings to a style more akin to what you have in New Haven - they were adept at that.

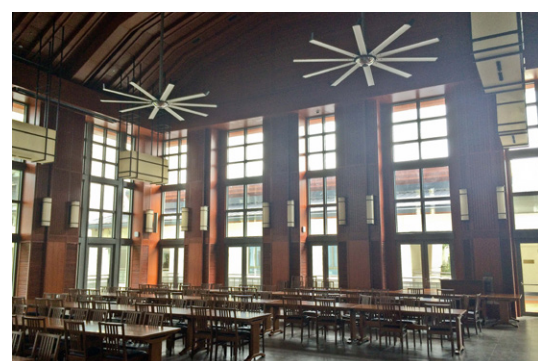
**JW:** What challenges did you face during design?

**TKH:** I thought maybe the interiors could be more contemporary, but I think Yale had other ideas. They still wanted it to be stylistically referential, so I had to find a way to reconcile my own design inclinations. Someone in the senior management of NUS reminded me that Yale is used to three-storey, at most five-storey colonial-era buildings hugging the ground but here in Singapore, they are in a high-density region and have to contend with being thirty storeys up in the air. I understood that to mean that Yale was already giving up some ground: instead of the stair portals, we gave the students sky gardens in the towers, with staircases that serve communities spread over three stories. So Forum worked hard to bring more 'Yaleness' into the design.

As for the interiors, I would call it 'contemporary classic'. The colors are modern, the expressions are modern, the details are modern: cornices don't curve, they are straight. So to me it was a happy marriage between what was desired and what we managed to achieve.

**JW:** How is the campus adapted to the tropical climate?

**TKH:** The courtyard and five-foot ways along its edges are very amenable to the tropics, so there is always an inside-outside feel, which is wonderful because you can't do that in New Haven: it's too cold most of the year. They are not designed to be used in the way that you'd imagine a square in New Haven or in any temperate country is used. Here the edges of the courtyards are designed to be used. We don't expect usage at the centre: Nobody gets out there because it's too hot: the courtyards are a visual anchor. Usage only occurs under the shade of trees,



and the central courtyard has got three heritage trees providing a huge shading effect. So one thing about the tropics, when we design a building and its garden, we try to put the trees very close to you, so that they are the filigree or the filter through which you see the courtyard, as opposed to the tree being a thing for you to look at.

**JW:** What do you think about the final result?

**TKH:** The final result is not bad. The good thing about it is that it's got a very collegial feel, which is difficult to do with an ultra-contemporary look. It harks back to New Haven, and the courtyard idea worked out very successfully.

**JW:** How has Yale received the campus so far?

**TKH:** Before I became the architect, the Yale Project Team made me take them through the buildings I've done. We looked at the International Arbitration Centre Building at Maxwell and the Bukit Timah campus, which was more classical. While they see a certain quality, it's always in a very contemporary style. The details are contemporary, and they ask me if I can do a classical thing the way they want it, and they have the tendency to think, "Yeah, but we use solid wood, our furniture is made to last a hundred years, so yes that's a beautiful detail but it doesn't look like it's going to last." At the back of their minds they always see a difference of standard.

The Yale board members come down regularly, and the last time they came, I was told they are happy and probably pleasantly surprised that we could do it so quickly. We started planning this job in 2009, and in six years, this college was built.

**JW:** What are your impressions of Rudolph Hall in New Haven?

**TKH:** That was a stunning visit. It was an incredible thing for me. It's very strange. It was only during my second or third trip that I got the chance to squeeze in one or two hours before I had to catch a flight. When I visited Rudolph Hall, I felt the most amazing thing: I had the feeling of coming home. But why? Because I've never been to Yale before, I've never studied here, but I had this feeling of coming home. The reason was simple: When I was young - fourteen or fifteen years old - I wanted to become an architect. I used to read GA. I remember there was one copy I had with Paul Rudolph's Art and Architecture Building on the cover. That was my book and that was the thing I looked through every day. I knew the building so well when I was young, such that when I visited it I said, "Okay, of course I know this building." But I've never seen the

building in real life!

**JW:** How do you feel about Brutalism as a style?

**TKH:** It was about sincerity, about expressive materials. Brutalism was about being authentic to the materials that we use. I think the connotations of its name is sad because its ideas are essentially gentle - it was about sincerity and humility, letting the material take over as opposed to your ego. But it really was a 'brutal' style: cruelly singular. I think the lessons of the style are worth noting, but the actual execution of the style may not be so relevant.

**JW:** How do you feel about Robert AM Stern's new residential colleges in New Haven?

**TKH:** They are relevant to what he's doing in New Haven. It is relevant to Yale in New Haven and its historical context. The next question would be how well it's done, and the spaces created. I have no qualms about any kind of style as long as it serves its purpose and is done well. One of my favourite of Ruskin's Lamps is the Lamp of Sacrifice. Why sacrifice? Because the artist sacrifices by putting in his/her labour of love. So for me, in any style you choose, you put in your labour of love, you put in your whole heart. And there's sacrifice in whatever you do: that to me is very powerful because people feel it. You go into a church you feel it's amazing because somebody built this incredible thing, you ponder it for a while, "Which crazy guy did this, and gave up his life to do this." I think occupants of a building appreciate human effort, human strife. So to me that's a very abstract, very subconscious part of architecture and art - actually, more craft than art - that I think is a powerful driving force.

**JW:** How do architects impart an artist's touch in the buildings they design?

**TKH:** Architects don't have to be craftspeople, but they can be 'imagineers'. They are the guys who shape the engineering that takes place. That's the art of building, and the deeper you think through a project, the more faithful the result is going to be. I am always trying to do more complex projects because I find it a really interesting challenge. How do you still maintain the thread of artistry and remain faithful through all these routes, turmoil and obstacles? To me, doing a house is the easiest thing you can do: just you and the client, and you can still do your architecture, but it's not challenging enough for me. I am challenged by doing very utilitarian projects like hospitals: complex and technical. How do you still draw a thread of art, of craft, of love in a project like that? To be honest, I haven't succeeded. But I want to get there one day.