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Instructor Information:
[Karla Maria S. Rothstein](#)

GSAPP Fall 2012_Advanced Studio V

Karla Maria Rothstein, critic

Jennifer Preston, TA

Inevitable Indeterminacy

or the uncertain certainty of our mortality

Contemplating absence and remembrance, our ambition is to pull the present forward and inform the shape and substance of imminent urban society—redefining what it means for a civilization to be civilized and for mortals to be connected by mortality. This advanced studio explores architecture in dialog with impermanence, urban archives, and our unsettled relationships with memory and identity. Work will focus on the future of life in cities and the transcendent spaces that emerge between the fundamental indeterminacy of urban life and the inevitability of loss. We are designing for the uncertain certainty of the death of 154,000 people in an increasingly urban world each day.[\[i\]](#)

Deeply considering new spaces of remembrance within the metropolis, projects will honor the finitude of life and the immediacy that this awareness instigates for the living. From the highly pragmatic logistics of what we do with dead bodies, to temporal repositories of public and personal archive, to the eviscerating intensity of grief—new spaces of mortality will be conceived to contribute to the civic life of the city.

Misaligned with—yet networked through—quotidian urban tissue, design explorations will question societal notions of the proper while serially navigating intimate experience in concert with the pulse of urban life. We will contend with time, duration, transience, and the liberation of letting go. Projects will respect the rhythms, currents and ground swells of memory and ritual, and engage the objective, material world, without being bound to conventions no longer suitable to megacities and their diverse mega-populace.

The urban environment is resilient, and will be re-tuned to shape new relationships between the public and public space.[\[ii\]](#) Students will experiment and strategize with a productive quotient of uncertainty, catalyzing passages of catharsis and unforeseen potential. Maturity and raw confidence allow us to be comfortable working in the dark—in the cavernous space that enables our vision to touch the lives of others.

POSITION

Reformation comes in all sizes.

Written manifestoes of critical intent will be revised and developed throughout the semester. Experiments, provisional positions, and research will inevitably instigate projects to diverse trajectories, requiring students to regularly articulate the evolving intent, logics, methodologies and metrics particular to their work.

Beyond simplistic opposition, alternative visions will craft a stance vis-à-vis questions of belief—from atheists and secularists to adherents of the four major religions in the US: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and

Buddhism. Cultural values have deep, foundational roots thickly intertwined with nature, society and technology. Yet culture also embodies the clear capacity to respond and evolve, and our work as architects has the potential, perhaps the obligation, to induce critical change in the world.

CONSTRUCT

Projects will define critical constructs across mutually conditioning fields of inquiry, including: concept, urbanity, grief, value, zoning, energy, ecology, and memory.

Definitions will be tested and synthesized to inform the metrics and phenomena of architectural propositions that rigorously explore the potential spatial, material, political, societal, and metaphysical consequences of your vision.

MEASURE

Utilizing intellectual, phenomenological, digital, and material tools, students will redefine value within the urban infrastructure they are designing. Demonstration of the system's capacities will be studied in dialog with the pulsing vitality of the city in which it operates. Data and analyses related to measurable capacities, duration and effect of your proposals will be iteratively assessed. Individuals or teams must be able to clearly evidence what the project does, how it works, how it is experienced, by whom, how frequently, and why. Metrics of performance, occupancy, and finance will be balanced with indeterminate intersections with shifts in the weather and other embedded and serendipitous experiential relationships.

Calculated uncertainty is inherent in experimentation. It is the degree to which we know something to be true. Precise thought and strategy enable us to navigate open-ended, unpredictable speculation, and design for both inevitable and unimaginable events occurring in unknown timeframes.

GLOBAL REACH

Recognizing the intense heterogeneity of cultural practices, and simultaneous ubiquity of our mortality - a representative group of 3 to 4 students will make an intensive travel-research trip focused on critical, tangible contact with spaces of death in Beijing, Rio, Amman, or Mumbai. Experience and information from this annual intersection with the studio-X global network will feed the current semester's work and an expanding archive of research into rituals of death and remembrance, supporting this series of GSAPP research studios re-conceiving civic infrastructures related to human mortality. Travel will likely occur over the election holiday.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

passages from the following books will be required reading:

Allen, Stan, Notations and diagrams: Mapping the Intangible in *Practice: Architecture, Technique and Representation*, (London: Routledge, 2009)

Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2010)

Colomina, Beatrice, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*(The MIT Press, 1996)

Deleuze, Gilles, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (University of Minnesota, 1981)

Derrida, Jacques, *Archive Fever* (University of Chicago Press, 1998)

Dickinson, Greg, et.al., *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (University of Alabama, 2010)

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Lefebvre, Henri, *The Urban Revolution* (University of Minnesota, 2003)

Ragon, Michel, *The Space of Death: A study of Funerary Architecture, Decoration, and Urbanism* (University Press of Virginia, 1983)

Steedman, Carolyn, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (Rutgers University, 2002)

Taylor, Mark C., *After God* (University of Chicago, 2007)

Vidler, Anthony, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (MIT Press, 1994)

KARLA MARIA ROTHSTEIN, critic

Karla Rothstein has taught design studios at all levels in the GSAPP for the past 15 years. http://latentnyc.com/project_category/6/ She is a registered architect and the Design Director at Latent Productions, a design practice operating at the nexus of architecture, real estate, finance, and research. <http://latentnyc.com/capacities/>

In 2011, based on her professional and academic work related to spaces of death and memory, Karla was appointed as a member of the Columbia University Seminar on Death. She most recently presented at the seminar's 2012 Conference, addressing the contentious and evolving environment of death studies in the 21st century. In addition to a bakery-bar-restaurant and apartments in Gowanus, and a carwash on Long Island, her firm is currently designing a 10,000 SF techno dance music venue in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Rothstein's first single-family house is included in Kenneth Frampton's *American Masterworks* (2nd ed., Rizzoli 2008). <http://latentnyc.com/projects/>

JENNIFER PRESTON, ta

Jennifer Preston has taught with Professor Rothstein at GSAPP for five years. She leads the research and design of sustainable projects at BKSK Architects, an architectural practice in New York City. Her professional work focuses on the practical integration of high-performance building ecologies in projects throughout New York City. Jennifer's ongoing research combines emergent science, simulation modeling and performative design to inspire future solutions in urban food production, global waste networks, micro remediation landscapes, and net positive architecture.

[i]<http://www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2012/world-population-data-sheet/data-sheet.aspx>

[ii]Michael Kimmelman, on Bogotá, NYTimes, July 2012, referring to beliefs of Cedric Price - "open-endedness and delight; architecture as a catalyst for re-shaping relationships between the public and public space. Price embraced impermanence in buildings and society. Architecture was forever adaptable to change"