

ACSA Candidate for At-Large Director Canada (3-year term)

Weihan Vivian Lee, University of Toronto

Candidate Statement

I am an educator, academic administrator, and a licensed and practicing architect with experiences in both the USA and Canada. I believe that the confluence of these experiences makes me well-suited to serve as the Canada At-Large Director for ACSA. Furthermore, my pedagogical ambitions as the director of University of Toronto's Master of Architecture Program are well aligned with the ACSA's strategic plan priorities in racial equity and climate action.



I have been teaching architecture to Graduate and Undergraduate students since 2009 in a number of positions across University of Michigan (5 years) and University of Toronto (9 years). Prior to engaging in Academia, I was a practicing architect and project manager for large-scale public buildings and parks projects in New York City. Since teaching, I continue to practice architecture in my own firm, LAMAS, based in Toronto, Canada. Given my extended background in practice, the basis of my pedagogical objective is to make tangible the connection between what is learned in academia and how it is applied (preparatory) in the profession as we know it and how it should be applied (projective) to transform the way we practice.

Since the Summer of 2020, I have served as the Director of the University of Toronto Master of Architecture Program. My teaching philosophy is rooted in my experience as an active practitioner and recognizing the importance of bridging the gap between academia and real-world architectural challenges. I understand how abstract our discipline in academia may seem without witnessing first-hand the issues of construction, the contingencies of a site, and the constraints of a client's mandate. In all course development, I have taken on a range of instructional tools and methods to 1) design assignments that replicate or simulate workplace skill sets, 2) foster dynamic and interactive instruction, and 3) cultivate an awareness of emergent practices and new areas of explorations in design.

During my first term as director, I saw that the most pressing task (in addition to navigating teaching during a pandemic) is to update the core curriculum to reflect the demands of our profession today — and by extension recast the role of the architect in addressing many of the complicated and urgent issues that we face today. Consequently, I have re-structured our core studio sequence to address critical topics such as 1) Universal Design and Inclusive Public Spaces, 2) Indigenous Knowledge in Architecture, Site, and Ecology, 3) Affordable Housing and the expanding Urban City, and 4) Comprehensive Studio on Net Zero Building design. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of my esteemed colleagues, these new studios have garnered both faculty and student acclaim and awards.

Additionally, I am firmly committed to fostering genuine diversity within our discipline and envisioning intentional pathways and admissions initiatives that will address enrollment disparities faced by Black, Indigenous, and lower-income students. Our school has established the First Peoples Leadership Advisory Group (Dorothy Peters, Amos Key Jr., Trina Moyan, and Douglas Cardinal) as well as an Assistant Dean of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (Dr. Jewel Amoah) and through their council we have been working together to critically examine and reform our curriculum, recruitment, admissions, and community outreach efforts.

I am also a board member of our accreditation body (CACB-CCCA.) I am enthusiastic about contributing to the strategizing and formulation of CACB policies that shape the education of future architects. This dual opportunity to contribute to both institutions opens exciting avenues for collaboration and learning. I am particularly eager to engage with my American colleagues on progressive methods of evaluating and shaping the future of architectural education.

Wei Han Vivian Lee, OAA, AIA

Biography

Wei-Han Vivian Lee is a registered architect in the U.S. and Canada, and director of the Masters of Architecture program at the University of Toronto Daniels Faculty. As founding partner of LAMAS since 2008, Lee brings to the studio her research on the role of craft in the age of digital architecture as related to issues of craft, labor, vernacular traditions, and professional practice.

EDUCATION

2004 Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Master in Architecture
1999 Wesleyan University, Bachelors of Arts with High Honors

REGISTRATION

Ontario, Canada #8689
New York, USA #035999-1

SELECTED ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

2020-Present University of Toronto Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, Director, Master of Architecture Program
2024-Present University of Toronto Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream
2014-2023 University of Toronto Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, various teaching positions
2009-2014 University of Michigan Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, various teaching positions

SELECTED HONORS AND AWARDS

"50 Best Architecture Firms 2020" Domus Magazine.
Architect's Newspaper Best of Design Award, "Delirious Facade" winner in Research Category
MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program Shortlist
ACSA Faculty Design Award, Honorable Mention for "Hair, Spikes, Cattail, and Turkeyfoot."
Architect Magazine R+D Award, top R+D Award for "Hair, Spikes, Cattail, and Turkeyfoot."

SELECTED LECTURES AND EXHIBITIONS

"Decolonizing the Design Industry: How to authentically diversify student bodies and workforces" IDS Toronto
"Holding Up History: Panel Talk" hosted by DesignTO of the 2022 DesignTO Festival
"In Medias Res" for Baumer Talks at Knowlton School of Architecture, Ohio State University
"Building Practice" Interview and Exhibition. Syracuse University School of Architecture
Delirious Facade, presented for the Becoming Digital panel at the 107th ACSA Annual Meeting
Computer Composition, hosted panel discussion at the 107th ACSA Annual Meeting
"Unruly" Spring 2018 Lecture Series, Princeton University School of Architecture
"Inscriptions" Exhibition at Harvard Graduate School of Design
"Becoming Digital" Lecture, Workshop, and Exhibition at the University of Michigan, Taubman College
"Cabaret Series: ha ha ha (the Funny, the Witty, and the Grotesque)" Lecture for the Storefront for Art and Architecture, NYC
"Assemblies of Labor" 105th ACSA Annual Meeting, Seattle
"Literally Anything At All: Ornament in the age of Seapunk" 104th ACSA Annual Meeting, Toronto
"Does Drawing have a Future?" MIT Architecture Symposium

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

2023-Present CACB-CCCA Board of Director member
2020-Present OAA Sustainable Built Environment Committee (SBEC)
2022 Jury Panel for RAIC International Prize, Canada
2020 Jury Panel for Kent State Integrated Design Awards, USA
2020 Jury Panel for Markham Public Art Competition, Canada
2020 Jury Panel for Architect Magazine Studio Prize, USA
2018 Jury Panel for Texas Society of Architects Design Awards, USA