

Leyuan Li

Assistant Professor of Architecture

University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver)
2023-

Visiting Assistant Professor on Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver)
2023

Adjunct Faculty

University of Houston (UH)
Gerald D. Hines Collge of Architecture and Deisgn
2022

MY CORE COMMITMENT:

- Cultivate inclusive pedagogies that examine the infrastructures of care and collectivity to confront the injustices of our urban landscapes, particularly related to housing crises and community displacement.

- Foster students' social responsibility to engage architecture as a collective project and a collaborative process in response to social and environmental complexities.

-Engage students with creative activities that empower the marginalized and under-represented communities, exploring the agency of architecture in promoting a more inclusive, equitable societal framework.

CONTENT

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| Denver Low-Rise Spring 2023 | 02 - 05 |
| Denver Low-Rise Spring 2024 | 06 - 08 |
| The Suppressed Interior: Reimagining Chinatown | 09 - 14 |
| The Suppressed Interior: Reimagining Amache | 15 - 17 |
| Engaged Research | 18 - 19 |
| Student Engagement | 20 |

My name is Leyuan Li, and I am an Assistant Professor of Architecture at the University of Colorado Denver College of Architecture and Planning. Previously, I served as a Visiting Fellow with an Emphasis on Issues of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at the same institution. For the past three years, I have been primarily teaching and coordinating foundational studios at undergraduate and graduate levels, in addition to research seminars and studios centered around the agency of the architectural interior.

Like other minority-serving public institutions, many of my students at CU Denver come from humble and historically underrepresented communities that are excluded from educational opportunities and academic privileges. They are typically trained towards a singular mode of architectural practice focused on building-making, and rarely introduced to other ways of doing architecture that associate their education with the immediate social environment, such as the communities they live in. Therefore, as an educator, I constantly ask myself:

in addition to introducing essential design skills, how can I foster an inclusive pedagogy that prepares my students to confront the injustices and inequities entrenched in our urban landscapes? How can I engage my students with creative activities that empower the marginalized and underrepresented communities, exploring their civic and social responsibilities as future architects?

As a BIPOC scholar who grew up against political biases and social inequities, I believe in the power of collective actions in empowering underrepresented communities, and I believe in the urgency of cultivating students' social responsibility to engage architecture as a collective project and a collaborative process in response to social and environmental complexities. This endeavor is reflected in my pedagogical framework, in which design tools are often deployed to investigate disruptions and marginalizations of underserved constituents in contemporary social and political contexts, including the obscured histories of the Granada War Relocation Center and the severe crises of affordable housing in Denver. Additionally, collaborative acts are explored in design studios at divergent scales and in many forms. For instance, terms and concepts such as "shared," "mutual," and "collective" are often posed as the core design guideline, and collaboration with community stakeholders is encouraged to explore collective actions, such as the "Where is Denver's Chinatown" exhibition co-authored by History Colorado, and Colorado Asian Pacific United, and students at CU Denver. Ultimately, I strive to equip students with a broad understanding of architecture's engagement and advocacy, preparing them to comprehend architecture as a contested site of interactions amidst social-political and environmental forces.

RESEARCH AND TEACHING FOCUSES

My research and creative work investigate the medium of the interior as the infrastructure of care and collectivity to confront the injustices of our urban landscapes, examining ecological, political, and social issues in the context of living crises, particularly related to housing shortages and community displacement. Unlike mainstream discourse that emphasizes the static, external attributes of a building, my work focuses on the dynamic, nimble qualities of architectural interiors, prioritizing scalable, portable, and adaptable installations that actively engage with the body, nature, and society.

My teaching is closely intertwined with my research interests, involving students in questioning the entrenched power structures and problematizing the established social norms through the lens of the interior. In design studios, students are tasked with exploring often overlooked concepts, elements, and conditions of domestic and public interiors. For example, in the studio themed "The Suppressed Interior," they delve into topics such as the interior conditions of laundromats in Denver's Historic Chinatown, examining the suppression of the interior from a domestic to a territorial scale. In another studio titled "Denver Low-Rise," students reinvent domestic forms for collective living through the lens of Missing Middle housing typologies. By exploring the agency of the interior, my teaching guides students to understand the life and form of the city at every scale, shedding light on the uncharted interior territories where the relationships between culture, city, community, gender, race, and health are socially defined and materially constructed. This pedagogical approach has received national recognition, including the **ACSA/AIA Housing Design Education Award in both 2024 and 2025.**

ENGAGEMENT

As the faculty advisor for our AIAS and NOMAS local chapters, I have been actively advising and mentoring students, creating academic opportunities for students to engage in conversations around identity, gentrification, and social justice, such as the panel discussion of the film "Reclaiming Denver's Chinatown" NOMAS organized at the Denver Art Museum in 2023. With my continued dedication to supporting student leaders in promoting diverse, inclusive excellence in the learning environment, I am committed to cultivating student's civic responsibility and inclusive attitude as they are shaping our future built environment.

I am humbled by the opportunity to be nominated for the 2026 AIAS/ACSA New Faculty Teaching Award. I believe my inclusive pedagogical approaches to encourage collective actions and endeavors, as well as my core commitment to fostering student voices in shaping our professions and discourses, would make me a great candidate for this award. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

HOUSING: DENVER LOW-RISE DOMESTIC FORMS FOR COLLECTIVE LIVING WINNER OF 2024 AIA/ACSA HOUSING DESIGN EDUCATION AWARD

COURSE

Denver Low-Rise: New Domestic Forms of Collective Living
ARCH 5120: Graduate Core Studio II, Spring 2023

ROLE OF NOMINEE

Coordinated this course and taught one section of 15 students.

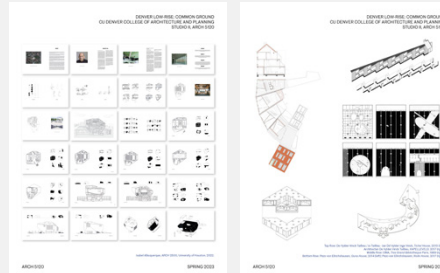
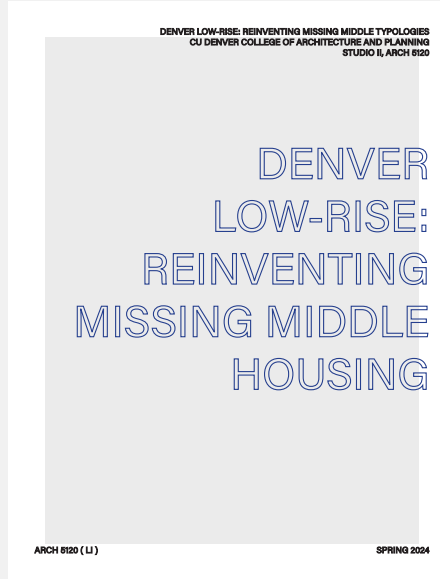
COLLABORATORS AND FUNDING SOURCES EXPENSES

José Ibarra taught a second section of 16 students.
No funding sources were involved in this project.

STUDENT COMPENSATION

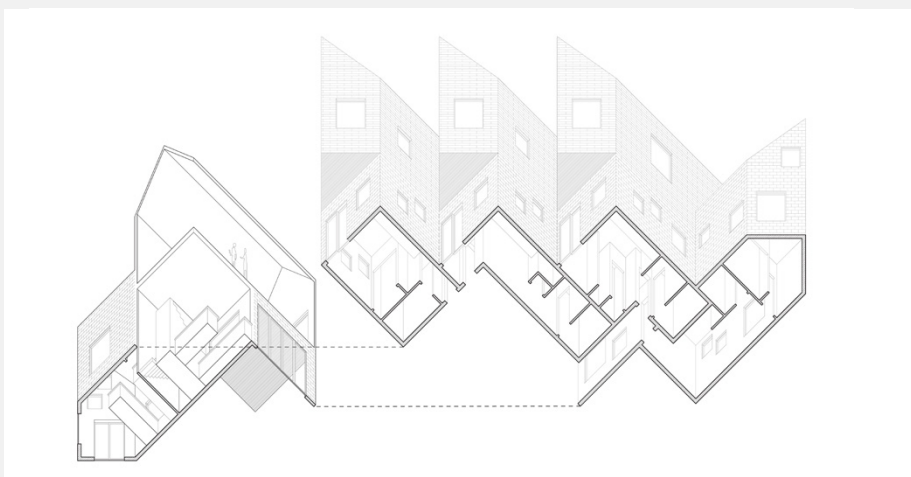
1 student worked as a paid teaching assistant for 10 hours per week. 31 students contributed to this project for a 6-credit studio course.

Denver Low-Rise: New Domestic Forms of Collective Living is the second foundational design studio in the 3-Year M.Arch program. The course focuses on a small-scale design problem, speculating on a new paradigm of affordable housing through reinvented domestic forms. Responding to the housing shortage exacerbated by the predominant model of single-family housing, the studio asks students to reimagine "Missing Middle" housing typologies to enable flexible and adaptable arrangements engaging the real dwellers of contemporary cities, such as individuals, single parents, child-free couples, same-sex couples, and multi-generational households. The studio asks: how could reinvented domestic forms—such as shared living rooms, collective kitchens, and reimagined laundry facilities—create common grounds that engage the diverse constituents of a mid-sized American city?

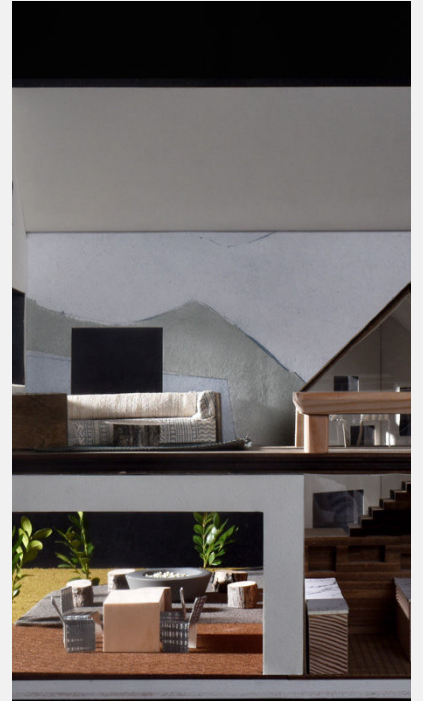


REINVENTED DOMESTIC FORMS: TOWNHOUSE TYPE

This reinvented townhouse type creates gradients of public, collective, and private space, offering large recreation areas for the neighborhood, work/study areas for selected community members, shared kitchens for its residents, and private bathrooms and bedrooms.

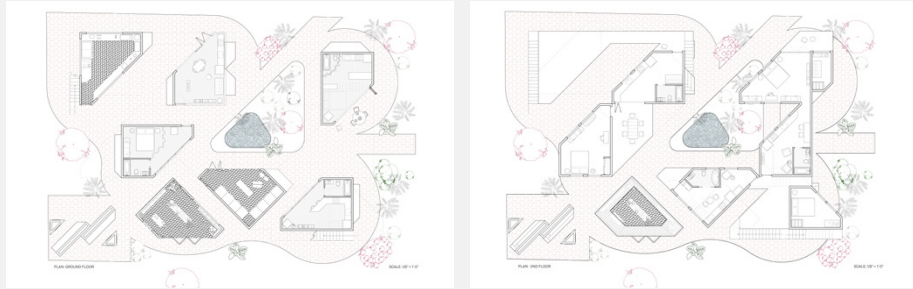


Models and drawings by Alex Gardiner (Spring 2023).



REINVENTED DOMESTIC FORMS: COTTAGE COURT TYPE

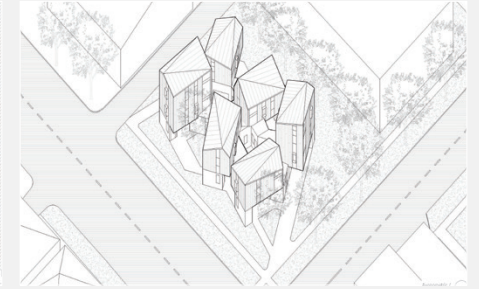
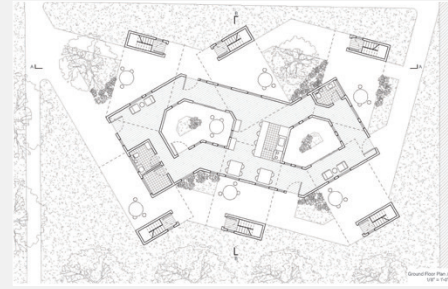
This housing complex provides eight residential units anchored around a central social hub: a laundromat that uses a greywater system to sustain a plant shop and food crops grown on site as provisions for a corner café.



Models and drawings by Stephanie Clouse and Martina Grbac (Spring 2023).

REINVENTED DOMESTIC FORMS: COTTAGE COURT TYPE

This reimagined cottage court building proposes a shared kitchen for all its residents, along with private interior courtyards, where residents can choose to interact with one another from their windows, while maintaining privacy through the precise orientation of unit walls.



Models and drawings by Blake Brooks and Geoffrey Bremer (Spring 2023).

HOUSING: DENVER LOW-RISE REIMAGINING A RESIDENTIAL BLOCK WINNER OF 2025 AIA/ACSA HOUSING DESIGN EDUCATION AWARD

COURSE
Common Ground: Reimagining a Residential Block for Collective Living
ARCH 5120: Graduate Core Studio II, Spring 2024

ROLE OF NOMINEE
Coordinated this course and taught one section of 16 students.

STUDENT COMPENSATION
1 student worked as a paid teaching assistant for 10 hours per week, \$20 per hour. 16 students contributed to this project for a 6-credit studio course.

Common Ground: Reimagining Residential Block for Collective Living focuses on the investigation of a small-scale design problem, speculating on a new paradigm of housing development through reinvented domestic forms and collective arrangements. It presents a collaborative pedagogy

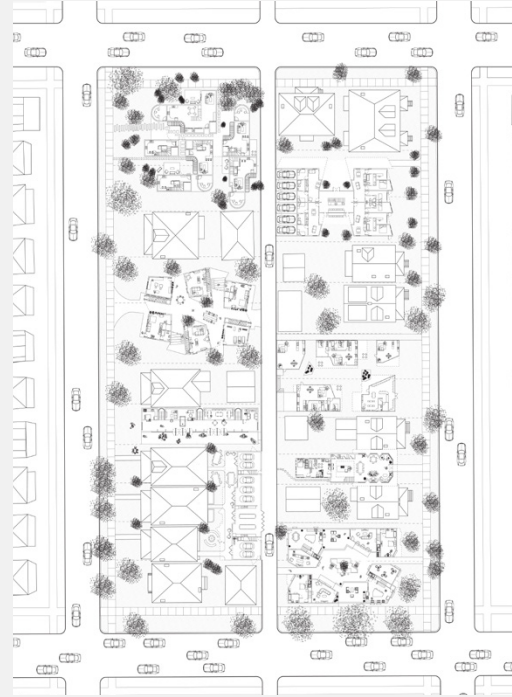
for a foundational housing studio, proposing a series of reimagined "Missing Middle" housing schemes on a residential block in Denver, to explore new forms of collective living. Reflecting upon existing housing typologies, students engage with local residents to develop a guiding framework for design efforts, such as rethinking building heights and incorporating shared facilities. Moving forward, students develop design schemes that tackle different lot conditions within the block, such as utilizing the backyards of multiple adjacent lots. By examining different collective arrangements and shared domestic spaces on the ground level, students propose new "Missing Middle" housing strategies, formulating a hypothesis of "Common Ground" that envisions a collective development of the residential block. Through accumulating a network of shared spatial and social resources, these reinvented "Missing Middle" housing options seek to establish a new mode of development at the scale of a block where the relationships between individual and city are socially defined.



Photographs by Brandon Wunder; models and drawings by all ARCH 5120 students (Spring 2024).

COMMUNITY MANIFESTO

In response to their research on local zoning policies and “Missing Middle Housing” typologies, students discussed with housing professionals to come up with a “community manifesto” that regulates the development of the residential block.



COMMUNITY MANIFESTO

01 As a community, we would like to **update the existing framework of “Missing Middle” housing and create new typologies** that engage the diverse constituents of American cities.

02 As a community, we would like to rethink new technologies and cultural shifts that inspire contemporary dwelling changes, and **reconsider the role of shared domestic spaces**, such as shared living rooms and collective kitchens, in fostering new forms of collectivity.

03 As a community, we would like to **create a continuous network that embraces collective arrangements** that bolsters a sense of community and resilience, with an improved ability to age in place.

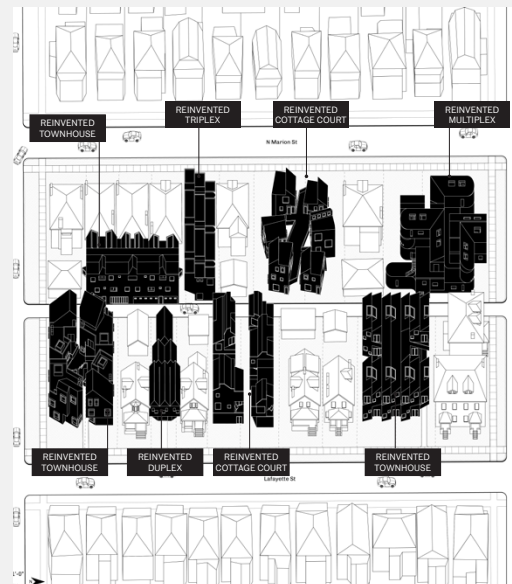
04 As a community, we would like to **co-author the development of the whole city block**, which would require close collaboration and coordination with architects, urban designers, potential residents, and community stakeholders.

05 As a community, we would like to **gently increase the housing density by increasing the maximum building height from 30'-0" to 40'-0"**.

076 As a community, we would like to **challenge the existing zoning policies**, allowing the free arrangements and combinations of lots to enable the development of multi-family projects better aligned with collective aspirations.

07 As a community, we would like to **follow the existing front setback requirements to respect the continuity of the urban facade**. We would disavow the requirements for side and rear setbacks to liberate experimental design ideas from dated restrictions.

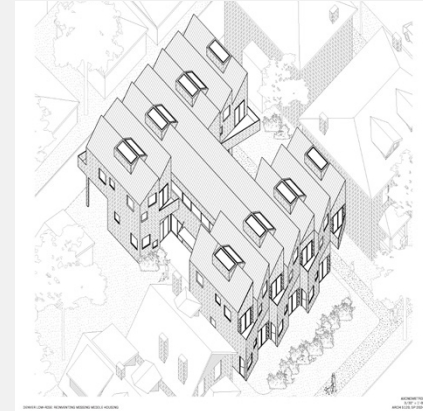
08 As a community, we would like to **establish a common ground** where the relationships between individual, collective, city, race, and public health are socially defined and formally celebrated.



Photographs by Brandon Wunder; models and drawings by all ARCH 5120 students (Spring 2024).

REINVENTED DOMESTIC FORMS: TOWNHOUSE TYPE

This reinvented townhouse type creates gradients of public amenities, communal gardens, private spaces, and shared parking on the ground floor, offering public access that bridges the front street and the alley way.



Models and drawings by Mia Mettais and Abby Ramirez.

REINVENTED DOMESTIC FORMS: COTTAGE COURT TYPE

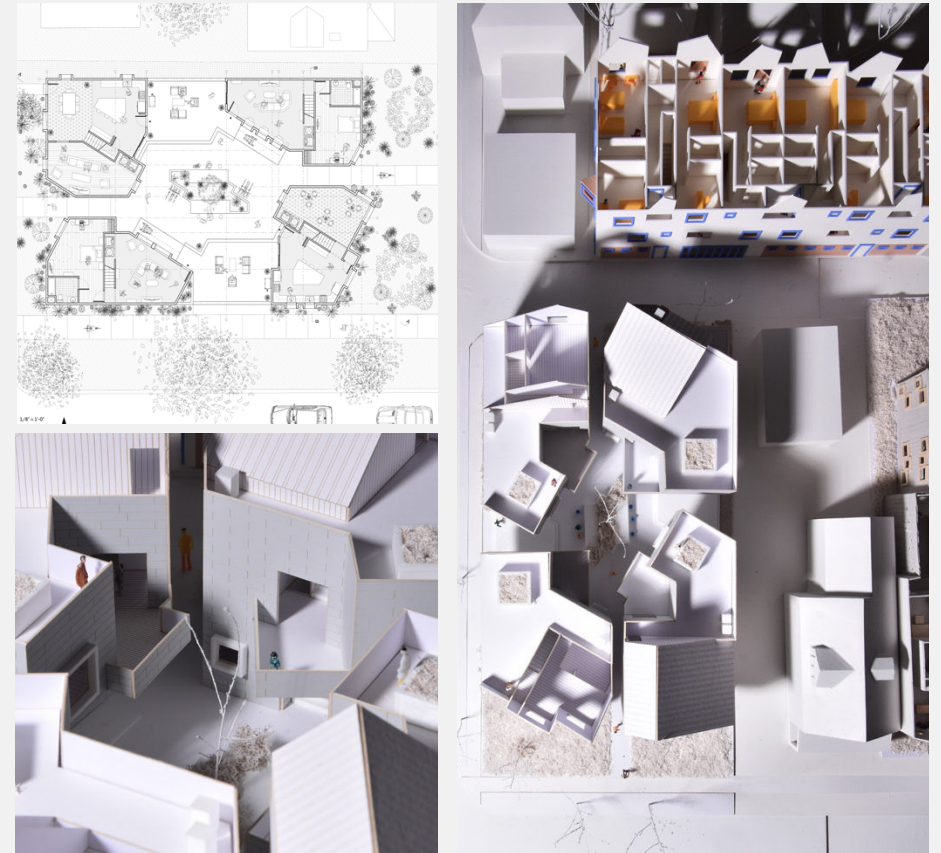
This reinvented cottage court type creates a network of shared amenities on the ground floor accessible to the general public, including co-working spaces and communal gardens at divergent scales. It also creates a semi-public platform on the second floor open to the residents.



Models and drawings by Hannah White and Angela Holden.

REINVENTED DOMESTIC FORMS: DUPLEX TYPE

This group of reinvented duplex types creates a central courtyard with shared kitchens and living rooms on four sides and large shared balconies on the upper floors, forging a point of convergence for residents living in the neighborhoods.



Models and drawings by Christian Robertson and Rashad Bullock.

THE SUPPRESSED INTERIOR: REIMAGINING CHINATOWN

Supported by and Exhibited at History Colorado

COURSE:
ARCH 4111: Undergraduate Studio V, Fall 2023

ROLE OF NOMINEE:
Studio Instructor

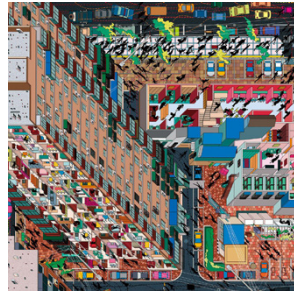
COLLABORATORS AND FUNDING SOURCES EXPENSES:
Collaborated with History Colorado and Colorado Asian Pacific United. Secured more than \$30,000 to cover all material expenses and ongoing research.

STUDENT CONTRIBUTION
2 students worked 10 hours a week for 15 weeks at the rate of \$20 per hour. 11 students contributed to this project for a 6-credit studio course.

The Suppressed Interior: Reimagining Chinatown is an advanced research studio that questions the power of architecture in combating political biases and social injustices. It accumulates a collection of interactive research and design outcomes, immersing a wide range of audiences in exploring the past, present, and future of Denver's erased Chinatown. By embracing a participatory approach to spatial production and conversation, the studio cultivates an engaged learning culture for students and a positive experience for the public to understand the social significance of Denver's hidden Chinatown. It was featured as a significant part of a public exhibition in collaboration with History Colorado and Colorado Asian Pacific United at the History Colorado Center between October 2024 and September 2025. It attracted more than 30,000 visitors and received numerous national recognitions.

PART 01: REPAIR THE ARCHIVE

In Project 01, responding to archival silence and material scarcity, students collected photographs, paintings, articles, drawings, and other possible media that established a clear spatial, social narrative of Denver's old Chinatown. They also developed a series of diagrams, drawings, and collages to dissect different layers of the site, understanding a site both physically and conceptually as a geometric abstraction and an aesthetic, socio-political, and programmatic provocation.



THE SUPPRESSED INTERIOR

LEYUAN LI
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE
CU DENVER COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

INSTRUCTORS

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Blake Brooks (TA)
M. Arch Candidate
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Suppressed Interior is the fifth design studio in the undergraduate core sequence at the University of Colorado Denver. It investigates the medium of the interior as the infrastructure of care to confront the injustices of our urban landscapes, unearthing the social ecologies of underrepresented identities through examining ecological, political, and social issues in the neighborhood of Denver's old Chinatown.

Historically, the old Chinatown in Denver was a residential and business district between Wazee and Market streets and from 18th Street to 20th Street—adjacent to where CU Denver's Campus is situated. Due to historical moments of racial discrimination, social injustice, and political unrest, the old Chinatown, once considered the largest in the interior West, was demolished by the 1940s and is nowadays rarely known by the public. However, as the city continues to grow and expand, so does the urgency to unearth the hidden history, which is critical to foster the equality, inclusion, and diversity of communities inhabiting Denver's rapid-changing urban environment. To do that, the studio will focus on the interior territories where the history of the Chinese community has manifested. In contrast with the lively, prosperous frontier on the exterior, the interior presents an opposite image of chaos and hardships, mostly rendered in congested domestic spaces. These spaces, along with clusters of objects and furniture embedded with cultural and spatial meanings beyond their utilizations, constitute the ecological networks where the relationships between culture, city, community, gender, race, and health are socially defined and materially constructed. In other words, through exploring the interior outdoors, the course aims at unearthing underestimated design problems and underrepresented identities related to the interior, exploring its spatial, social, and political agendas and its impact on the life and form of the city at each scale.

In response to the divergent scales of investigations in the studio, the course follows a sequence of three nested projects, each looking at a different scale of conceptualization and realization. During the first few weeks of the course, students would be tasked with researching divergent domestic interiors and objects and their relationships to social, cultural, and ecological agendas within the context of Chinatowns in Denver and beyond. By unfolding the spatial and material tactics of these spaces, the research would look into the spatial and cultural meanings of selected objects in addressing the wilderness.

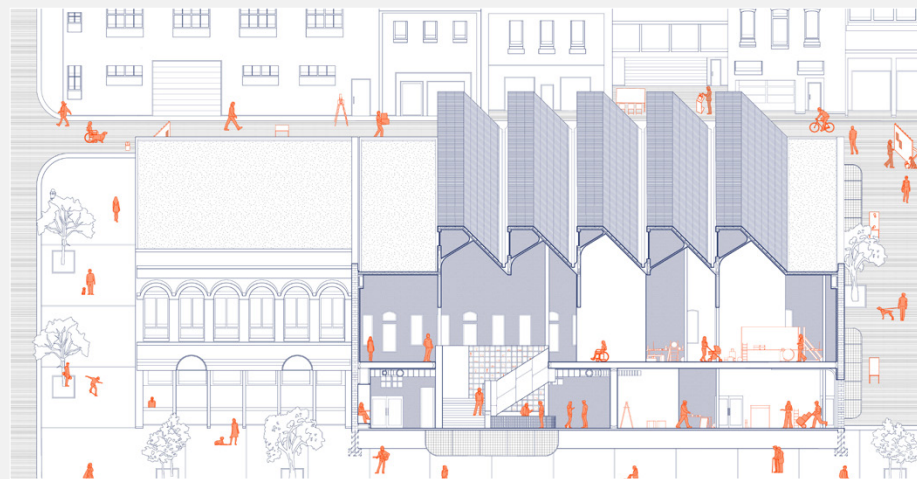
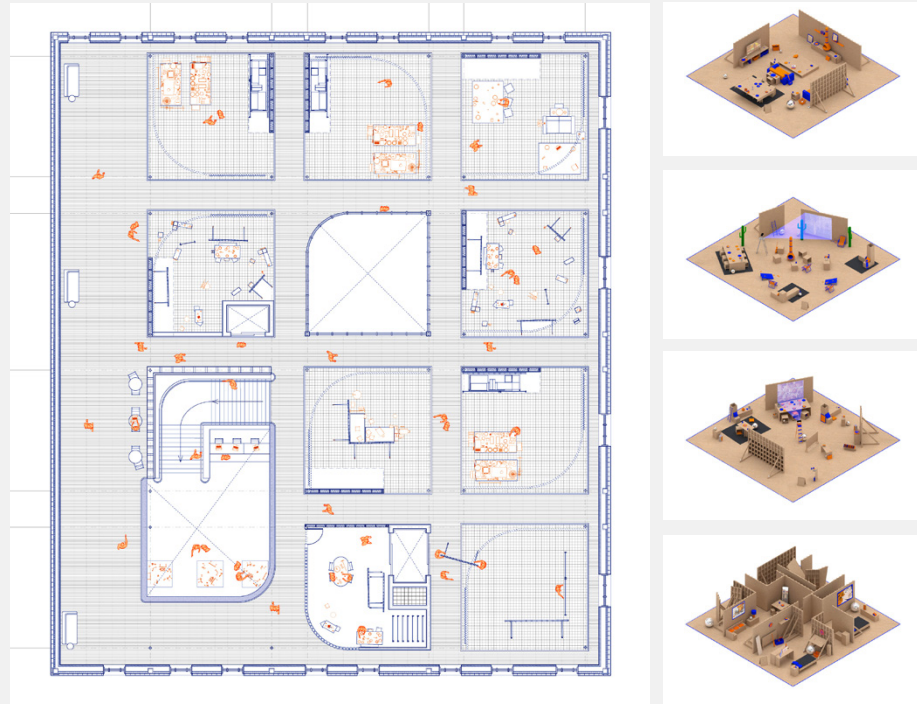
ARCH 4111 FALL 2023

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| <p>SOCIAL ECOLOGIES: THE SUPPRESSED INTERIOR CU DENVER COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING FALL 2023</p> <p>PROJECT 01: CONCEPTUALIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION This semester, students have a dual mission: analysis and conceptualization of Denver's Chinatown as well as a studio design project. The design project is a conceptual reconstruction of the historical Chinatown, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site. The project is a response to the social ecologies of the site, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site.</p> <p>RESEARCH This semester, students have a dual mission: analysis and conceptualization of Denver's Chinatown as well as a studio design project. The design project is a conceptual reconstruction of the historical Chinatown, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site. The project is a response to the social ecologies of the site, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site.</p> <p>OUTCOMES This semester, students have a dual mission: analysis and conceptualization of Denver's Chinatown as well as a studio design project. The design project is a conceptual reconstruction of the historical Chinatown, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site. The project is a response to the social ecologies of the site, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site.</p> | <p>SOCIAL ECOLOGIES: THE SUPPRESSED INTERIOR CU DENVER COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING FALL 2023</p> <p>PROJECT 02: FROM FUTURE, TO INTERIOR, TO BUILDING, TO CITY This semester, students have a dual mission: analysis and conceptualization of Denver's Chinatown as well as a studio design project. The design project is a conceptual reconstruction of the historical Chinatown, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site. The project is a response to the social ecologies of the site, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site.</p> <p>RESEARCH This semester, students have a dual mission: analysis and conceptualization of Denver's Chinatown as well as a studio design project. The design project is a conceptual reconstruction of the historical Chinatown, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site. The project is a response to the social ecologies of the site, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site.</p> <p>OUTCOMES This semester, students have a dual mission: analysis and conceptualization of Denver's Chinatown as well as a studio design project. The design project is a conceptual reconstruction of the historical Chinatown, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site. The project is a response to the social ecologies of the site, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site.</p> | <p>SOCIAL ECOLOGIES: THE SUPPRESSED INTERIOR CU DENVER COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING FALL 2023</p> <p>PROJECT 03: PRODUCTION AS MANAGEMENT This semester, students have a dual mission: analysis and conceptualization of Denver's Chinatown as well as a studio design project. The design project is a conceptual reconstruction of the historical Chinatown, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site. The project is a response to the social ecologies of the site, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site.</p> <p>RESEARCH This semester, students have a dual mission: analysis and conceptualization of Denver's Chinatown as well as a studio design project. The design project is a conceptual reconstruction of the historical Chinatown, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site. The project is a response to the social ecologies of the site, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site.</p> <p>OUTCOMES This semester, students have a dual mission: analysis and conceptualization of Denver's Chinatown as well as a studio design project. The design project is a conceptual reconstruction of the historical Chinatown, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site. The project is a response to the social ecologies of the site, which is a response to the social ecologies of the site.</p> |
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| <p>Background 01 Using objects to speculate Denver's History</p> | <p>Context 02 Maps as a guide to learn and inform</p> |
| <p>Explained 03 Collage as an opportunity to retrace steps</p> | <p>Diagram 04 Evidence of transformed landscapes</p> |
| <p>Site 05 Viewing change + an outlook to the future</p> | <p>Closing 06 Where we are, but more importantly where we are going.</p> |
| <p>Credits 07 Recognizing research and tactics</p> | <p>Credits 07 Recognizing research and tactics</p> |

PART 02: FROM FURNITURE TO CITY

Students were tasked with the investigation of furniture that evolved into the unfolding of the scalar relationship between furniture, interior, building, and city. Furniture was understood as the most immediate tool that produced architectural programs by directly influencing the user's actions and sensations. It performed as the measure between space and the human body, in a similar fashion that architecture serves as the framework between the interior and the urban. Based on the provided spatial framework, students developed prototypes of interior elements that responded to their research of the suppressed interior, proposing a system of small-scale spatial interventions that envisioned flexible, adaptable futures of Denver's Chinatown.



Project "Memory Museum" by Trevor Motzko and Hannah Drummond.

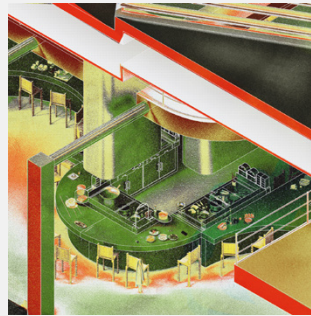


PART 03: COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION: THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE OLD CHINATOWN DISTRICT

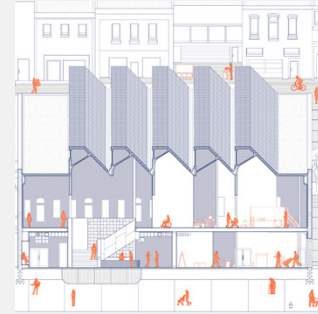
Students proposed a series of adaptable spatial elements that evolved into a collective framework for re-purposing the existing buildings in the old Chinatown district.



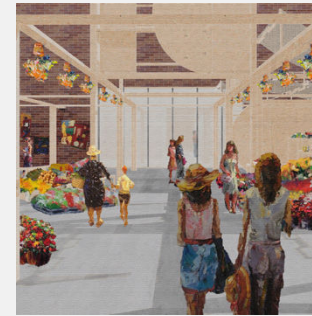
FOOD MARKET



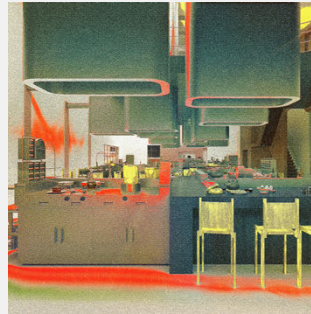
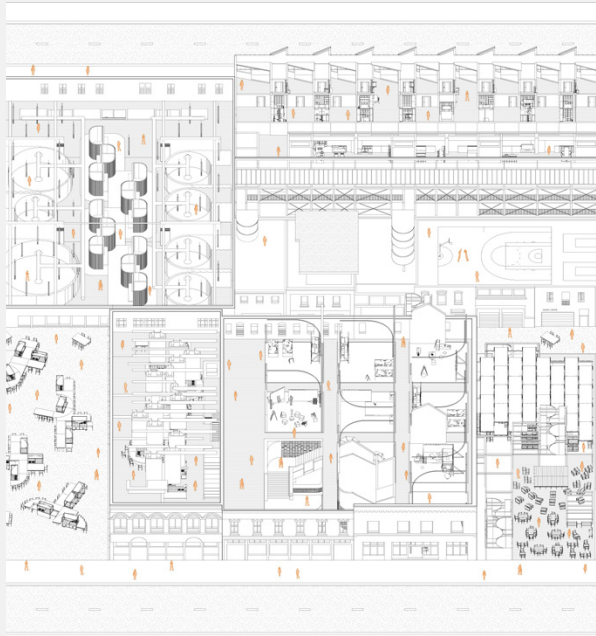
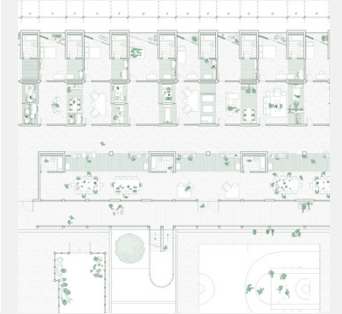
MEMORY MUSEUM



COMMUNITY CENTER



WORKER HOUSING



PROJECT EXHIBITION AT CAP GALLERY

This constellation of spatial tactics and social codes, materialized in multiple media, such as films and large-scale models, aimed to stimulate the imagination of a future Chinatown by surrounding the audience with an immense body of shared visions and varied perspectives



PART 04: SPATIAL ARCHIVE

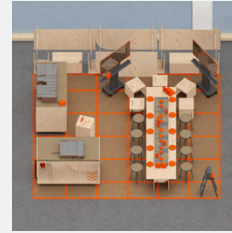
Students collaborated on an installation that allowed the participants to improvise its spatial arrangements, encouraging different forms of *sharing* the design concepts and research outcomes.



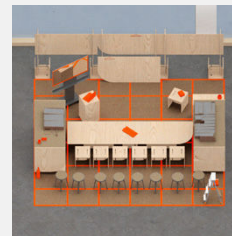
Photographs by Brandon Wunder.

ARCHITECTURE AS REHEARSAL

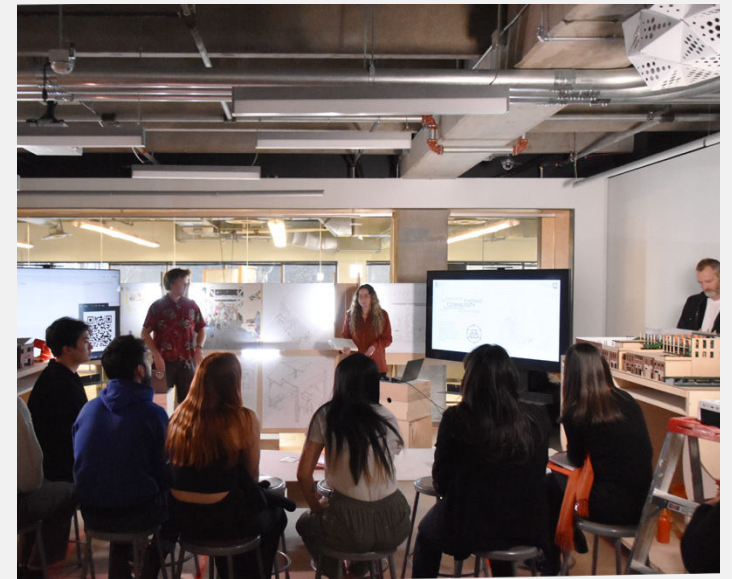
Using the installation as the locus for discourse and dialogue, students proposed a series of performances and discussions to engage all audiences and participants as actors.



Rehearsing around a dinner table with models as plates and architectural drawings as place mats, the students engaged with design critics and community stakeholders to discuss the social and spatial value of food as collective medium.



The students set up the table with construction manuals, engaging the audience in discussing their project that proposed a revitalization of the community through different forms of spatial negotiation.



PART 05: EXHIBITION: "WHERE IS DENVER'S CHINATOWN?"

History Colorado Center, October 9, 2024 to September 2, 2025

The series of design outcomes ultimately evolved into a public exhibition at History Colorado, an ongoing collaboration between CU Denver, History Colorado, and Colorado Asian Pacific United. Students were empowered to participate in the design process of the installation, as well as take an active role in curating their work as a central part of the exhibition. Since its opening, the exhibition has attracted more than 30,000 visitors in the region.



The central installation was designed by Leyuan Li and ARCH 4111 students. Photo by Jesse Kuroiwa.



^ Exhibition opening. Photo by Act One Photography.

v Student work was included as a central part of the exhibition. Photo by Act One Photography.



THE SUPPRESSED INTERIOR: REIMAGINING AMACHE

Supported by National Park Service

COURSE:
ARCH 4121: Undergraduate Studio VI, Spring 2025

ROLE OF NOMINEE:
Studio Instructor

COLLABORATORS & FUNDING SOURCES EXPENSES:
Collaborated with Linnaea Stuart of Arch 11 and the National Park Service. Secured an \$8,000 teaching grant from the National Park Service to cover all material expenses and ongoing research.

STUDENT CONTRIBUTION
1 student worked 10 hours a week for 15 weeks at the rate of \$20 per hour. 19 students contributed to this project for a 6-credit studio course.

The Suppressed Interior: Reimagining Amache is a collaborative effort between Arch 11 and CU Denver, generously funded by the National Park Service. In the 1990s, the first Amache museum campus was established by a local high school teacher, John Hopper, who fostered an educational program with his students to unearth and document the history of the Granada Relocation Center, the Japanese internment camp in Colorado. Through the Amache National Historic Site Act in March 2022, the Amache site was designated as part of the National Park System. Building upon ongoing efforts from divergent community and organizational stakeholders, and considering the programmatic demands to grow the existing museum, the studio asks: focused on the programmatic goals and spatial possibilities between the sites of the Granada Relocation Center and the Amache Museum, how can we leverage spatial agencies that guide community stakeholders to envision a flourishing future for Amache?



COURSE PREVIEW

The Suppressed Interior is the 6th design studio in the architecture undergraduate program at the University of Colorado Denver. It investigates the agency of the interior as the infrastructure of care to confront the injustices of our urban landscapes, unearthing the social and cultural ecologies of under-represented identities through examining spatial, political, and social issues in the context of the Granada Relocation Center. The studio is a collaborative effort between Arch 11 and CU Denver, and is generously funded by the National Park Service.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

(This description includes excerpts from 2007 Amache Interpretive and Development Plan by the National Park Service.)

The Granada Relocation Center, commonly known as Amache, is one of the ten relocation centers where Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II following their forced removal by military authorities from the West Coast. Although not charged with any crime and without benefit of judicial hearing, Japanese Americans as a group were uprooted and taken under armed guard to hastily created assembly and relocation centers. This decision, greatly influenced by racism and hysteria toward Japanese in the United States, had resulted in harsh living conditions for the Japanese communities, epitomized in the case of Amache. More than 10,000 people passed through the center, which operated from August 1942 to October 1945. After the war, most of the temporary "Theater of Operations" buildings constructed at Amache by the wartime War Relocation Authority were removed and sold to the public inoperably, and this troubled history has gradually faded from public consciousness.

In the 1990s, the first Amache museum campus was established by local high school teacher, John Hopper, who fostered an educational program with his students that continues to guide and maintain the custodial direction of its current building today through the Amache National Historic Site Act in March 2002. The Amache site was designated as part of the National Park System. Building upon ongoing efforts from divergent community and organizational stakeholders to reimagine the history of Amache, and considering the programmatic demands to grow the existing museum, the studio asks: **how can we leverage spatial agencies that guide community stakeholders to envision a flourishing future for Amache?**

In response to these questions, the course employs a research and design methodology that unearths the term "interior" and dissects its dimension of oppression. On the urban scale, the term "interior West" refers to the States of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. On the building scale, the oppression is manifested through the disconnection between external perceptions of Japanese communities and the internal realities experienced by its inhabitants. The internment camp resulted in an internalized territory, in which the Japanese community was confined under threat in the face of expedient political and social performance. As such, the inherent identity of the Granada Relocation Center was suppressed in order to maintain the order imposed

REIMAGINING AMACHE

by the military. On the interior scale, the interior spaces of these barracks and communal buildings, such as barracks and schools, were often intertwined with arduous living conditions that resulted in a congested, deteriorating interior environment. This, in turn, had a detrimental effect that suppressed the wellness of historically underrepresented communities. Unearthing the oppression of the interior is considered an effective way to unearth the social, political, and cultural parameters that have shaped the history of the Granada Relocation Center in Denver and beyond.

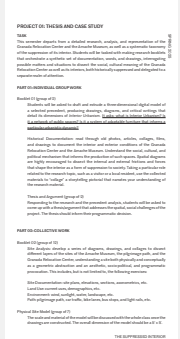
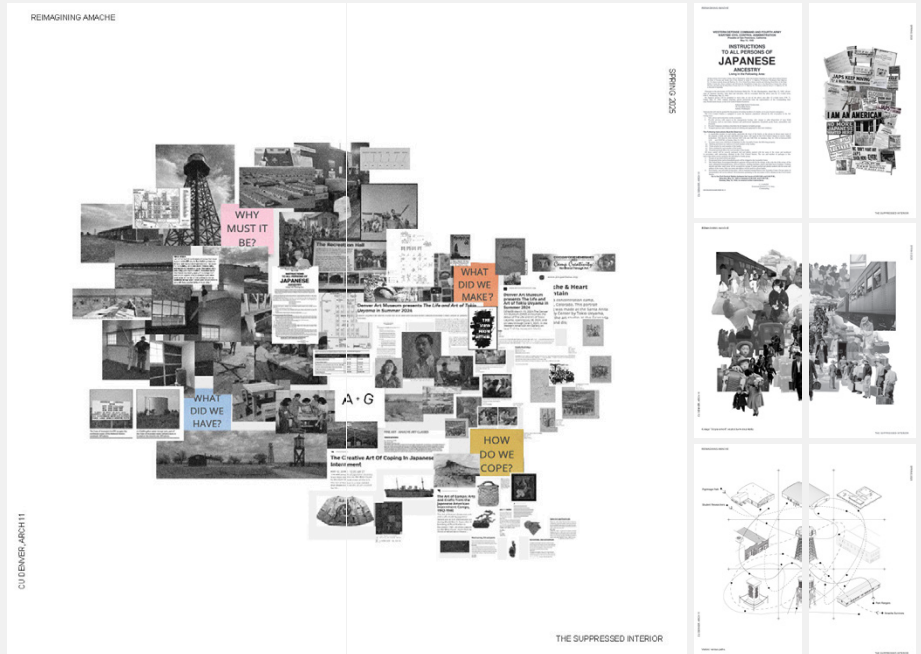
The course follows a sequence of three nested projects, each looking at a different scale of conceptualization and realization. During the first two weeks of the course, students would be asked to conduct a detailed research, analysis, and representation of the interior. Students will be tasked with making research booklets that unearthing a synthetic set of documentation, words, and drawings, interweaving possible matters and situations to discuss the social, cultural meaning of the Granada Relocation Center as well as its interiors, both historically suppressed and relegated to a separate realm of attention. Moving forward, students will be tasked with producing drawings, models, and videos to encapsulate their research findings while proposing a spatial system of "Interior Urbanism" in response to the challenges of today. By investigating the circulation of capital, production, and population in these urban interiors, the project would investigate the collective, political system that informs the relationship between the conditioned interior territory and the outer world. This design process will be accompanied by talks, lectures, and workshops given by faculty and guest lecturers. The last weeks of the course will be dedicated to the development of a scheme in tandem with the refinement of research materials in preparation for the final exhibition.

Ultimately, the course aims to re-examine the historical, social, and political relationships between the site of the Granada Relocation Center and the Amache Museum. Projects proposed in the studio should use architecture as a medium to investigate propositions and precedents that reimagine the future of the Amache museum and its local context.



PART 01: UNEARTHING AMACHE

A research booklet orchestrating a synthetic set of documentation, words, and drawings, dissecting the social, cultural meaning of the Granada Relocation Center as well as its interiors, both historically suppressed and delegated to a separate realm of attention.



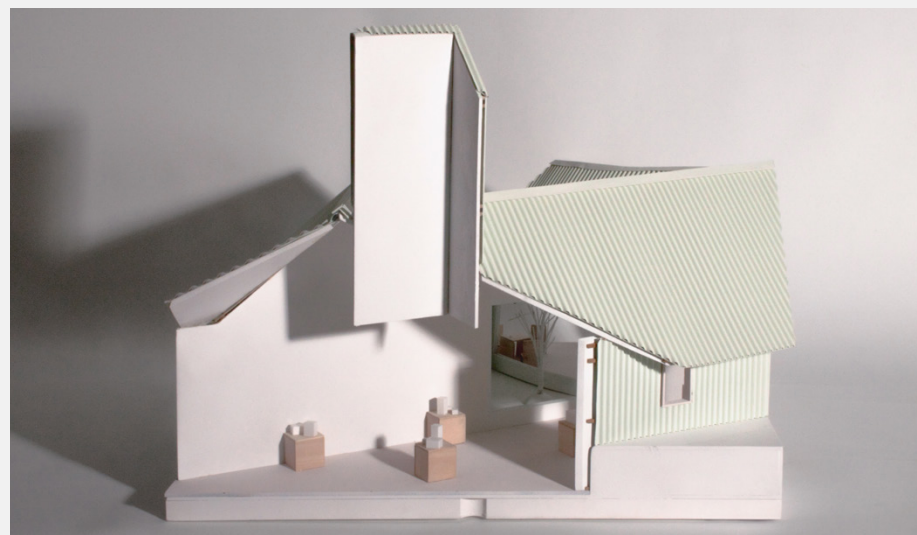
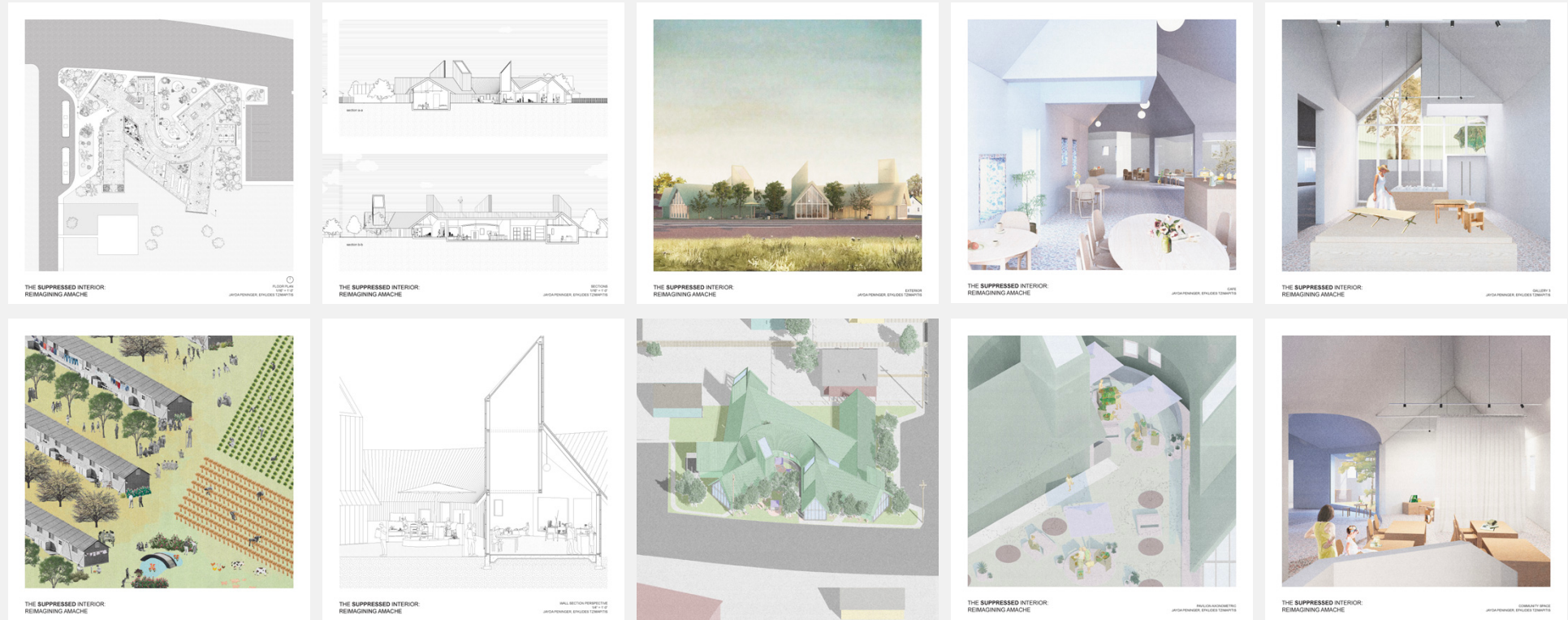
PART 02: AMACHE MUSEUM REIMAGINED

The project proposes a kit of parts that can be arranged in various locations throughout the town of Granada. These arrangements will serve as temporary, flexible curatorial and social spaces that activate the Pilgrimage path connecting the Amache Museum and the Granada Relocation Center.



PART 02: AMACHE MUSEUM REIMAGINED

This project examines the suppressed interior of a barrack, a typical unit in the Japanese concentration camps. By reinterpreting the barrack, the project creates a sequence of spaces that showcase materials illustrating the harsh conditions endured by Japanese Americans during their internment.



ENGAGED RESEARCH

"Your Greenhouse Is Your Kitchen Is Your Living Room" Temporary Installation, 2024. In collaboration with JXY Studio.

As an educator and designer, I am committed to creating a supportive learning environment while engaging students in my creative research. Over the course of three months, students actively participated in design and curatorial discussions with the host gallery and the communities involved in this project. They were also trained in digital software and fabrication tools to prepare models and drawings for the project.



In an unfiltered, unadorned, unadorned space, the structure is a testament to the power of community and shared experience. It is a place where the boundaries between the kitchen, the living room, and the greenhouse are blurred, creating a unique and engaging environment for everyone who enters.

Tomato Even though my parents no longer have that maple table or a screened-in porch, the tomatoes still return to my kitchen table each summer. In the spring, my dad tills the soil and prepares his garden in our backyard. Some years, my sisters and I would help him plant, and later, pick tomatoes, squash, zucchini, and corn, though raccoons and deer would often destroy the corn stalks before we could harvest any for ourselves.

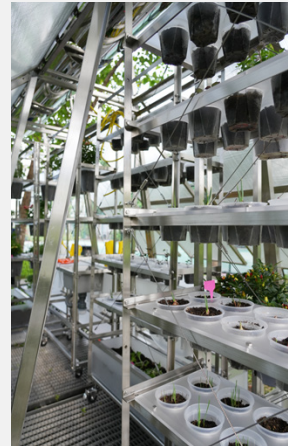
My grandparents here also avoid gardeners. They grow the sweetest "peaches and cream" corn and flavor-dense green beans that were a staple at every meal we ate at their house. They would also recruit my sisters and I to help them

shell peas and shuck corn in the summers. My access to fresh vegetables has spoiled me my whole life and is the reason I have a deep appreciation for fresh produce and farmers' markets. But it's tomatoes that always remind me of home.

One year, in a decade, my dad has hosted an annual "BLT Day" at TLM Associates, Inc., an architecture firm in Jacksonville, Florida, where he worked for 20 years before retiring in 2023. Still, the annual BLT Day tradition continues. About a month before the local business community to stop by the firm for the lunch, my dad would enjoy a classic bacon lettuce, and tomato (BLT) sandwich with

"We're having... cooorn chowwder!" I howled at the neighbors across the street before galloping up the porch steps at my parents' house in Ithaca, NY, and slamming the screen door in a humid summer evening circa 1998. The soup, consisting of potatoes, onion, often bacon, celery, and, inevitably, corn, was served and simmered in milk, was a summer tradition on both sides of the family and presented us with an opportunity to chat informally while keeping hands busy, nosh on not-too-weet

peas, and partake proudly in our family's heritage. Shucking a messy business, with sticks and silk flying about and catching when the smallest breeze, so this activity was to be conducted outside in a place that offered some shelter from the wind. At my parents' turn-of-the-century American Four Square, this meant in the front, on the porch (a modest, open colonnade-lined structure a few feet back from the sidewalk) or in the back, on the deck, underneath an umbrella at a table beside the pergola covered in climbing hops in later years,



Graphic design by Studio Pianpian He and Max Harvey.

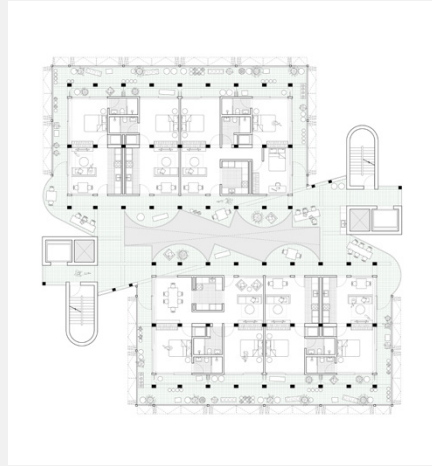
ENGAGED RESEARCH AND CREATIVE WORK

A series of creative projects that encouraged active participation from students at CU Denver.

2026 AIAS/ACSA NEW FACULTY TEACHING AWARD



- ^ ACADIA Installation and Exhibition, 2023. Photograph by Brandon Wunder.
- > "Bundle House" for the Denver Single-Stair Housing Challenge, 2025. In collaboration with Xuanyu Wei.
- v "Flower Room", 2025. Photograph by Leyuan Li.



- ^ > "A Timber Tower Wearing a Greenhouse Coat" for the "Decoding Timber Tower" competition, 2025. In collaboration with De Peter Yi.
- v "Becoming Chinatown" Installation, 2025. In collaboration with Studio Everyone.



LEYUAN LI / UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Student feedback for courses included in the supporting material.

ARCH 4111 IN FALL 2023 AND SPRING 2025

"Li as an instructor is amazing and he is so supportive and passionate about his students and projects. His passion and attitude pushes his students to work and produce amazing projects throughout the entire semester. Every aspect of Li's course is effective."

"Li has been by far the best instructor I've had in the architecture program. After the first week, I could immediately tell Li's bar of expectations was far higher than previous professors, which I appreciated immensely as it felt like a significant push this semester. Throughout the term, it was apparent just how passionate Li was about the studio and the project. His passion infected me and all of a sudden I cared more for what I was producing. Overall the studio was an incredible journey."

"Li and his TA Blake Brooks proved to be an outstanding duo in studio V. Li in particular set up one of the most outstanding studios I or anyone I know has either witnessed or been a part of. As such a young and emerging faculty member, Li has demonstrated his passion for teaching and his students."

"Li, this semester has been one of the most eye-opening and transformative studios I've taken thus far as a student here at CU Denver. The disruptive perspectives, ideas, and approaches to design that you bring to our university are precisely what our school needs. Your efforts to introduce us to new and emerging offices as the studio's architectural canon was refreshing and inspiring and your attempts at pushing students to explore a specific theoretical concept driven with real-world purpose was highly effective."

"Li was incredible. I've grown so much in my skills, production, and design knowledge this semester because of Li's guidance and curriculum. Feedback was concise and very helpful. Deliverables were challenging, but within reason, so I felt a lot of personal growth. I truly appreciated Li's perspective on design and architecture and I am leaving this semester feeling inspired, and excited, and I will miss Li as an instructor."

"The most effective aspect was the time you took to walk through everything with us. The objectives of the studio were laid out in a way that helped us grow in our design and creative skills as well as challenge ourselves to push further in what we can produce."

"Li was wonderful in all ways, my only wish is that others would have been able to take part in this studio. Thank you Li for a great studio V."

"Leyuan Li is the best professor that this school has to offer. I did not

Thank you to University of Colorado Denver for their continued support, to all the students who have been supporting and inspring me as an educator, and to the 2026 AIAS/ACSA New Faculty Teaching Award Jurors for your consideration of my application.

believe that I could learn so much in such a short amount of time. He is the most inspiring teacher I have ever had. He displayed genuine care for his students that no studio professor has ever offered. The brief was amazing, enriching and rewarding. As difficult as it was, it pushed me to become a better designer. If this school hires more people like Li this will be one of the best architecture schools in the country. I just want to tell him thank you for the best studio I am going to have in my academic career."

ARCH 5120 IN SPRING 2023 AND SPRING 2024

"Li has helped me develop my critical thinking and creativity when it comes to crafting a piece of architecture. As Studio II students, we're still in the early stages of learning, and for me, this was the first real-world building I've ever designed, and Li was able to work with me at the level I'm currently at. He is open to ideas, and offers constructive feedback on whether decisions will work or not."

"I like how everything in the course was organized and the documents on canvas were very helpful when I needed to reference old material."

"Generating skills across design as a whole as been very beneficial. Investigating missing middle housing in depth before going into our own design project was very helpful."

"Li was really helpful with guiding me on my drawing conventions and was readily available for questions and emails! I really appreciated how engaged he was with my project and how he would go out of his way to send emails that help my project."

"I learned a lot this semester about graphical representation. I like that each assignment was a build on each other so the final is a culmination of what we learned through our precedents and of diagramming. Workshops were super helpful in my opinion. I would have loved to watch the photo workshop but the timing of that wasn't great with finals. I thought the course was highly organized. I appreciated the PDFs and resources available in canvas. Li is very responsive via emails and in class enthusiasm for the class."

ARCH 2121 IN FALL 2024

"Li didn't overwhelm us with assignments but gave us enough to still be effective of our work."

"This course has not been that overwhelming and has taken architecture in a very fun jump and learn about line weights and made this idea of architecture very fun and made me look more forward towards this career."

"Having Li as my instructor was an amazing experience. I honestly learned the most in his class compared to other architecture classes I have previously taken. He takes our learning seriously and consistently challenged us. I appreciate his class a lot and I will be leaving it with a lot of new learnt things."

"Li was very encouraging on managing school and work balances, and was constantly vocal on progression of work throughout semester."

- ^ "Reclaiming Denver's Chinatown" Film Screening and Panel Discussion, Spring 2023. Organized by Leyuan Li and the Denver Office of Storytelling. Photo by Carmen New.
- > "Becoming Chinatown" Talks and Performances, Spring 2025. Organized by Leyuan Li and Tairan An. Photo by Judith Gonzales Chavez.
- ✓ 2024 CAP Lecture Series, organized by Leyuan Li and Sarah Hearne. Photo by Leyuan Li.

