

# YOU'RE FIRED

"Your position has been eliminated."  
"Your services are no longer required."  
"We think you'd be happier elsewhere."  
"Exciting new changes are coming."  
"This is a difficult position to be put in."

However it's delivered, it all means the same thing: you're fired.

At one point, just a punchline on *The Apprentice*, the current administration has taken the term beyond the point of irony. DOGE's pervasive mass firing of federal employees has weaponized the catchphrase while the greater attacks on higher education have intensified. Recently, in fear of the nearly 7% raise in the Endowment Tax, the University's hiring pause has left funding for student positions at Yale out at sea.

Unfortunately, the act of unionizing is still disparaged in the field of architecture, and the YSoA is no exception. Since 2023, following the ratification of the first Yale Graduate Workers Contract, student positions in the YSoA have been precarious, with tens-of-thousands of dollars worth of wages nearly washed away through restructuring, reclassification, and outright elimination of jobs.

The industry reflects a similar tumultuous wave.

Commissions are controlled by investment capital and speculative real estate, drowning young professionals in the relentless monetary currents. Our own position as workers is deliberately kept unstable, with work contracted out to maintain a degree of separation between employers and employees. It fosters a culture of out-performance where you might inadvertently throw your fellow crewmen overboard. We're taught to be scared of the repercussions of organizing en masse, breeding apathy in the grandiosity of the problems, reeling-in capital-worshipping LARPers alike, preventing the betterment of people's lives in any systemic way.

This issue is not intended to be a doomier eulogy, together, it is a humanizing experience. Whether premature or woefully overdue, we all exist in this drift, as our careers are one canceled project or budget cut away from erasure. In truth, these conditions won't be reversed. The field of architecture will always face an uncertain future as we try to keep our heads above water. It's an industry perceived to be perpetually put at risk due to the next recession or the next rising tide. While we can't foresee the next challenge, we can always anticipate the emergence of new ones. As Connor suggests, we heed the words of the ever-referenced Deleuze, and we learn to surf.

## Endnotes

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- 12 Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," 6.
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Paprika! Magazine is a window into emerging discourse from the Yale School of Architecture. Every student-curated issue features diverse voices in the fields of architecture, art, and design and is uniquely designed by students from the Graphic Design program at the Yale School of Art. No two issues are alike.

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## ON THE GROUND

### Leaving the Nest

By Marusya Bakhrameeva  
(M.Arch II '26)

The seventh floor is gradually becoming a cozy nest of our own design. Wooden shelves now rest warmly against the concrete walls, and a collectively chosen couch is on its way. Knowing that Rudolph Hall will welcome us home, we can focus on our theses. Each of us created an "advanced studio trip" for ourselves; the itineraries reflect the individuality of the research they support. The journeys span across the year and the globe. From now until the spring midterm, we will explore every continent except Australia and Antarctica, carrying the quiet assurance that our shared space awaits us.

### Perfection is a Collectable

By Maggie Holm  
(M.Arch I '28)

"One could say the matcha-dubai-chocolate-labubu is our generation's Vitruvian Man" – David Sadighian, Architecture and Modernity

While it's widely recognized that Da Vinci's perfect man is dead, first-years proposed what he's been reincarnated as. Grayson Sommer says it's the default scale figure at o.o in SketchUp. Vicky Wu thinks he has a Rhino Dynamic Input Box hovering over his head. Others claim that our cohort's ideal is Professor Moon. Bader Baroudy says that while the Vitruvian Man has never been all-representative, the labubu exquisite corpse is perhaps the perfect symbol of empty aspirations under late-stage capitalism.

### Pin-Up Milestones

By Tian Hsu  
(Undergraduate)

Congrats to the juniors on surviving printer jams and costly prints, now fluent in o.1 vs 1 linewidth. Meanwhile, seniors have advanced from "dominant void" to "intimate immensity"—though what that means, we're still waiting to hear.

## Learning to Teach

By Jaime Solares Carmona  
(Ph.D.)

I'll allow myself to share some personal news: I've started T'fing for the class "Architecture and Modernity." I am very excited just for the fact that I'm going to be part of a class that revolves around theory, rather than history. I never had anything like that in Brazil. I also love the idea of keeping my "ears to the ground." As I am deeply opposed to an academia disconnected from the absurdity of everyday life, I am finding teaching to be a delightful place where I can get closer to the anxieties and potentials of the present moment.

## The Mitchell Library is "Mid"

By Majdi Alkarute  
(M.Arch I '27)

"By itself it's mid—with me, it's going to be a superstar." That's how Nathan Nguyen described Mitchell Library, the subject of our adaptive reuse studio. "I think that's fair," Robbie Skoronski agreed about the building's mid-ness. So how to reuse something with apparently limited architectural value in the idealized world of

design studios? Some students think that it would be an affront to demolish the building beyond recognition. Sure, the value of the building is subjective, but "I haven't seen anyone do better," joked Melos Shtaloja. But others think it's better to demolish an existing building than ruin a new one.

## Above us is only the sky

By Tony Salem Musleh  
(M.Arch I '26)

Leaves are full of life in August. Travel was just a coffee break. September's wind whispers summer's end. By its end, tables are cleaned, books stored, coffee cups stacked.

The fourth is ours. We are third-years.

We share all of Zund's mysteries, blacklist classes, and make the disco ball spin. By the end of September, we are comfortable in the role of "Third-Year M.Arch I." And while we miss our seniors, we can proudly say: our DIs are surpassing. Thanks, BuRu.

## Perspective Needs a Visa

By Shreshtha Goyal  
(M.Arch II '27)

Over half of our cohort are international students. The M.Arch II program's curriculum for travel week and thesis research gives opportunities that let us step directly into the contexts we design for. Perspective is essential to design, but perspective needs access, and access requires a visa, which, for us, comes at a cost. Alongside classes and jobs, many of us spent hours chasing visa appointments, navigating the city without passports, and waiting anxiously for their return. Thankfully, they arrived in time, but each trip carries uncertainty. Hopefully, we will see you back at school!

## Abundance Without Architects

Greg Calleja Ayapanteatl & Brigid Elrod

In typical conference fashion—breakfast burritos, coffee, orange juice, and roundtables—YIMBYtown 2025 (YIMBY in "yes-in-my-backyard") drew housing advocates from around the country, state and congressional lawmakers, and grassroots New Haven groups to the Omni Hotel. (Shout-out to Local 217!) As members of the Yale chapter of The Architecture Lobby, we went to see what architecture students might learn from the YIMBY movement for pro-housing policy and zoning reform. But something was missing: where were all the architects?

The energetic tinkers at YIMBYtown were intent on perfecting the combination of tax credits, code reform, zoning, and deregulation that would unleash a new boom of housing abundance. A room of over two hundred people discussed the latest single-stair code reform, while other attendees expounded on how to rationalize the complicated Oregon vent pipe code—which, according to the Director of Plumbing Standards Research and Development at the non-profit Center for Building in North America, has made new-build plumbing too intricate and expensive since the early 20th Century—and how to streamline building code reform procedures.

But we were still reeling from a moment during the previous panel, "If

You Legalize It Will They Build It? Real Estate 101." City planner-turned-developer Seth Zeren was asked about when developer costs will come down low enough that starting rents will follow. Zeren's answer was quite clear: any savings in building costs will always go to developer profits, not to lower rent.

So why is the so-called housing abundance movement so focused on speculative developers? What role can architects play in breaking these rules of the game and envisioning a new future for de-commodified housing?

YIMBYtown taught us that reforming building codes is less of a hassle than we thought. Codes are revised on three year cycles, and architects can be vocal proponents for those changes. Our professional practice class neither covers that, nor recognizes the potential for architects to use our expertise as a lever for policy changes.

With that, we encourage current and future architecture students to join these conversations and create space for architects to do more than accept the status quo. We can no longer afford to stay silent and allow groups like the AIA (who had notably no presence at this national conference) to speak for us (or in this case, to not speak)—it's crucial that we reach outside the studio to participate in these critical discussions of our time.

## LOOKING BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Review of Lake Verea's  
"Paparazza Moderna: Lovers & Frenemies"

by Cai Sheng-yu (Q-Sheng)

Lake Verea, the artistic and romantic duo of Francisca Rivero-Lake and Carla Verea, maintains a guerrilla photographic practice. Fascinated by the complex relationships behind canonical modern houses, they photograph reticent buildings without notifying current owners. As *paparazzi*—the rare feminine conjugation of everyone's love-to-hate media pests—they approach with a sort of impish glee. The resulting photographs are thus full of risk and spontaneity, offering a refreshing counterargument to the glossy, straightened images favored by architectural tastemakers.

While the products are visually muted, Lake Verea's image-making process is nothing but vocal. Their cameras oscillate between distant exteriors and intimate close-ups,

## EPIHEMERALITY AS FOUNDATION

Response to Barclay & Crousse's  
"Permanence and Instability,"

by Shreshtha Goyal & Marusya Bakhrameeva

Returning to Lima after two decades of practice in Paris, Sandra Barclay and Jean Pierre Crousse embraced the uncertainty of their new context. Memory was what drew them back to Peru: as a robust counterweight to instability, it urges them to tell the story of the land and its people. Not only do Barclay & Crousse's projects reflect memories of the past, they also invite new memories to take root—as in the UDEP lecture building, where a tree planting initiative allows students to form bonds with the place.

Memory is also anchored in their building methods. Glass bottles set into walls, hand-placed mosaic walkways, and carefully stacked stone give buildings a character that can only emerge from close collaboration with seasoned workers rooted in local traditions.

However, this kind of work also comes with costs, like energy, time, labor, and informal working conditions. Such costs are felt throughout the project, and most deeply by the communities working on site. It's hard not to think of the builders working day in, day out with salt-resistant reddish pozzolan cement on the exposed concrete, bare-handed in the desert sun when looking at the beautiful plaster wall of the Paracas Museum. Hand-applied cement finishing is no easy task, and the mixing requires precision and a steady hand. The traces of their steady hands are what make the building truly unique. Without them, there would be no building. While informality benefits the project, does it benefit the builders?

challenging the single-family house as the locus for heteronormative ideals. Those genuine stakes come fully into view when they speak. In Rudolph's austere temple to modernity—and dressed in twinning all-black incognito *paparazzi* outfits, the duo delivered a voyeuristic take on loving and losing in sexy, rectilinear rooms. Their quasi-comedic performativity was precisely the tonal upset that made the canon human-scaled and close to life. It almost feels unfeeling to consume their work upstairs in the gallery without the live narration. Anecdotes of love and hate are betrayed by the absence of human figures in the photographs themselves.

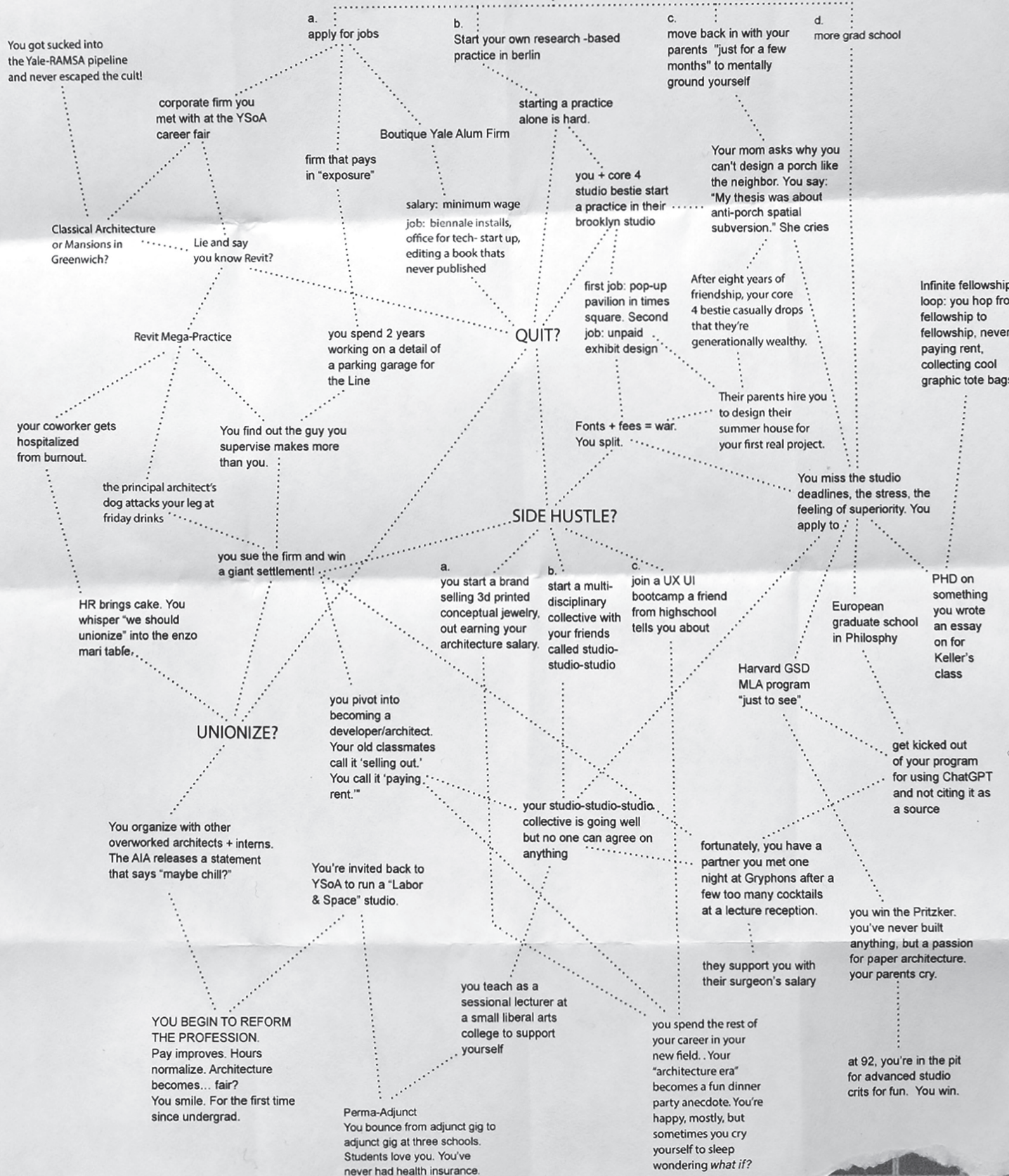
If the exhibition maps friendships, rivalries, and client-architect feuds, the accompanying lecture-performance zeroes in on perhaps the strongest emotion of all: love. It's a reminder that modernism did not arise outside fragile human conditions. Pulling back the curtain of tectonics, Lake Verea lets us witness the messy, funny, tragic people that make life and love in buildings, and sometimes for buildings.

*Paparazza Moderna: Lovers & Frenemies* is on view through November 29.

10/6 The much-anticipated, much-toured Living Village student housing, designed by Howeler + Yoon and featuring a fountain by COLE QUIST, ELLEN ZHU, and JULIA EDWARDS, opens at the Divinity School.

## GRADUATE FROM YSOA

Life Chart  
—Priscilla Barker





Everyone Around Me Is Being Fired - McKenna Sabon

What do my mother, my boyfriend and my co-teaching fellow have in common? They all lost their jobs last month.

My mom worked in banking, underwriting loans for small businesses. Her expertise and seniority earned her a top salary and position. However, when her department wasn't generating enough revenue, she was placed on the chopping block instead of her younger and cheaper coworker. What once made her an asset suddenly became a liability.

My boyfriend was placed in his first teaching fellow (TF) position through the mystical matching of Davidson. He dove in headfirst: attending the first class and introducing himself to the ten students. As a required course in the undergraduate architecture track, enrollment above the 12-student threshold was expected. However, when administration discovered enrollment fell, one of the two TF positions had to be cut. The decision was out of his hands.

My co-teaching fellow was hired post-Davidson for a course which had grown to 14 students. Their knowledge of the course subject was beneficial and insightful during the first two classes. Then came the add/drop shuffle. When enrollment fell to 11 students, my fellow TF had to leave their position. Their employment relied on the actions of others.

These situations subvert three assumptions we tend to believe about our employment:

- 1) We believe being a "good employee" guarantees job security
- 2) We trust the hiring process protects us from instability
- 3) We believe we control the terms of our employment

After all, we have the power to choose to accept a job, so it feels natural to believe we also choose when to leave it. These assumptions do not hold true. And instead, everyone around me is being fired. My mother, my boyfriend, and my co-teaching fellow all accepted their positions with good faith, alongside the skill and dedication to succeed. Yet forces beyond their control—profit margins, arbitrary thresholds, enrollment numbers—were responsible for the termination of their employment. These situations reveal the somber truth: employment is not as stable as we are led to believe. But they also indicate how losing a job does not correlate to losing one's worth. Our increased awareness of the instability of employment can serve to empower us to have the conversations to push for change.

Surf's Up! by Connor Liskey

Everywhere surfing has already replaced the older sports.  
—Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," 1992.

When times are tough, architects turn to Deleuze. Since the 1990s, some of the biggest names in the profession—from Greg Lynn to Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi—have invoked the work of this singular philosopher in their attempts to elaborate an architecture appropriate to the present moment. But why Deleuze? What is it about Deleuze that captures the imagination of designers and theorists reckoning with a discipline in crisis? To answer these questions, we must first ask: what's the matter with architecture?

If the title of this issue—YOU'RE FIRED—is any indication, architecture has, once again, lost its way. In the United States, the future of the research university seems uncertain. If, in previous decades, the university served as a redoubt of critical inquiry in a society guided by the imperatives of accumulation, the present situation feels different. On campus, people are nervous. Academic freedom can no longer be taken for granted. Campus politics have been shorn of their insularity. As recent events demonstrate, the university has drifted far from its monastic origins. What happens on campus—in seminar rooms and design studios—is tied intimately to happenings further afield. As a result, the classroom feels disconcertingly porous. No longer can we assume—if we ever did—that the work of scholarship is insulated from the broader currents of politics. Whether the university, as we recognize it, will survive the coming decades is an open question.

The situation of architects in the labor market is equally ambiguous. The emergence of novel technologies promises to reshape the profession in the coming years, in ways both good and bad. For now, though, one thing is clear: precarity rules the day. Job security is hard to come by. For those lucky enough to find employment in the profession, workloads are onerous, and compensation is often insufficient. Like other forms of so-called 'skilled labor,' design is subject to the insecurity and exploitation that accompanies work in our post-Fordist present. Armed with degrees—and (mostly) bereft of labor unions—contemporary designers are tasked with navigating an employment landscape within which uncertainty and overwork are facts of life.

Fortunately for us, the crisis of architecture—as an academic discipline, as a skilled profession—is nothing new. There is, thus, no shortage of places to look for insights into the dilemmas we confront as budding theorists and designers alike. As early as 1973, in the preface to *Architecture and Utopia*, Marxist theorist Manfredo Tafuri linked the impasse of the discipline to the plight of its students, reduced to the status of mere 'technicians' by the machinations of capital. Tafuri argued that, in the wake of modernism, architecture was in its death throes, consigned to the production of 'sublime uselessness' after the Enlightenment dream of Utopia has been all but abandoned. With its relentless, Adornian 'negativity,' Tafuri's work should be read as an elegy for the avant-garde impulse which animated the architectures of the early twentieth century. For Tafuri, architecture had become a discipline robbed of its telos, condemned instead to service the very force—capital—whose imperatives it ought to oppose in the name of something better.

Is the world described by Tafuri so different from our own? Has architecture recovered from its abandonment of substantive political engagement? The answer, on both counts, is clearly negative. As a disciplined historian, Tafuri refused to speculate about the future. This is, I think, where Deleuze comes in. In a now-classic essay from 1992, entitled "Postscript on the Societies of Control," Deleuze surveys the "crisis of the institutions" which undergirded post-war society. For Deleuze, the history of Fordism can be written as an architectural history, in which the "spaces of enclosure" explored by Foucault—"prison, hospital, factory, school, family"—were tasked with the orderly production of disciplined, modern subjects. Put simply: under social democracy, institutions mediated between individual subjects and the broader social collectivities of which they were an integral part. The twentieth century was, for better or for worse, the century of the masses. By the 1990s, however, a novel governmental rationality was in ascendance, which operated through practices of autonomy and individuation. This is, in many ways, the world we inhabit. We are all individuals now, entrepreneurial and wily.

For Deleuze, this epochal transformation is captured by a seemingly commonplace observation: "everywhere surfing has replaced the older sports." In other words, mass society, with its characteristic forms of communal leisure, has given way to something new. Surfing, an individual undertaking par excellence, offers a metaphor for the transformations underway. The situation described by Deleuze is familiar to us. The postwar promise of full employment is a thing of the past; internships and insecurity are second nature. The enclosed spaces of the architectural firm and the seminar room grow increasingly porous. Yet, nostalgia has its limits. Surfing, like design, finds its pleasures in openness. Both practices entail shrewd engagement with an emergent field of possibilities. Conditions are always changing; our job is to exploit instability for our own ends. To surf is to locate freedom in the condition of ephemerality. Only time will reveal the full implications of the changes we are witnessing in our discipline. At the moment, everything seems to be up for grabs. But seeing like a surfer enables us to grasp the indeterminacy of our present. If Tafuri is to be believed, architecture has been dead for more than fifty years. Perhaps, then, the tide is finally turning? For us, surfing will involve locating new forms of practical and theoretical engagement with the present that might very well outlive the university or the firm as we now know them. As Deleuze reminds us: "There is no need to fear or hope, only to look for new weapons."<sup>25</sup>

ALEXANDER POFF

From my drafts...

Dear Ms. [Classified],

How did you do it? You felt a calling many of us know, pulled in by the tantalizing black hole that is architecture, like a child to a stovetop. We just can't help ourselves, can we? Yet, you did so in a time where stovetops are kept near glass ceilings for women like you. I guess skylights always leak, and creatives find a way to burn themselves, huh?

Not only did you receive your degrees from a prestigious university, but you succeeded in New York's "right of passage," in your own words. You leapt past fearful men who attempted to reduce you to an overqualified secretary. You moved home, started a family, and gave up your career to raise children. Then, you miraculously snatched it right back from a desk in your basement. You inspired me.

You built a bridge over the nightmarish precarity and toxic power structures that plague our industry. It's too bad you destroyed it, and maybe that's fitting—architecture isn't built to last anyway.

I wish I could say you hired me. I would have loved to be your legitimate employee rather than feeling pressured to act as one. Five days per week. Deadlines. Late nights. One paid day off would have felt like mercy. A sick day or maybe health insurance? I would have organized if I had that chance, yet I dared not complain. As an independent contractor, I could not be fired—I just might not be welcome back. And that's an incredibly tenuous and exploitative line to live on.

You misclassified me.

And you misclassified my coworkers. Being naive and eager to impress, I quickly completed the work of a senior colleague. Shortly after, their desk was empty. People came and went. Unsurprisingly, without investment in workers, workers weren't invested. I carry undeserved guilt that my success pushed others out. But I didn't construct the toxic work environment—you did. You disappointed me.

Unfortunately, you are not alone in this sin. In 2018, the AIA found that a mere 6% of labor is characterized as long-term contract, yet in 2024, they reported that 28% of architects are characterized as "solo practitioners." These distinctions are blurry. I was technically a solo practitioner as the owner of an LLC—which I created at your recommendation for "tax benefits." It is certainly possible that a fifth of our entire industry is being exploited through this very loophole. Your motive is obvious: all costs are offloaded onto us—medicare and social security taxes, insurance, workers compensation, maternity leave, and so much more.

All this boils down to the larger problem of not being paid our worth. Principals like you leverage power to make up for lost income late in their career by exploiting loopholes and workers, perpetuating the cycle of abuse. So go get your bag Ms. [Classified]. I daresay you've earned it after the glass ceilings you've shattered. Just know that one day, the stove won't be worth the heat, and our beloved architecture will crumple like your bridge.

Sincerely,  
Your loyal contractor

disillusioned.nwd by Gregorio Calleja Ayapantecatl

Marr'd by a lack of mentorships and wounded by unfair compensation, my drive is depressed. Although a dedicated steward, I found solace being embraced in law this summer. This is my requiem for other lost workers, and for the mediocre management that squandered our accomplishments with janky job titles and overburdened workloads.

My past work in detailing, permitting, and design feels like a mirage. It was a time when my spirit was rebuked for refusing to capitulate to verbose speculation. Despite being afflicted by the lesions of discrimination, we prevailed against the bureaucratic ghoul, born of my own naivete.

You're the subordinate of a BIM manager who never learned to manage BIM or run a clash model—how does that make sense? The only appreciation for our work came from another general contractor who recognized our efforts. It's rough knowing that someone in the senior team thinks you're out to get them. Yeah, I'm the crazy one for singling them out, because what does "make it look good" mean? Shoutout to the office hall monitor, the corporates apparently valued me more during the layoffs. Also, my name isn't [insert stereotypical name].

Then, you stumble upon stacks of archives—contracts for a prison among other skeletons—and the general contractor is furious the project won't open on time (rip SoFi 2020 Taylor Swift concert). At this point, you murmur "E—you, too" on the coordination call. You wake up and realize the dream was a nightmare.

Okay, I'll calm down and enjoy my weekend. I quit.

A Fin-tastic Coworker by Ruoxi (Cici) Jia

At my last job, I had a surprisingly special coworker: an office fish. Petting it—or trying to—became my daily act of rebellion. My little colleague sent me devious telepathic signals: "Let's make tea together!", "Want to take a walk?", "The weather's great today, why not leave work a bit early?" I'd wander around the office, browse grad school applications, or carefully brew tea, imagining my aquatic friend nodding in approval. My fishy companion taught me how to outswim monotony.

The work itself was repetitive—a parade of cramped rooms and sterile details copied from one project to the next, all to make money for already-wealthy developers. It was one floor plan after another. Sometimes I wondered if my fish friend felt the same boredom, or if it was secretly cheering me on as I tapped my pen and pretended to be 100% devoted to the redlines. Perhaps it found comfort in the simple rhythm of swimming back and forth, reminding me that even the dulldest waters could sometimes be endured. Its little bubbles shared a quiet protest with me at my stark white desk.

Why did I stay? Rent needs to be paid. But maybe a job isn't just about bills and deadlines. It's about these stolen moments, secret friendships, and small joys. Petting my tiny coworker was my quiet mischief: gently firing the office, one sip of tea and one tap of a fin at a time. Maybe we all need a little fish to pet.

Competitive Edge

by Brigid Elrod

Precarity in architectural labor—for commissions and for position in the firm—drives a race to the bottom. As designers push to prove a certain nimbleness with a client's budget, the profession steers towards cheaper, faster, and more versatile architectural materials. In the case of engineered stone, the consequences are fatal.

These crushed stones bound by resin—also known as quartz countertop, quartz surfacing, quartz surface, or quartz agglomerate—typically contain more than 90% crystalline silica content. (For reference, granite contains about 30% of crystalline silica and marble under 10%.) Dry cutting engineered stone, a practice common in small stone fabrication shops with non-union labor, repeatedly exposes workers to this harmful substance, leading to silicosis, an incurable lung disease now on the rise among countertop fabricators in their 20s and 30s.<sup>2</sup>

Ideally, we would live in a world where rigorous safety procedures are enforced, but that is far from reality. Even in large shops with waterjets, respirators, and advanced ventilation systems, maintaining silica levels below OSHA-permissible limits of 50 µg/m3 requires a regulatory framework stronger than what exists at the state and federal level. In California, for example, doctors identified a cluster of 52 silicosis cases among countertop workers between 2019 and 2023. Among those, 26 underwent lung transplants and 14 died.<sup>3</sup> According to the 2025 American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine study led by Amy Heinzerling, only several hundred of the more than 10,000 U.S. employers in the industry have been inspected by OSHA. And among those, most were not compliant with existing silica regulations.

Australia offers an instructive example of the limits of regulation. In 2015, it tightened regulations and monitoring, followed with educational campaigns and a certification program. A national task force then reviewed the efficacy of these initiatives and found hazardous silica exposure persisting despite the new regulatory policies. So they decided to ban the use of engineered stone altogether in July 2024.<sup>4,5</sup>

As students, we investigate architectural materials for tactility, tectonic expression, process of assembly, building life cycle, ecology, and end-user well-being. One seldom dreams of filling their architectural scheme with resin and silica, but in practice, factors like budget and schedule push back on the architect's material intent. Engineered stone first entered the market around 2000, and from 2010 to 2018, U.S. quartz surface imports increased approximately 800%.<sup>6</sup>

Legally, the means and methods involved in fabricating this material fall outside of the architect's purview, but the decision to specify it in the first place does not. The Architecture Lobby at YSoA invites you to join us in refusing to specify engineered stone and sharing knowledge of its health hazards to fabrication workers.

September 19, 2025

Yale School of Architecture  
180 York Street, New Haven, CT 06511

Re: Competitive Edge / Stop Silicosis



Dear YSoA Community,

The YSoA chapter of The Architecture Lobby calls on our profession to put an immediate end to the specification of engineered stone with silica content. We insist on a commitment to collective knowledge sharing across all levels of our profession of the occupational hazards of architectural materials.

As the designers of buildings, we stand in care and solidarity with the workers who build our designs.

Engineered stone—crushed stone bound by resin—is also commonly referred to as quartz countertop, quartz surfacing, quartz surface, or quartz agglomerate. It typically contains greater than 90% crystalline silica content compared to 30% in granite and less than 10% in marble. Dry cutting engineered stone, a practice common to small stone fabrication shops with non-union labor, subjects workers to extreme silica exposure. Repeated extreme exposure leads to silicosis, an incurable lung disease now on the rise among 20- to 30-year-old countertop fabricators.

Specifications

The architect holds power through the instrument of material specification. When a worker experiences extreme exposure to silica, the architect is not legally liable but is complicit.

Knowledge Sharing

In the regulatory void left by legislators and administrators architects play a key role in protecting workers by sharing knowledge across firms and with clients.

We commit to working towards a future built with architectural materials that are safe for people and the planet. Pursuant to that commitment, we the undersigned commit to stop specifying engineered stone containing silica content. From our dual position as students and designers, we commit to educate each other on the occupational health impacts of products such as engineered stone.

Best regards,

The Architecture Lobby at YSoA

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