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Barnard and Columbia Colleges Architecture Department

ARCH UN2103 Architectural Design: Environments and Mediations | Spring 2022

T/Th 9am-11:40am | Location Diana Center

Instructor: Lindsay Harkema | lharkema@barnard.edu | Office hours by appointment

Architectural Design: Environments & Mediations

Feeling all the feels

“Despite the fundamental function of architecture to provide protection for humans...and to give the support necessary for maintaining the vital functions of everyday living, the idea of the architect is linked to autonomy and independent genius rather than connectedness, dependency, social reproduction and care giving.”

--Elke Krasny

Care is everywhere. Recently, Care has become a buzz word within and beyond the discourse of architecture. As the discipline retreats from its patriarchal conventions of privileged form and singularity over support and interconnectedness, notions of Care have gained its attention as necessary if not obvious references for creating sustainable, communal environments. Historically gendered as female-no doubt due to an association with domesticity, childrearing, and maintenance-caring about Care has only recently become a mode of resistance and a means of flipping the script. In popular culture, the word has also been instrumentalized as tactic of persuasion, from disingenuous greenwashing to the neoliberal marketing of “self-care”.

Currently, public spaces are designed to be neutral, standardized spaces for passive use by a universal population. This generic, one size fits all approach often presents barriers for some by negating the specific needs of neurodiverse populations, people of color, women and children, the elderly, LGBTQ+ and gender nonconforming individuals, and other typically underserved groups. Focusing on the public realm, this architectural design studio will analyze existing conditions and explore possibilities for the built environment to better support a range of needs including emotionality, sensory sensitivity, individuality and connectedness.

These explorations will be understood as catalysts for design experimentation. Analog and digital methods of drawing and modeling will be used as complementary techniques of making. With attention to sensory experience, we will consider material traits such as tactility, softness, and interiority. Challenging conventional notions of functionalism, design investigations will preference ambivalence over purity and pluralism over singularity.

Through a series of design exercises, we will focus on techniques of making that facilitate a range of experiential conditions and modes of representation that convey their immersivity. Relatedly, we will consider how they contribute to a more inclusive and equitable built environment and the potential for architecture to become a facilitator of Care.



Pamela Concil, A Fountain for Survivors, 2021



Ernesto Neto, Celula Nave, 2009

