PRESENT FUTURE: A NEW RESEARCH-BASED DESIGN PROGRAM

The Rice School of Architecture announces an intensive new, two-semester Masters program of advanced architectural studies: Present Future. The program’s aim is to reconceptualize the role of the architect from within the network of relations that engulfs us today. We are interested in how the architect constructs new possibilities from never before seen political, economic and cultural reverberations — by shaping new institutions and publics, by forming new cities and buildings, and by asserting new ambitions and optimisms. Present Future is a forum through which we can rethink the nature of the architect’s social contract.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THIS PROGRAM?
The new program is “post-graduate” as well as “post-professional.” The RSA does not require a professional (BArch) design degree to enroll in the program, though BArchs are welcome to apply, as well as BAs, BSs, and their equivalents.

HOW LONG IS THE PROGRAM?
This program spans two semesters: one academic year. Total credits equal 28 hours, with 13 of them being thesis-based.

WHAT DEGREE WILL I RECEIVE AFTER PROGRAM COMPLETION?
A nonprofessional degree of Master of Arts in Architecture (M.A.A.).

HOW IS THE PROGRAM FORMATTED?
The program is not based on a fixed or overarching architectural or urban issue, agenda or “stream;;” nor will it be a platform for independent student work. In place of these more common formats, we propose a continually shifting curriculum that changes with each entering cohort. More like a year-long symposium than a traditional curriculum, the new program is topic-based. New topics will be announced each year and advertised in advance of the admissions season.

WHAT KIND OF CLASSES WILL I TAKE?
The curriculum of the new program has a core component of one course per semester that is required for the students in the program. This required course will be taught by the program director. It will be a 3 hour course the first semester and a 13 hour course the second semester (thesis equivalent). All other courses will be electives chosen under the advisement of the program director. The majority of these will come from School of Architecture offerings, with the remaining from the university at large.

WITH WHOM WILL I BE WORKING?
For each entering cohort, a unique curriculum will be defined by a rotating faculty member. This faculty member will be assigned to mentor each cohort of students for the two semester duration of the program. The class will work collectively on the deliverable, but each student will have an individualized schedule of classes.

WHAT IS MY EXPECTED OUTPUT/THESIS?
Each cohort will have an explicit deliverable in the form of a book, exhibition, website, or any combination of the three as defined by the topic.

HAS THE FALL 2014 PROGRAM TOPIC BEEN SELECTED?
The inaugural class of Present Future is Next City and will be carried under the direction of Professor Albert Pope. Students will travel to the Hong Kong/Shenzhen Megalopolis to investigate, in situ, the brief but potent history of the modernist New Town. With the fastest rate of urbanization in the history world, Chinese cities can be seen as a present future nexus of a nascent global urbanism. While no existing urban development exactly matches the needs of tomorrow, Present Future will seek signs and symptoms of the Next City in an urban present of Hong Kong that anticipates and responds to the most pressing issues of the day. The final output will be a book-length study of the Hong Kong New Town.

I’M IN! HOW DO I APPLY?
To apply for Fall 2014 of Present Future, please visit https://arch.rice.edu/gradapp/.

PLEASE NOTE: THE PRESENT FUTURE M.A.A. REPLACES THE RSA’S CURRENT “OPTION 3” PROGRAM.