Spotlight
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Everything is Architecture, the Viennese architect Hans Hollein famously proclaimed in 1968 and I have yet to find a better explanation of our field than those three words. Architecture reflects and affects its own relevance—its political, historical, social, economic, material, technical, and cultural contexts, as well as the immediate physical context in which it is sited. Architecture often remains in place long after any or all of these contexts have evolved: sometimes it evolves in sync; at other times it persists as a marker of an earlier time.

The challenge, then is how do you teach a field that’s, well, everything? Rice Architecture is the meeting point of that everything: of design and discourse; of theory and practice; of past and future; and of Rice and the world. Here at Rice we put architecture within its cultural context, while also mining architecture’s own culture. Architecture shapes our world—it affects how we live in a room, in a city, and across our globe. We don’t shy away from acknowledging that architecture creates boundaries. Walls necessarily define an inside and an outside, a here and a there; doors, materials, and circulation necessarily bring up questions of access, privacy and publicity. Architecture can open onto or it can close our own world from the worlds of others. Repercussions, ranging from the technical to the political, come into play with every design project. There are no “right” answers for how to negotiate architecture’s cultural impacts and one cannot influence or even anticipate most, but learning to think, talk, and act culturally is what we do here at Rice Architecture.

How? We are intimate and intense. We are a small school with large ambitions. We can, and do, optimize at every turn. We know you. You know us. At our core is a running conversation: a tête-à-tête that is at once curated, spontaneous, formal and informal. It connects students, faculty, and visitors. It connects architecture to ideas. It connects the school to the world. It is as casual as a passing exchange and as vibrant as a thesis presentation. It takes place in a series of carefully considered studios, lecture courses, seminars, workshops, events, and travels around the world. It takes place over a coffee. It might be ruminative; it might be rambunctious. It is a conversation that begins as an introduction to architecture and that culminates in an architect being far more than conversant: Rice Architecture teaches architects to be leaders in the conversations that inevitably make up our discipline and impact our worlds.

Faced with global economic, political, and environmental crises, we can’t afford to be passive. Leading – engaging the world – requires mixing a precise understanding of our multiple contexts with architectural speculations that define a better future. It requires being optimistic, discerning, collaborative, and smart. Every project in the school, whether in studio, lecture courses, or seminars, should project forward. Everything is Architecture: we understand these three words as a mandate to navigate that everything (which is as exciting as it is unpredictable) with a nimble, yet precise understanding of what makes architecture relevant.

—Dean Sarah Whiting
Rice Architecture’s top ranked undergraduate program consists of two consecutive degrees: the first four years of study result in a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture; students subsequently receive a Bachelor of Architecture professional degree after an additional two years, one of which includes the renowned Rice Architecture Preceptorship program. Preceptorship places our B.Arch students in notable offices across the world where they gain a year’s worth of mentored experience as paid employees.

The Rice Architecture B.A. is a decidedly liberal arts degree: our curriculum exposes students to architecture’s full breadth. The core curriculum coordinates courses in history/theory, technology and design and organizes requirements in such a way as to optimize electives, permitting students to take advantage of course offerings across the university. The aim of this breadth is to ensure that Rice Architecture graduates will be ideally positioned as leaders in practice and other endeavors. In addition to the invaluable Preceptorship experience, fifth year students directly engage practice in the advanced Totalization studio in the fall semester of their final year; this unique program embeds distinguished consultants in the studios, emphasizing design’s intrinsic relationship to other fields, ranging from finance to fabrication. Finally, Rice Architecture emphasizes that architecture is a global practice—as significant an issue in Houston (the fourth largest city in the United States) as it is in the European base of our Rice Architecture Paris program, and in our many courses that incorporate global travel.

Students who have been admitted to the school of architecture can elect at the end of their second year, or any time thereafter, to pursue the Bachelor of Art in Architectural Studies major. This major does not lead to a professional degree, requires fewer studios, and is designed to allow students to pursue other academic interests in greater depth.

The one-year Rice Preceptorship Program was formally established in 1968 to provide a practicum between the fourth and fifth years of the Bachelor of Architecture curriculum. Participating offices are selected by the School from among the leading firms in the US and abroad and appointed by the University for two-year terms. Current firms include Johnston Marklee in LA, Diller, Scofidio + Renfro in NY, Thomas Phifer & Partners in NY and Renzo Piano Building Workshop in Paris among others.

Preceptees intern for a minimum 9-month period, participate in a variety of roles that provide a better understanding of the scope of professional practice, and are paid normal wages. Seniors apply by portfolio first to the Fifth Year Program, which is comprised of Preceptorship followed by a final fifth year of academic study. Two analytical reports per semester are required of preceptees in addition to submission, upon their return, of a portfolio of work produced.
Rice Architecture is the meeting point of design and discourse of theory and practice; of past and future; of Rice and the world; and of our inseparable aims: to educate architects and to position our graduates as leaders in a rapidly changing world.

Generously binds these aims to one another. Inside the school, the exchange of knowledge depends upon the magnanimous sharing of intellectual culture among students, faculty, and visitors to the school. Beyond the school’s boundaries, Rice Architecture is a catalyst, an advocate for architects and architecture to step unfurlingly into public life. Taken together, these mandates underscore our goal of forming architects whose ideas will continue to reverberate across contemporary culture. Our ambitions are simple. Our graduates will be prepared with knowledge. They will always be curious about what they don’t yet know. And they will continue to propose alternatives that foster an unyielding optimism about the future.

The required core sequence of Rice Architecture’s Master of Architecture Program includes courses in four areas: design studio, history/theory, technology, and practice. Each area provokes the others in a deliberate feedback loop. The collective conversation that characterizes Rice Architecture – in our studies, our seminars, our juries, our lectures, our hallways – is where we synthesize these threads. Our core courses in design, history/theory, technology, and practice focus attention on key topics within architecture: form, program, materials, technology. The core also establishes a shared set of references – significant historical and contemporary. We also offer a broad selection of electives within the architecture school and across the university.

The advanced options studios of the final year of the Masters program include Totalization, our unique program that embeds nationally-recognized consultants in the studios, emphasizing that architectural innovation results from collaboration and the nimble anticipation of contingencies. The final course in the history/theory core is the required pre-thesis seminar, which reflects our conviction that every student must step back and define her argument. And they will continue to propose alternatives that foster an unyielding optimism about the future.

For example, what is the structural and symbolic role of the roof today? Exposure to additional critical realms takes place in required seminars and lectures attended by all Totalization studios and addressing further considerations, such as accessibility, fire safety, environmental controls, construction document delivery, and development financing.

Depth and breadth: Totalization’s unique organization, which coordinates and synthesizes its multiple studios and multiple consultants, means that the specific research topic in question is developed within architecture’s broader scope.

Totalization recognizes that architecture is generalist, collaborative, and unpredictable, and that architectural innovation only happens when that messiness totality is nimble enough to accommodate contingencies. Totalization sees the architect as the negotiator at the center of a diverse team of collaborators. Projects are understood to be contingent and evolving—a totaling up that is never fixed or finite.

Our Totalization semester coordinates all of our advanced fall studios in order to emphasize design’s intrinsic relationship to other fields, ranging from finance to fabrication. Nationally-recognized consultants (Robert Heinippe, Nat Oppenheimer, Mark Malekshahi, among others) are embedded in our Totalization studios, advising students on facades, structure, MEP and other factors. Each studio focuses in depth upon a single, fundamental, research topic engaging materials, techniques, technologies, elements, or markets.
Graduate MA in Architecture
Program: Present Future
Professor Albert Pope

Present Future is equal parts education, research, think tank, and soapbox. From urbanization, to media, globalization, the environment, technology, to name just a few of the issues that press in on us as never before, architecture can, and will, play a role in the most urgent questions facing us today.

Rice Architecture offers an intensive, three-semester research-based program of advanced architectural studies: Present Future. The program’s aim is to re-conceptualize the role of the architect from within the complex sets of relationships in which we live today. We are interested in how the discipline constructs new possibilities from never before seen political, economic, and environmental circumstances—by shaping new publics in support of new institutions, by forming new architectural and urban models, and by asserting new ambitions and optimism. In short, Present Future is a forum through which we can rethink the nature of the architect’s social contract.

Present Future is a concentrated undertaking culminating in a Master of Arts in Architecture degree. The program is structured around a three-semester long exploration of a topic led by a Rice School of Architecture faculty member and advertised in advance of the application process. A select group of students forms the core: a collective intelligence responsible for developing a discourse that synthesizes theoretical, historical, and design ambitions. Subjects will be of contemporary importance and will be framed by a 3-credit seminars in the first and last term and a 12-credit collective thesis in the second term. In addition to free electives, each semester will include additional required credits that are deemed appropriate to the research topic. The program’s student body will include those with backgrounds in architecture as well as other fields: individuals with B.A., B.S., equivalent, or more advanced degrees in architecture or other disciplines are invited to apply.

Present Future is decidedly proposition-oriented. To that end, each three semester sequence will culminate in a book, exhibition, or symposium. The program is intended to be at once intensely focused and enthusiastically extroverted.

Thesis at Rice is payback time of sorts: it’s the moment when the faculty learns from the students—when graduate students contribute to and advance architecture at Rice. Every Master of Architecture student is required to take Pre-Thesis Preparation: Design Research during their penultimate semester. The course provides an environment and structure in which the conceptual formulation, articulation, and critical evaluation of thesis proposals can take place. Each student is expected to clearly outline a thesis focus and relevance, its architectural implications, and projected material results. This course assists students to pose a question that will continue to motivate them long after they graduate. The students who are admitted into the Design Thesis in the following semester test their proposed thesis in a project that is a synthesis of intellectual and design objectives. These projects are not meant to be comprehensive building designs; thesis is a laboratory for focused research in our field. Thesis concludes in a final public review with distinguished invited guests, that engages the entire school. The project is evaluated both on its own terms and within the broader field of contemporary architectural discourse. Successful theses and the discussion they foster stimulate future activity at Rice Architecture and beyond.

Amelia Hazinski’s thesis project, Walk Don’t Run, 2017

Graduate Thesis
Assistant Professor Scott Colman
Paris is not Houston. It’s Paris. Modernity lived here. Avenues were cut here. Baguettes taste good here. Heads came off here. Art is everywhere here. We have a school here.

If Paris was once the capital of the nineteenth century, as Walter Benjamin announced, today it sits astride the possibilities of the twenty-first century. Infrastructure, energy and globalization all push at the fabric of Paris, stretching it in ways that Baron Haussmann never could have envisioned.

Rice Architecture Paris program (Paris) provides a semester-long opportunity to explore advanced topics in architecture. Established in 2002 and located in the 12ème arrondissement, near la Bastille, the program operates in both the fall and spring semesters. Course offerings include a design studio; seminars in history/theory, technology, and representation; as well as French language and culture classes.

Paris also includes organized study trips to other cities in France and Europe. Taught by faculty drawn from Rice and the leading architecture and art history programs in Europe, Paris is a nimble think tank, taking advantage of the extraordinary offerings that Paris provides, as well as the city’s role as a cultural nexus for the world. Paris is now open to qualified students and graduates from other architecture programs who have taken at least six semesters of undergraduate studios or four graduate studios.

For more than twenty years, Rice Architecture Construct (previously known as Rice Building Workshop) has engaged the world by challenging students to contribute directly to the built environment. Construct students design and build projects that produce lasting effects, creating resources for the communities they serve while building knowledge through research and experience.

Working at various scales and in diverse situations, students engage all facets of the creative process—conception through construction. Expanding their knowledge in the pursuit of novel solutions to real-world challenges, students work together to test concepts against the practical realities of budget and schedule, explore innovative means of analysis and fabrication, and translate forward-thinking designs into built works.

Construct is co-directed by Assistant Professor Andrew Colopy and Professor of Practice Danny Samuels. It was founded in 1996 as Rice Building Workshop (RBW) by Professors Samuels and Nonya Grenader.

The Rice Design Alliance, established within Rice Architecture, was founded in 1972 by a group of faculty and civic-minded community members. Through the support of its members and Rice Architecture, Rice Design Alliance empowers Houston’s diverse community to transform our city through design.

That mission is carried out in a variety of ways: The fall lecture series organized in collaboration with Rice Architecture faculty explores cutting edge design ideas; annual architecture home tours in Houston, as well as guided and curated tours in other U.S. and international cities, invite Houstonians to experience architecture firsthand; Rice Design Alliance civic forums invite governmental, academic, professional, and creative leaders to come together to debate issues and give all Houstonians a venue to contribute their voices; competitions challenge both emerging and established designers; publications such as Cite: The Architecture + Design Review of Houston feature a diversity of voices reflecting on the city’s past, present, and future, asking what, exactly, Houston is — and what it might be.

All these programs give Rice Architecture students, faculty, and Rice Design Alliance members a launching pad to make a real difference in the city and build connections. Additionally, Rice Design Alliance employs student interns, supports the publication of the student journal PLAT, and invites Rice Architecture students to serve as representatives on its Board of Directors.
Rice Architecture Mentorship is a student-led organization that empowers students at Rice Architecture to take control of their professional trajectories and to translate their studies into their future endeavors.

To accomplish this vision, Mentorship connects Rice Architecture alumni and friends with the current student body, providing students with opportunities to build professional relationships and the resources to learn about a variety of career options.

The Mentorship Coordinating Team organizes these opportunities through five main avenues: a student-to-professional mentorship program, a curated lecture series, external programs including interviews, externships, recess, and a career fair; professionalism and technology workshops, and field trips to cultural, historical, and commercial sites.

Rice Architecture Mentorship
B.Arch. student Jennifer Heon

Rice Architecture Society is an organization that aims to increase student discourse and connect the school to the broader university. As a group of committed students, Society focuses on the peripheral aspects of an architectural education that shape the culture of the school.

Society’s main social and educational events include weekly open studios: late-night studio gatherings for the exchange of snacks and ideas; Mini-charrettes: weekend-long design competitions; Architronica (fall) and ArchiArts (spring): university-wide parties; and Open houses: post-final review events for the display of semester work.

In addition to these events, Society creates the student directory, curates student exhibitions, and organizes conversations with the Dean. Its members act as the voice for the student body and keep students informed about events and opportunities at Rice Architecture.

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B.Arch. student Andrew Bertics

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Rice Architecture Society
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Spotlight on…

Houston
Piergianna Mazzocca
Ajay Manthripragada
Rice Design Alliance
Spotlight Prize
Rice Architecture Paris
Turns Fifteen
Mentorship Recess
Preceptorship at SHoP
PLAT Journal 7.0
Public Lecture Series
Amnesiac city. Ephemeral city. Space city — a moniker that could refer to the history of NASA or to the profound vacancy in the heart of this humid, low-slung, sprawled-out megalopolis, the most diverse and one of the largest in the U.S.

Just what is Houston? In fact, this city began as a fiction. Nineteenth-century real estate advertisements for the newly settled town showed mountains and boasted that Houston was “handsome and beautifully elevated, salubrious and well-watered.” We’ve been trying to get the story straight ever since.

No one really knows what Houston is. That’s its charm. Really, it’s all here. Houston’s home to serious architecture — you can see Renzo Piano’s Menil Collection, Mies’ Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and Philip Johnson’s Pennzoil Place, not to mention the astonishing collection of world-class buildings at Rice — as well as serious urban challenges, rooted in decades of car-dominated development, a shrugging attitude about historic preservation, and an allergy to planning.

That’s why Houston’s such an exciting, interesting city, in the twenty-first century. A deep architectural and cultural history is met by an almost insurgent progressivism, as the city densifies and works to invest in public spaces, infrastructure, and transit (with three light rail lines, a new bus network, and an expanding bike-share system). It’s true: It’s all here, especially if you’re willing to go looking for it.
Piergianna Mazzocca graduated as an architect from the University of the Andes in Mérida-Venezuela, after which she co-founded and worked as an architect in Taller de Arquitectura Singular, directing the office between 2011 and 2015. In 2014 she moved to the Netherlands to start her post professional at The Berlage Center for Advanced Studies in Architecture and Urban Design, Delft University of Technology, from where she graduated cum laude in February 2016. She has practiced architecture in her home country, Rotterdam, and Milan.
Piergianna’s current research focuses in architecture’s enduring relationship to health and its associated medical aesthetic paradigms.

Prior to coming to Rice, Ajay Manthripragada taught core and advanced design studios at UC Berkeley, where he also directed the post-baccalaureate program in architecture from 2014–2016. He has been an invited guest critic at Cornell and the Rhode Island School of Design. Manthripragada holds a Bachelor of Arts from UC Berkeley and a Master of Architecture from Princeton. He worked in various architecture firms in Paris, New York, and San Francisco before founding his own studio in 2014. The office has completed work on a number of small projects since its inception, including a new house and art gallery in Berkeley.

In practice and in teaching, Manthripragada focuses on the tension between conceptual autonomy and contextual specificity. His Wortham Fellowship research takes up contemporary debates about the role of reference in architecture. The project aims to devise an updated model for the use of historical examples in design studio pedagogy.
Rice Architecture Paris Turns Fifteen

Professor John Casbarian, Director of External Programs

For 15 years, our students have explored advanced topics in architecture...in Paris. The opportunity to live and study in Paris has profoundly affected the architectural trajectory of the more than 300 Rice Architecture students who have participated in the program. Paris, whose rich urban fabric is layered with traces of all stages of its development, provides a unique backdrop for advanced undergraduate and graduate students to work together while experiencing a different culture and its quotidian life. Each semester, our Rice Architecture students engage in intense investigations on design, history, theory, technology and French culture and language in Paris, under the tutelage of Rice faculty and leading French and European practitioners, historians, critics and theoreticians. The classroom is the city itself where they explore many of the architectural treasures and storied monuments through walking tours and special visits. In addition, short study trips are taken throughout the semester to destinations across France and Europe.

Rice Design Alliance Spotlight Prize

Angie Chen, Assistant Director, Programs

The ninth annual Spotlight Prize will be awarded to OOPEAA. Founder and Director Anssi Lassila will visit Houston to accept the prize and give a lecture during the fall semester, 2017.

Lassila’s international breakthrough was the Kärsämäki Shingle Church in 2004, which gained him a distinctive position among young Finnish architects. His architecture displays an interest in combining a sculptural form with traditional materials and innovative techniques. He explores new methods and techniques as a means of developing new solutions in building. OOPEAA works on a wide range of projects on varying scales from churches and daycare centers to housing and town planning as well as extensions to historically valuable landmarks.

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OOPEAA, Periscope Tower, 2016

Arch. 620, Pyline Tangsuvanich & Austin Jarvis, 2015
Mentorship Recess

M.Arch. students JP Jackson and Keegan Hebert

Mentorship Recess is a new community outreach program intended to share the student talent and energy at Rice Architecture. Each month Recess provides students from the school the opportunity to volunteer and teach design thinking to local youths within the greater Houston area. The lessons are fun and engaging, meant to introduce creative thought processes not typically integrated into a daily curriculum. Focused activities build on the lessons, helping students to identify problems, propose solutions, and communicate their ideas. The program hopes to positively impact all participants, allowing for new perspectives in understanding our built environment and the ways in which design can enhance life.

Recess hopes to diversify the ways in which Mentorship fulfills its overarching mission. In its first year, Recess worked in partnership with The STEM Foundation at the Judson Community Center, providing content for the Engineering Saturday once each month. Past lessons have considered structure, communication, space, environment, and community.

Preceptorship at SHoP

B.Arch. student Sophie Eichner

My preceptorship experience at SHoP has profoundly shaped my education and career as an architect. I was exposed to an incredible range of work, from academic buildings, to master plans and tower renovations; and from concept design to drawing construction documents. I quickly felt like an integral part of the teams I worked with. I am so thankful for my colleagues’ incredible patience and generosity in teaching me both the hard and soft skills the field of architecture requires.

In the design process my input was not only encouraged but expected. In addition to regularly presenting to the partners, I also had the opportunity to be a part of presentations with high profile clients. SHoP fosters a truly generous and social work environment. I found so many friends and mentors in my colleagues, who now form the basis for a strong professional network in New York—a major asset the preceptorship experience gives you. More than anything, this experience has shown me that architecture is unequivocally what I am meant to do, and my Rice Architecture education could not have better prepared me for just that.
Founded in 2009, PLAT Journal is published by the students of Rice Architecture. Through a combination of open submissions and commissioned pieces, the editors seek out contributions from various disciplines to further design discourse. PLAT offers a place to share both work and theory, mixing the projects and writings of established professionals as well as emerging voices. The readership and contributor base stretch worldwide. Each new editorial board develops a unique theme, cognizant of the previous issue. This format maintains PLAT’s commitment to advancing a provocative set of ideas with every release. PLAT 5.5 was recently featured in Metropolis magazine and the Studio NOCK exhibition A Print.

Next Issue: PLAT 7.0

"Sharing is caring!" shout employees of the semi-utopian tech company, The Circle, in James Ponsoldt's film by the same name. PLAT 7.0 Sharing will ask if this ubiquitous phrase, first coined in the 1950s by the Salvation Army, is still relevant today and what it means for architecture.

This fall’s series, Still, brings to the school four speakers: Chicago architect and professor John Ronan; Angela Garcia Paredes, partner of the Madrid based studio Paredes Pedrosa Arquitectos; OCD’s graphic designer and principal Bobby C. Martin; and Mexico City based architect Mauricio Rocha. Each will address the subject of Still and its relevant meanings: continuity and calmness, not only as it regards their individual research and work but also within the larger context of architecture and design: the imbricated social, political, economic, environmental, and technological underpinnings of our global, mediated world.
Rice Architecture