

BUILDER'S BODIES

An interrogation of labor practices and of violence toward gendered bodies on construction sites.

Mary-Lou Arscott

QUESTIONS

This studio will work to counter the wolf whistle. Using narrative forms of drawn, modeled and cinematic media the designs will ask how contemporary expectations for roles and relationships could be disrupted with a new set of paradigms. The aim is to expand gender definitions, particularly in relation to workers engaged in construction and to bring radical thinking to the production of the built environment.



above, DNA Webteam, Abraham Thomas Mumbai 2018
below, Reuters, Aly Song, Shanghai 2013

PROMPT

The studio will visit several Pittsburgh building sites, all at differing scales and stages of construction, and will interview a variety of tradeswomen, immigrant workers and union members. Their working conditions, hours and contracts will be studied, especially their bathroom and canteen provision.

In response to these findings, and through the lens of a global set of practices, the complexity of the needs of differently abled bodies will be integrated into the discourse about appropriate methods of construction and material extraction.



above Construction worker in China (image from video)
below Kalena Firstrider, Ironworker Seattle, photo B Hansen

PROGRAM

Site toilets and washing facilities will be the design focus, this intimate space will be considered as the political and environmental touchstone for profound changes in culture.

Construction sites are constantly in flux and so challenge the assumptions of conventional services with their lack of connections to power, water and sewerage. This instability is an opportunity for a novel design space that the studio will consider and will take the thinking beyond the default of the portajohn.

The studio will use readings to theorize issues around biopolitics of the body, particularly the tyranny of gender within segregated bathroom provision. Texts by Munoz, Sanders, Colliver+Duffus, Butler and Hu will be included in close reading.

Expanded cinema will be a reference for narrative building. Time based media will form representation for the emerging ideas. References and screenings of the work of Farucki, Marker, Guerin, Akomfrah and Hopinka. The final films will aim to challenge many layers of societal discrimination and expose the hypocrisy of the assumed status quo. Humor and satire will be essential tools in this production, but a serious reckoning underlies the intent.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of this studio a student should be able;

- to generate design propositions based on a critical understanding of the relationships between ideology and forms of representation.
- to use time-based media to construct visual-verbal narratives.
- to use ideas of systems intervention to pose multiple outcomes for change.
- to understand and apply theoretical positions from studio readings as keys to generate discussion and new insight.
- to articulate the ironies, contradictions and counter positions embedded in their own design propositions.
- to demonstrate a familiarity with systems of material extraction+supply and reproduction of labor in contemporary construction industry.



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