



a guide for new and recent
architecture school graduates

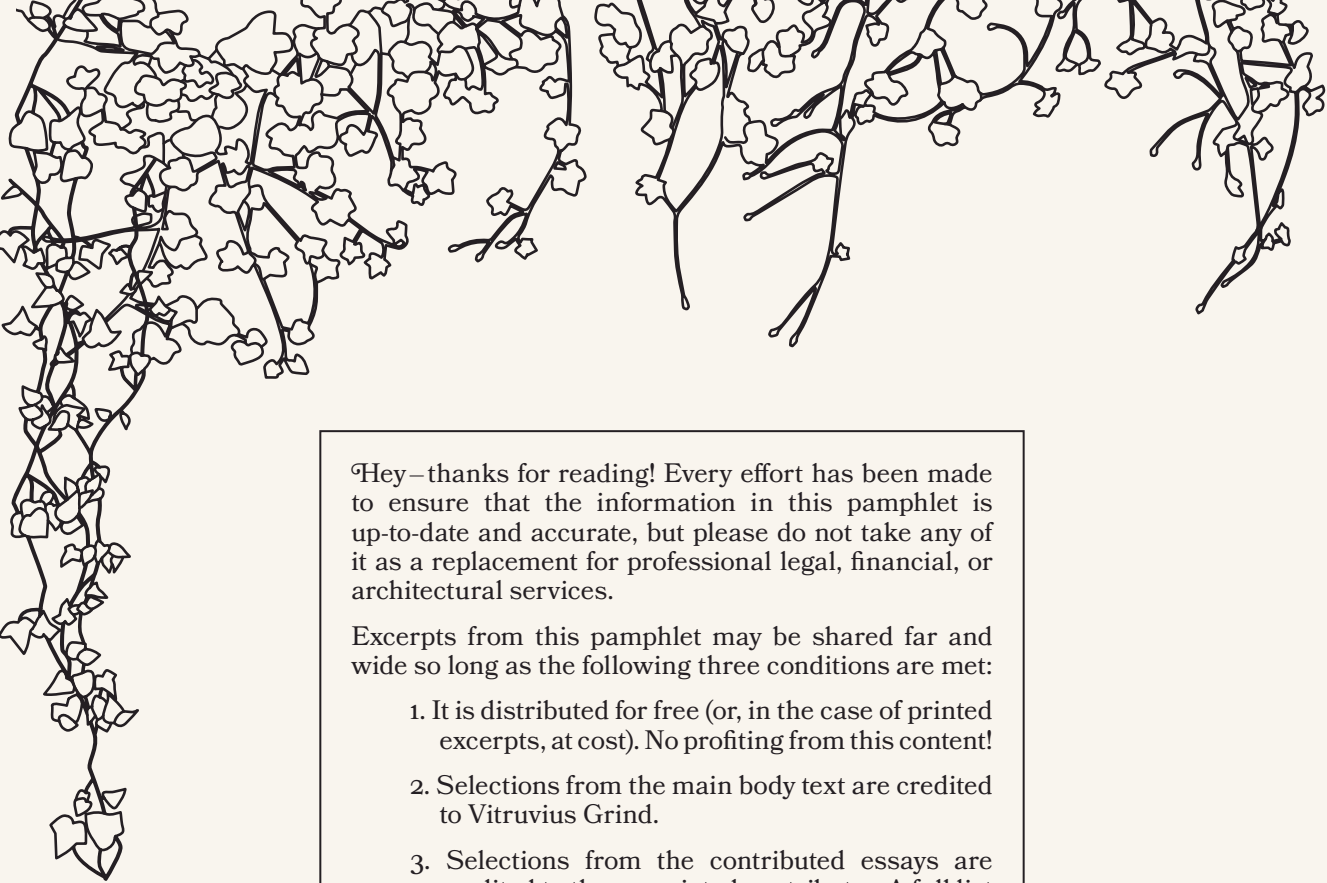


edited by:
*Vitruvius
Grind*



welcome to the
GRIND





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welcome to the **GRIND**

a guide for new and recent
architecture school graduates



edited by **Vitruvius Grind**



Welcome

This is a guide about architecture, but not one about designing buildings. There's nothing in here about the right way to detail a foundation wall for a cold climate or the most useful keyboard shortcuts for Revit. Instead, this guide is focused on the grind of it all: getting a job, showing up day after day, surviving, learning, and growing in the profession.

If you've just gone through two or four (or more) years of architecture school, you already know this field can be demanding: long hours, heavy workloads, and sudden changes in direction are all too common, justified by the belief that architecture is a calling that requires sacrifice.

When I finished my own undergrad degree and went out looking for jobs, I brought these assumptions about the field with me, using them to hide what should have been some pretty obvious red flags. I took a job that paid terribly (*but that's okay*, I told myself, *I'm working on real architecture, not boring corporate stuff*). At my new terribly-paid job, I often worked nights and weekends, ignoring any sense of balance or boundaries (*because at the end of all of this, I'll get a great letter of recommendation from Someone Who Knows People and can help me get in to The Best Grad School.*) When the firm hit a rough patch and laid off most of its staff, I cleaned out my desk with a sense of guilt and regret. (*If I'd only worked a little harder...*) Without a job, I felt alone and adrift, frustrated with myself and with the world of architecture that did not seem to love me anywhere near as much as I loved it.

I do not recommend this approach.





At its heart, this guide is my attempt to make sure that people entering the profession today—that is, all of you reading this—can have an easier time than I did.

But it's not just about me. Everyone I know in architecture has stories of bad jobs and toxic work environments. Experiences which should be rare or nonexistent sometimes feel like they're universal. That's a failure for our field to live up to the ideals we set for ourselves and our work.

I don't think these ideals are extravagant or unrealistic. We want to be paid a living wage. We want work that feels meaningful, where we can use the skills we've built up to make our world a tiny bit better. We want the time and flexibility to have rich, full lives outside of the office. We want to know that there's a clear path to taking on more responsibility and leadership when we're ready and able to pursue it. And we want these things to feel like the default condition, not like winning some sort of early-career lottery.

Everyone I know has stories of bad jobs. But we also have stories of good jobs, of good mentors, of finding an open door at what we thought was a dead end. We all chose to pursue architecture because we think it's worth doing and worth doing well.

I asked some people I look up to (some close friends, some complete strangers) to share some of their stories—both good and bad—from working in architecture. If there's lasting value in this guide, it's in this hard-won wisdom from those who've been in your shoes before.



Alongside these stories from the field, I've put together some information that may be helpful at this stage of your lives. All of this info is available elsewhere, but not always in a clear, centralized, and accessible format.

The guide is divided into four sections: WORK, GRAD SCHOOL, LIFE, and some ODDS & ENDS that didn't fit neatly into the other categories. Within each section, you'll find practical information, helpful resources, and some general advice and reflections. Read through it start to finish, or jump around to the sections that interest you most. Take what feels meaningful and helpful to you and disregard what doesn't.

This guide is being made available for free—nobody should have their access to advice and guidance restricted by their ability to pay—but it wasn't free to produce. I've had the time, space, and resources in my own life to put this project together because of the care and support of others. If this guide is helpful to you, all I ask in return is that you find a way to pay it forward: Check in on a coworker who might be struggling; join an organization fighting for a cause you're excited about; years from now, write down some of your own wisdom and lessons learned for the next generation of architects and designers.

As you leave school, move cities, find a job, start a family, move up the ladder, and build a life, your relationship with architecture will change. Some days you'll feel the excitement and wonder that led you to the field in the first place. Some days you'll feel boredom, drudgery, and dissatisfaction. A lot of the time you'll feel a little bit of both.





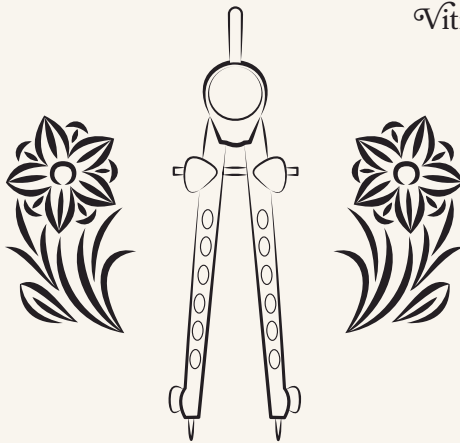
If I have one big, abstract piece of advice for you, it is this:

*be an active participant in your
relationship with architecture*

Our profession won't become any more equitable, sustainable, and healthy on its own. If you see that the field's priorities are in the wrong place, work to change them. Like architecture itself, this can take many different forms and operate in many different ways, but it takes work to make it happen. Find something in the field you're passionate about. Find a way that works for you to contribute to the cause. And then do. Someone has to or it won't ever get done.

The world of architecture has always been shaped by the people in it and that list of people now includes you. Welcome.

Vitruvius Grind

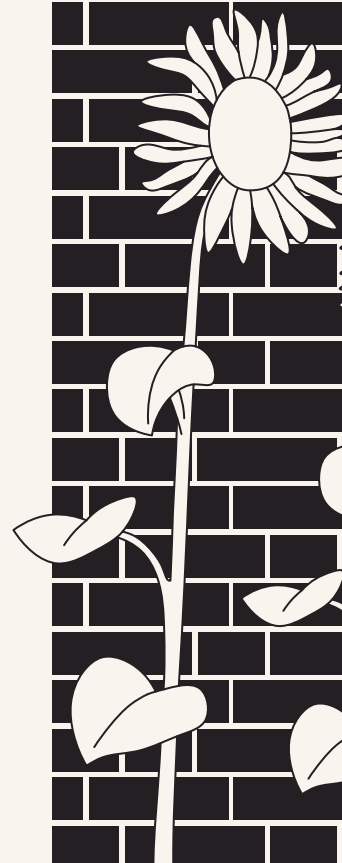
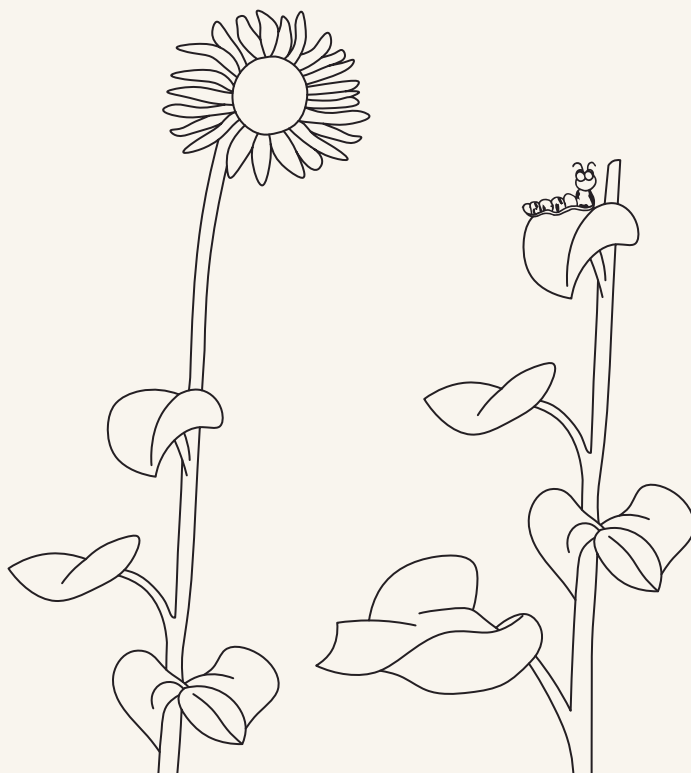


A few disclaimers

My own experience—and as a result, this guide itself—is limited to the practice of architecture in the United States. While much of the wisdom from contributors is relevant and applicable to any environment, specific details about, for example, licensure and grad school may be less useful in other parts of the world.

I've done my best to make all of the information in the following pages as accurate and up-to-date as possible, but I'm not infallible. Take specific figures with a grain of salt and do your own research where appropriate.

If you represent an organization or institution mentioned herein and think I've gotten something wrong, please don't hesitate to reach out. I want this guide to be as accurate and helpful as possible, and your feedback will help realize that goal.



WORK

finding a job

showing up

moving up

getting out

getting organized



FINDING A JOB

There's a harmful and outdated line of thinking that treats young workers as infinitely flexible and utterly disposable. Statements like "You should be lucky to have a job at all" or "Long hours and low pay are just how this profession has always worked" are used to justify practices that have no place in today's world.

Rejecting these toxic attitudes begins in the job search (if not before). Don't let vague promises of future prestige or networking opportunities convince you to take a bad or exploitative job. Look for an employer that values you for who you are and supports your growth as a whole person.

Where to look

Even in the best job markets, finding a job in architecture is an active process. It's rare for a good opportunity to just land at your feet, particularly at the beginning of your career. (And even if it does, it's always a good idea to develop a general sense of what the job market in your area looks like, just in case you need to make a change.)

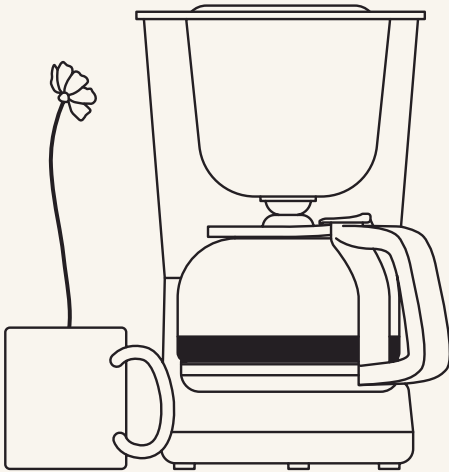
So where should you do your job-hunting?

The big, general-purpose job search sites like **Indeed** and **Monster** are popular for a reason: at any given time you can usually find a good number of openings posted by a whole range of employers. The downside is that some of these positions will be barely (or not at all) related to architecture.

For more relevant results, the **Archinect Jobs Board** and the **AIA Career Center** are good resources. Most state and city chapters of the AIA maintain a local jobs board as well.

You might also look into work in local government or the non-profit sector. The availability and nature of these jobs will vary based on where in the country you're looking, but don't let that discourage you from seeing what's out there.

And finally, don't be afraid to ask your friends, classmates, and former professors. Architecture is a small world, and chances are high somebody knows somebody who would love to see your resume.



Portfolio

Your portfolio should document your skills and your way of thinking. Include finished presentation drawings, but also sketches, models, and diagrams. A potential employer should come away with a sense of how your way of approaching architecture would fit into their office as a whole.

It's a good idea to orient your portfolio toward the types of jobs you're applying for. For example, if you know the offices you're interested in do a lot of in-house rendering or fabrication, highlight your skills and experience in those areas. But don't feel the need to start from scratch with each job application.

There's nothing wrong with unconventional layouts and presentations, but make sure they enhance your work, not distract from it.

Resume

Keep it clear, simple, and straightforward. A potential employer should have no trouble at all finding your education and previous experience all on one page. Let your unique personality and perspective shine through in the portfolio, cover letter, and interview.

CV

Some jobs, particularly academic ones, will ask for a CV (or *curriculum vitae*) instead of a resume. The basic goal of the document is the same, but you'll want to include more information about research, publications, and/or teaching experience. The job posting itself should tell you what is expected, but you may need to do a little bit of extra research about the institution and the position you're applying for to make sure you're including all the best and most relevant info.

Cover letter

Think of this as your "elevator pitch" to a future employer. In just a few paragraphs: Who are you? What are the highlights of your resume and portfolio that make you a particularly good fit for the position? Why do you want to work in this office in particular?

A really good cover letter might not make up for a resume and portfolio that don't fit the job requirements, but a careless one can definitely sink an otherwise strong application.

Be concise, don't be shy about your interest and qualifications, and don't forget to spell-check. (That last part goes for your resume and portfolio, too!)

Interviewing

A lot of people find this part to be very stressful—I know I do. Feeling nervous before, during, and after an interview is normal. A few considerations to keep in mind:

1. Your work and your communication style got you this far. Don't show up as a radically different version of yourself on the day of the interview.
2. An interview is just one part of the application process, and only one factor of many when employers are hiring for a particular position. Stay grounded in your expectations and reactions. A 'bad' interview doesn't mean you won't get the job and a 'good' one isn't a guarantee of future employment.
3. Anyone you meet along the way could be a future coworker. This should be obvious enough, but it bears repeating: Humility, kindness, and respect go a long way. This goes double for in-person interviews where you get a tour of the office.
4. The above point works both ways, though. If a potential employer is rude, dismissive, nonresponsive, or otherwise unpleasant to work with in the interview process, it's unlikely they'll behave any better on the job itself.

Brush your teeth, wear an outfit you feel comfortable, confident, and professional in, and bring an extra copy of all your application materials, just in case.

Following Up

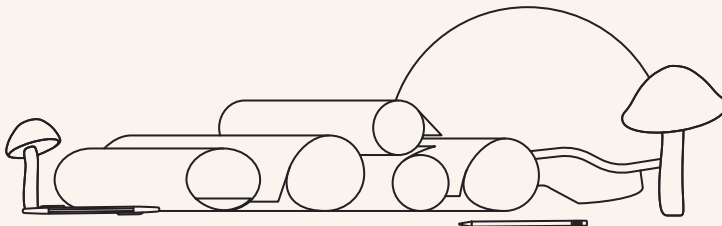
It's a nice gesture to send a short thank-you note after an interview. You might mention a part of the conversation you particularly enjoyed, or send along a bit more info about a particular project or work experience that caught the interviewer's attention. Don't overdo it, though: it's a thank-you note, not a thank-you essay.

The timeline for a firm to get back to you with an offer or next steps can be unpredictable. In the best-case scenario, you'll hear something back in a day or two. The worst-case scenario is waiting around indefinitely and never hearing back at all. It's entirely okay to send a follow-up after a few days, but if you don't hear anything back it might be time to move on to the next opportunity.

Firm owners and hiring managers: you all have busy schedules, but if someone has taken the time to put together an application and come in for an interview, at least give them the courtesy of a timely response, even if it's not a job offer. A little kindness in this world goes a long way.

References

A potential employer might ask for references as part of the interview process. Former supervisors are best, but former professors and coworkers can work, too. Be sure to ask your references if they're okay being contacted about your work. They almost certainly will be, but it's better not to take anyone by surprise.



“Wait—are they really allowed to ask that?”

US employment law prevents discrimination based on race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy status, age, national origin, or disability. The interview questions below are almost always illegal – it’s up to you to decide if you want to answer them or not. Some employers may not know the law and just genuinely want to get to know you better. Others may have less innocent intentions. As a general rule, questions should be directly related to your qualifications and ability to perform the duties of the job to which you’re applying.

The following questions are illegal in the interview process in almost all circumstances, though some may be valid after accepting an offer:

Are you married?

Are you pregnant?

Do you have children?

Do you plan to have children?

Do you have any disabilities?

What religion do you practice?

What nationality are you?

Where did you grow up?

Are you a U.S. citizen?

Have you ever been arrested?

How old are you?

Do you rent or own your home?

Do you own a car?

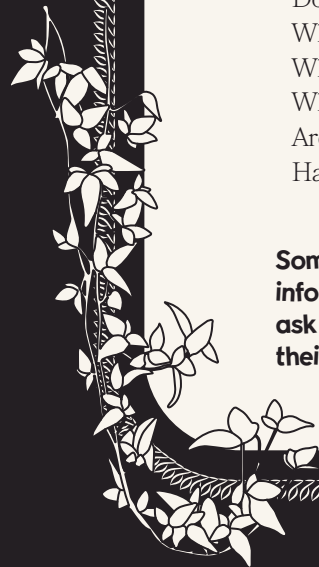
Have you ever filed a claim for worker’s compensation?

Who is your emergency contact?

What clubs or social groups do you belong to?

Are you a member of a union?

Some employers will devise clever workarounds to ask for this sort of information without technically breaking the law. After the interview, ask yourself how interested you are in working for someone who runs their office that way and if the position is really a good fit for you.



Evaluating and negotiating

You've submitted your materials, gone through an interview, and now you have a job offer in hand. How do you know whether or not to accept it?

The pages ahead have some information about salary specifically, but on a more general level, here are some questions worth asking yourself:

Is this a living wage? A fair one relative to my experience and the local market average?

Does the offer clearly define expected hours, benefits, responsibilities, and expectations?

Does the offer ask you to sign anything that makes you feel strange or uncomfortable?

Are you still waiting to hear back from other offices you've interviewed with?

A good employer will be open to any questions or concerns you may have and won't think less of you for pushing for higher compensation or clearer terms of employment. It's also entirely appropriate to mention if you have competing offers and want to see if Employer A will match the salary offer made by Employer B.

This is not the time to be shy or timid. See Germane's excellent advice below for more.

When to ask for more money

The best time to ask for more money is when you're first hired. That sets your salary floor. As someone that has hired people before, NEGOTIATE! Never accept the first offer, no matter how great it looks on paper. There's always more waiting for you. Also, if the salary is low, that's not your dream job. I don't care how much you love the firm's work.

—Germane Barnes



Accepting an offer

If everything has gone well and you have an offer in hand that you feel good about, there's no reason to delay letting the firm know that you accept. You'll probably be asked to do a bit of paperwork before your first day. Remain polite and professional and let them know how excited you are to join the team.

Declining an offer

This is totally okay! Sometimes an offer just isn't right for you. Or perhaps you've received more than one great offer and have to weigh your options. Just extend the firm the same courtesy you would want them to extend to you: thank them for their time and consideration, let them know you'll be going in another direction, and don't burn any bridges along the way.





Dealing with rejection after rejection

Sometimes this happens without much rhyme or reason. You send out resume after resume, go on interview after interview, and never come away with an offer.

I've been there. All of the smartest, kindest, and hardest-working people I know have been there. The architects you look up to have probably been there, too. That may not help you in this moment, but I hope it brings some small comfort to know that you're not alone.

Some recommendations:

1. Find a job – any job – that you can tolerate for a little while to help you pay the bills. Having a little bit of money coming in and some structure to your day will be much better for your mental health than sitting by the phone waiting for a call. I shelved books in a children's library for a few months when I was struggling to find a job. It wasn't architecture but it (barely) paid the rent and gave me time to figure things out; in the end that's what I needed most.
2. Pick up a hobby (and don't rush to monetize it). This is also good for mental health and overall well-being. Maybe for you this means yoga, sketching, writing, or knitting. So long as it gives you a bit of

enjoyment, a bit of challenge, and a sense of incremental progress, you're on the right track. It can be tempting to rush to make a 'product' you can market and sell. Resist this urge, at least at the beginning: you want this hobby to relieve stress, not add to it. But be open to the idea that you might discover a new interest or make some new connections along the way.

3. Think carefully about your next moves. Whatever is going on in your local job market won't last forever, but it might not turn around overnight either. Maybe you'll decide to significantly revise your resume and portfolio to target a different type of job. Maybe your lease will be up soon and you'll look at jobs in other cities. Maybe you'll decide to apply to grad school. On the one hand, a bad job market can signal a good time to make some of these big decisions. On the other hand, they're still *big decisions*. Give them the care and attention they deserve.

Struggling to find a job in architecture is a scary and unpleasant experience, but a temporary one. Take care of yourself and your loved ones, and don't let anyone tell you that you're at a dead end. It's just a little roadblock.

“How much should I be getting paid?”

(A simple question with a not-so-simple answer)

As a rough estimate, \$50,000/year is a reasonable starting salary for an entry-level position in architecture. The chart on the opposite page will give you a sense of how this estimate varies across geography. But salaries can fluctuate as much as 10% above or below these rough estimates for any given market, so don't be surprised.

Where did I get these numbers? And where can you find them for your own location and situation?

The **AIA Compensation Survey Salary Calculator** will give you a free estimate based on region and position. (You can also buy more detailed reports, though you don't need to.)

The other great tool I consulted is the **Archinect Salary Poll** which collects info from architects worldwide and can filter results based on over a dozen different factors like location, education, experience, type of firm, etc. Check it out and add your own salary info to the database.

Firm size and profile

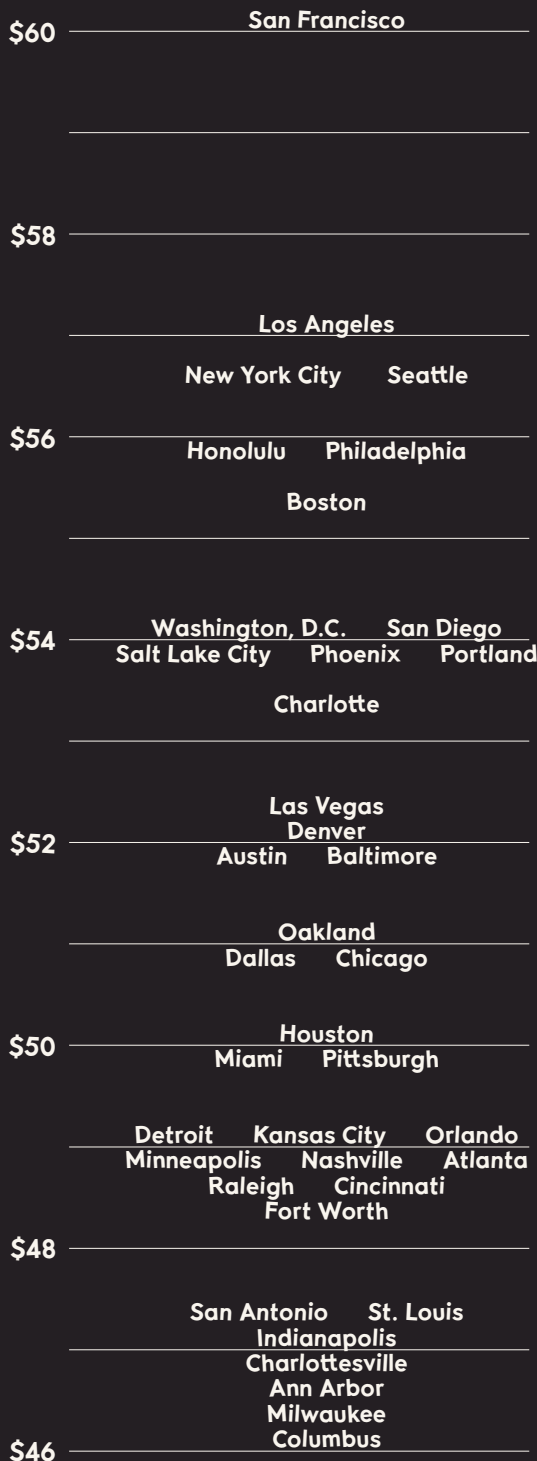
You may have encountered the suggestion that larger “corporate” firms always pay well while smaller “academic” or “boutique” offices typically don't.

Salary data suggests a grain of truth in this, but only a grain: Average starting salaries of firms of different sizes vary less than individual starting salaries within firms of the same size. You're not guaranteed a big payday by moving to a larger firm, nor does moving to a smaller firm necessarily mean taking a pay cut.

It might be true that a particular small office can't compete with a larger firm across town, but it's not inevitable everywhere. Be skeptical of any firm owner or hiring manager who insists that a small office can't offer a competitive salary. Also, you can do great work and learn a lot at a large office.

Uncritically accepting the "poorly-paid-but-meaningful" vs. "well-paid-but-boring" stereotypes only benefits one group: people who want to pay you less for your work.

Estimated starting salaries for recent architecture school graduates based on location (in thousands of dollars / year)



Location

Location will play a large role in starting compensation, as some markets pay higher than others. The chart to the right shows some rough estimates for different cities in the US. Keep in mind, though, that a higher cost of living will offset a higher starting salary in many cases: after accounting for rent, transportation, etc. you may find yourself with more disposable income in Indianapolis or Pittsburgh than in San Francisco or Los Angeles.

Education

Will going back to school make a difference in your pay? Not a huge one, at least not at first.

Some firms do offer 5-10% higher base salaries to workers with professional degrees—that is, a B Arch or M Arch. But going back to school means taking 2-3 years out of the workforce where you would otherwise be getting additional experience, so you might break even.

Licensure

As with education, licensure can bring about a modest increase in starting salary. And, as with education, it's a process, not an overnight change. In this case, the experience factor will work in your favor, as you'll need to spend some serious time in the office to satisfy licensure requirements. By the time you're fully licensed, you're likely to have gotten some level of raise/promotion and received extra responsibilities.

While they don't guarantee a huge pay increase at the beginning of your career, what education and licensure have in common is setting a higher ceiling for your future earnings, so don't disregard them just because the short-term gains are more limited in nature.

SHOWING UP

Your first day. You made it. All that hard work has paid off.

Now what?

The actual shape of your day-to-day work will vary quite a bit based on what sort of office you've ended up in. My first few jobs right out of school involved a lot of rendering and modelmaking tasks. This is a relatively common trajectory for new graduates, as you're likely highly skilled in these areas and can work on them without a lot of external direction or supervision.

Good friends of mine, with identical education and experience but working in different offices, found themselves working in Revit from day one. Still others spent their first few weeks in Rhino, or going on site visits, and so on. Don't be discouraged if it takes a few months to settle into a regular set of responsibilities at the office.

When in doubt, ask!

If you're not sure about something at the office, just ask. This sounds obvious, but it's worth taking seriously. If you don't know how something should be organized, labeled, formatted, documented, or printed, ask someone for clarification. If you don't understand an acronym or technical term, ask your supervisor what it means. If you're unsure how a specific task you've been assigned fits into the project as a whole, *ask*.

Asking plenty of questions at the office is a good move for several reasons. First, you'll be working with a clearer view of your role on the team and what's expected of you. In addition, you'll start to build up

a layer of background knowledge about the office and the field in general, which will only help you in the long run. Also, asking questions demonstrates to your coworkers and supervisors an eagerness to learn and grow, which can open doors for you down the road.

You may worry that asking too many questions will make you seem unintelligent or unable to take initiative. That's very unlikely. On the other hand, charging ahead on something you don't actually understand and should've asked for help with will definitely annoy your coworkers. Please don't do that.

“Getting Rest Is Never Discouraged”



**it's
time
for
bed!**

Or at least it could be.

Have you been giving yourself the space and the permission to step back and recharge when you need to? Are you putting as much focus, care, and energy into your own well-being as you are into that project?

Don't let a bad work/life balance follow you from the studio to the office. Set boundaries now, before any bad habits become permanent. Architecture will still be there in the morning.

Know your rights

No matter where you work, you have rights. You're likely already familiar with things like minimum wage laws and safety regulations, at least in the abstract. Take a half hour to review the whole range of rights and protections that apply to your work: there may be more than you think.

Ideally, the conditions of your employment will never come anywhere close to illegal territory, but if you suspect anything improper is happening, document it and start looking into your rights and options immediately. More resources can be found at the end of this section.

Know your worth

Even if everything happening in your office is legal, that doesn't guarantee that it's free from exploitation.

How, exactly, to define exploitative working conditions can be tricky, but if you find yourself spending a lot of time wondering whether your job crosses that line, that's likely a bad sign regardless.

Are you being paid something close to the market average salary for your work? If you aren't, is that true for everyone in your office, or are some people being paid far better than others?

In crunch times, does your office spread the increased workload equitably? When things go well, is credit shared fairly? (And, when things go poorly, is blame?)

If you didn't have friends or mentors in the office, would you want to stay? If the perceived "reputation" of the office went away overnight, would this still be a good job?

If you find yourself answering *no* to any of the questions above, it may be time to explore other, better options.

You're worth more than a firm that treats its workers that way.

Know your limits

Imagine a spectrum, where on one end *work* and *life* are completely and totally separate, with zero mingling. On the other end of the spectrum, *work* and *life* have become one and the same, a 100% overlap.

Architecture, as a profession, has a tendency to push everyone toward that 100% overlap. This isn't a good thing, and it doesn't make architects any happier or architecture any better. But it is a common impulse and one you've likely already encountered in school.

Pay attention to and resist this impulse in the workplace. Wanting to see a project go as well as it possibly can is natural, and I'd be lying if I said I've never worked into the evenings and on the weekend to finish something for work. But I've also seen people become completely absorbed in their work, to the point of missing out on hobbies, friendships, and family events.

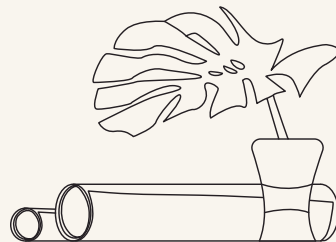
The urge to push ourselves into overwork can come from a lot of places and isn't always easy to resist or even recognize. As much as you want to learn and grow, saying yes to every opportunity will stretch you to—or past—your limits.

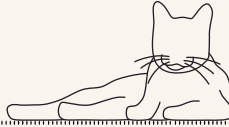
Or, put another way, there's nothing wrong with going into work on a Saturday every so often. Just make sure it's not every Saturday.

Know your neighbors

Get to know the people who work next to you, down the hall, in the office downstairs, in the building across the street, in the other architecture firms in town.

This isn't any sort of clever networking or professional advancement tip; it's just a nice thing to do for its own sake.





How to Say NO:

In our culture saying NO can be seen as being lazy, quitting, not having your heart in your chosen field, etc. Our culture rewards, even demands, that people starting out their careers willingly and happily say yes to longer hours, more work, etc. as proof of brilliance, tenacity, creativity, and love for what they do.

Yet, the act of refusal, clearly and energetically saying NO, is a liberative practice both for individual and—even better—communal change. As an example, by refusing to work on an unpaid competition you are actively saying that this kind of arrangement is unacceptable and you can refocus your time and efforts in other places. If you come together with other designers to collectively refuse this extractive model, you can affect the kind of change that will make it easier for others to say no.

Saying NO is about understanding your boundaries.

Saying NO is about critically engaging in practice and academia.

Saying NO is discursive and liberating.

Saying NO is about protecting yourself and others.

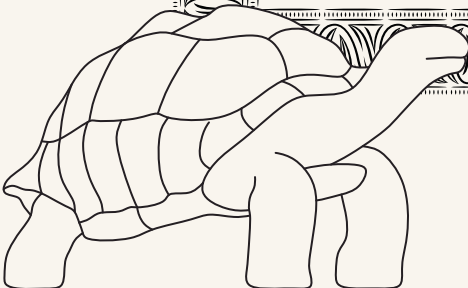
Saying NO is about finding your community.

Saying NO is about finding new modes and models for design and practice.

Saying NO is about clarifying the things you want to say yes to.

If your NO is not heard, you may just simply need to find the place that will hear it. Maybe there you can get to a yes.

—Quilian Riano



FREE PIZZA

is a beautiful thing...



...but it's not a living wage.

The appeal of a close-knit and casual office environment is plain to see: everyone wants to feel comfortable and at ease around their coworkers. Little perks and teambuilding activities are a common part of many office cultures. But don't let small gestures of appreciation or statements like "we're all a family here" distract from larger issues of equity and compensation.

In the long run, free beer on Friday afternoons matters a lot less than healthcare coverage and a regular 40-hour work week.

Follow Your Curiosity: Some Personal Reflections on 20ish Years in Architecture

Something that's cool about architecture, and making buildings in general, is that there are so many different ways to do it. And, you don't have to be tied to a specific firm, city, type of practice, or working environment – or even a desk or computer. You can build with your hands, with your brain, and/or with a mouse. You can design furniture or cities or living rooms or boatyards. You can teach about buildings, develop them, build them, manage them, render them, make and design the things that go inside them, inspect them, sell them, repair them, theorize about them, write policy about them, study them, advocate for them. It is all up for grabs.

I say this because I think architecture, in its more traditional day-to-day practice, can feel a bit narrow. Wrestling with Revit, dealing with zoning boards, wrangling GCs and clients, constantly proving your value both internally on your own team and externally to a world that doesn't understand what we do...it can be a bit of a grind, and distant from the more tangible aspects of making buildings or the people we're making them for. It's often a far cry from what got us excited about buildings in the first place, as little kids making drawings or building forts.

How do we keep that spark that brought us to architecture and buildings in the first place?

I think the answer is actually quite simple: follow your curiosity. Reread that list in the first paragraph, and bask in the myriad options – there are just so many ways to work in the built environment. But it can feel scary to deviate from the path we think we're "supposed" to take, or the one our parents and mentors are pushing for.

My first job out of undergrad, after getting my BS in architecture, was in construction. Of all things, I was working on the renovation of an architecture firm. On my first day, I was hauling rubble in buckets from the basement where we were jackhammering for new footings, carrying it carefully through the office and past my former classmates who were CADing and learning how to be actual architects. I would take the buckets out to the dumpster, which was too tall for me to reach over, so I had to build a little set of stairs to get up to the top. I felt like an utter failure: Wasting my degree AND too weak to do my job like the big guys could. I cried in my car on the way home.

The next day, I had to do the same thing all over again. But I was ready with extra sandwiches and the determination to make it through the day. I soon began to realize that the work itself, though physically demanding and repetitive, gave me opportunities to learn things I couldn't learn any other way. I learned about the constraints and practicalities of prepping for concrete, laying rebar, pouring footings, making steel connections, etc in tight quarters. I learned that while physical labor was hard, my mind was often free to observe, analyze, think, and speculate about what was happening around me. I learned that mundane tasks like sweeping floors meant that I had a front row seat to decisions

being made, conflicts playing out, and all kinds of conversations between trades, the architect and GC, inspectors and subs.

I stuck with it past those first few days because I was curious. Many people tell me now how smart and strategic I was being, but the truth is, I wasn't thinking about my career trajectory at all. I just wanted to know more about how buildings actually got built, and I wanted to try building them with my own hands. Eventually I started working in the office, as an assistant estimator, then assistant project manager, then full project manager running jobs. It was like trying to drink from a firehose every day, in terms of learning both content and culture. I was often the only woman around, I was young, and I was in a constant state of challenge. I worked very, very hard. And I loved it.

I talk to many students and new grads who are interested in pursuing non-traditional paths through the industry, but who are worried their careers will falter unless they start working at an architecture firm, keep their heads down, and do nothing else. I'm here to tell you that's not true. I didn't even have my first architecture job until after grad school, when I was 28, six years after I graduated with my BS. I didn't know much about being an architect when I was hired. But I had worked as a contractor for four years, learned traditional carpentry and masonry at a field school in Jamaica, moved to a city where I knew no one, spent summers working in only vaguely related jobs instead of getting Serious Internships, and pursued all kinds of interests outside of architecture. It was these experiences that set me apart in a tough job market, and these experiences that gave me the confidence to advocate for myself, seek opportunities that excited me, tackle new challenges, and eventually, start my own practice.

I also think back to those early days, when some friends, professors, and colleagues told me I was wasting my education and setting my career back irreparably. It's hard to know who to listen to when you're starting your career; you might get opposing advice from two different people you respect. How do you handle that? I'd say you have to discern who is really listening to you. Who is really helping you think through where you are, not just giving you rote or standard advice? Who is challenging you to be your best, while helping you learn how to advocate for yourself and not get taken advantage of? Who is helping you navigate tough situations at work, while helping you discern what is "good tough" [productive and character-building] from what is "bad tough" [detrimental and exploitative]? Who is bringing you back around to the things that excite you, feed you, engage your curious mind?

In short, if you make career decisions based on curiosity, you'll find your way to niches of this industry that fulfill you in ways that might surprise you. You'll build a unique and deeply personal foundation for your future endeavors and adventures, and you'll be living authentically to what you're interested in and what fires you up. And, you'll end up with some great stories.

—Marilyn Moedinger

MOVING UP

Eventually your new job stops being new. You develop regular patterns and routines. You have a set of expectations for how each day will go, and those expectations are accurate more and more often. Sometimes this will feel like absolute contentment and job satisfaction. Other times, this will feel boring and unpleasant, and you'll want more challenge and responsibility (*and maybe a bigger paycheck*).

“Moving up” in the world of architecture will look different for everyone. Some people feel passionate about opening their own office one day. Some people have certain dream jobs or project types they want to work on. Some people find their energy and aspirations focused elsewhere, with architecture just paying the bills. The good news is that none of these paths are any more inherently “correct” than the others. The world of architecture is made stronger by people discovering their own paths and carving new ones. Find what works for you.

Once again, ask!

A good, healthy workplace will want you to feel driven and supported in your professional growth. This is only possible when your supervisors understand your desires and ambitions. If you aren't getting to work on the projects in the office that interest you, ask if you can be moved to another team or take on some different responsibilities. These conversations (and their outcomes) will vary based on office size, workload, and team makeup, and you may not get exactly what you're looking for right away. But if you don't speak up about your goals, you're less likely to be considered for new opportunities.

Networking isn't a dirty word!

The idea of “networking” has a bad reputation in certain circles. It's often treated as a sort of insincere social-climbing pursuit that uses people for who they know, not what they know. And in some cases, that critique is valid, but don't let that dissuade you from starting conversations. Social events and professional groups (either in-person or in digital spaces) are full of people with interests and experiences that overlap your own.

Go to that local AIA event or lecture. Strike up a conversation with the person sitting next to you. Months or years from now, you'll be glad you did.

How to find a mentor:

Find someone who is doing what you want to do, or a skill you want to learn—locally, or online—and start asking questions. Share that you think what they're doing is cool/important to you and why and they'll be more likely to engage. Share what you hope to do with the skill and start to create the two-way relationship of knowledge sharing; and it's always two ways, never forget that. You can't come to the relationship only needing—people are burned out, even if they won't acknowledge it, and they need to feel energized by the additional interaction.

So the simplistic answer is: find out what you like to do, try to teach yourself how to do it, find others who are doing it well, and create a sharing relationship. Remember that mentors don't have to be great at everything or stay with you for a lifetime. You can learn from multiple people on different specific topics for different periods of time and that is just as valuable, if not more so. Most of all, remember that your mentors are human just like you, learning how to do things just like you are.

—Lora Teagarden



Find your niche

Many people, at different stages of their careers, worry about becoming overly specialized and then pigeonholed into certain limited roles in the office. You may have heard (or said) things like “I don’t want to be just the Grasshopper person” or “I don’t want to be stuck making models forever.”

These are reasonable concerns and nobody should be expected to stick around indefinitely in a role they don’t enjoy. At the same time, it can be difficult to become *great* at anything if you’re committed to being *good* at everything. Ideally, as you get settled in your job, you’ll find

certain tasks or project phases that capture your interest. Lean into these, especially if they’re tasks that other people don’t particularly want to do. You’ll end up with a specialized set of skills and expertise that will help your career advancement for years to come.

This isn’t about choosing a particular lane right at the beginning of your career and staying in it forever. Instead, think of it as slowly filling a kind of toolbox that you can draw from as needed.

Getting licensed

A full discussion of architectural licensure would be a book of its own, and plenty such books (and blogs, podcasts, etc.) exist. Look up the most current information for your area before making any big moves, as the exact requirements for licensure are set at the state level and can change over time.

In general, there are three main components for licensure:

1. A NAAB-accredited professional degree. This is most typically a B. Arch or an M. Arch. (See the section on GRAD SCHOOL for more info about degrees.)
2. Several thousand hours of documented work experience. This is now called the Architectural Experience Program (AXP), though was known as the Intern Development Program (IDP) until 2016. At the time of preparing this guide, the AXP requires formal documentation (via an online NCARB Record) of 3,740 hours of experience across 6 broad areas of practice.

This breaks down to just under 2 years of regular 9-5 work, but it will take longer to accumulate the right number of hours in each area. As you gain and track experience, you may want to ask your supervisor for the chance to work on specific tasks to complete the required hours for particular areas.

3. Passage of all six divisions of the ARE 5.0 test. Be advised that there is a five-year rolling clock system, so you'll need to complete all of your testing within a certain timeframe or go back and retest.



Preparing for the ARE

Just as lawyers study intently to pass their bar exams, most architects on the path to licensure prepare rigorously for their ARE tests. Testing is time-consuming and expensive, so it's worth doing everything you can to feel confident and prepared.

Whether you choose to review at your own pace or go with a more structured program, a number of tools and resources exist for ARE study and preparation.

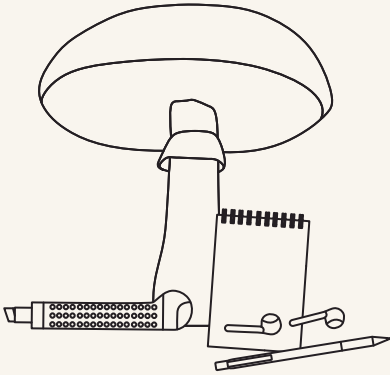
Think about how you learn and retain information best and what study strategies have worked well for you in the past. Make a plan or timeline for yourself, with realistic milestones to work towards. Look into the tools and study guides available and decide which of them best fit your needs and learning style.

Good friends and coworkers have used (and recommended) the programs below, but this is nowhere near an exhaustive list of resources.

Black Spectacles

Amber Book

ARE Sketches



The Six ARE Divisions:

- Practice Management
- Project Management
- Programming & Analysis
- Project Planning & Design
- Project Development & Documentation
- Construction & Evaluation

What led you to pursue getting licensed? How did you prepare?

I wanted to get licensed because I wanted the flexibility to take my career where I wanted to, either in reaction to experiences I might have or to proactively pursue a passion. If I wanted to own my own firm, I would need my license. If I wanted to be a partner, most states have business requirements or liability insurance requirements that would require licensure—or it might be part of the firm requirement.

I also just wanted to do it for me. I had gone through six years of school and didn't want to hold myself back from any potential path in my future. What I didn't know was that in the process of studying, I would create a business path to help others get licensed (the #AREsketches visual study guide book series). Opportunities are everywhere, and licensure opens up even more.

Much of this process is simply understanding “how to test” which is why it can sometimes be easier to do straight out of a school-type scenario. There may be things that operate differently than the real world (for better or worse) but you basically have to flip a switch in your brain and go into “test” mode and answer how you know the content wants you to answer.

—Lora Teagarden

It's a marathon, not a sprint!

You'll encounter people who choose never to pursue licensure at all, as well as people who dedicate themselves to moving through the process as swiftly as possible. While there's nothing wrong with either of these approaches, they're far from the norm.

NCARB measures and tracks a number of milestones on the path to licensure. This information is available on their **website**.

It takes aspiring architects an average of 12 years to complete all three components for licensure. The average age for starting to

record AXP experience is 25. The average age for starting ARE testing is 29.

These are just averages and your own path will be different. Make decisions based on your own needs and interests, not by trying to keep up with our outpace your peers.

Also, there are many routes to a meaningful and fulfilling career in architecture that don't involve licensure at all. Yes, there will be certain things you aren't able to do without a license, but the field is dynamic and diverse enough that it's by no means a necessity.

GETTING OUT

Sometimes things don't work out how we'd hoped or expected. An office that seemed like a great fit during your interview might not be so great in practice. Or, finding what works for you might reveal that you want something outside of architecture entirely. All of these things are okay. You're not "a quitter" for recognizing that you need a change.

Be open and honest with yourself about what's working and what isn't. Whatever change you need to make will only be more difficult if you try to minimize or mask it. Think about your support system in this time—your partner, your friends, your family, your mentor—and don't be afraid to lean on them.

Leaving a job

This is never easy, especially if you've built up close relationships with your coworkers. Sometimes, though, it's necessary to move on and get a clean start somewhere else.

One challenge that some people run into is an inability to move up or get increased compensation and responsibilities in their current office. This can come from budget or staffing challenges, from interpersonal differences, or from managerial apathy and incompetence. If you feel stuck and like you don't have a clear path for advancement in your current office, that can be a sign to look elsewhere.

It's a common piece of advice to not hop around from job to job too much at the beginning of your career. While that advice comes from a good place and, in general, is a wise strategy, it's not worth hanging around for long in a position where you aren't valued. Be honest with yourself about what you want from architecture and don't be afraid to make some waves to get it.

Leaving the profession

The skills and experiences you'll pick up from studying and working in architecture are applicable to a wide range of disciplines. There are, of course, closely related career paths in areas like interior design, preservation, research, and technical consultation, all of which will keep you close to the practice of architecture.

Slightly further afield, there are options in academia, journalism, criticism, and the like. Follow your passions, but be aware at the outset that jobs in some of these fields can be hard to find and not always well-paid. Reach out to some professors or writers you admire and ask if they can share any wisdom with you before you say quit your day job.

And, of course, there are other options even further from architecture itself: graphic or product design, custom fabrication, art, digital media production, advocacy and public policy, etc. Update your resume and portfolio as needed and don't overlook great jobs just because they aren't in an architecture office.



How to know if you're in a bad job:

Sexual harassment.

Toxic workplaces that hurt mental health.

Misogynistic or patronizing leadership.

These are all key indicators of a bad job.

But other factors can be less explicit. General malaise, lack of “fire,” anxiety, feeling the need to work all of the time to “prove your worth,” and so many other small symptoms.

I have lived through the first three indicators, and I found a way to exit that job as quickly as I could. It's an unfortunately common experience for women in the profession (and one that we have the ability to change). The latter three indicators, however, are even more common, and they can be more insidious because they're easy to explain away as “individual” issues, not issues created or worsened by firm structure and culture. The pandemic has put us in a weird place where your general sense of “I really don't care about this job” might be because of two straight years of pandemic health stressors and anxiety...or it might be because your employer showed you that they really don't care about you during a pandemic. Only you can know that.

If your issues are built around the first 3 examples, start keeping timestamped documentation of events as they occur. Tell someone you trust as soon and as frequently as you can—they become a witness who can verify events when they occurred. And, while you might not trust them, tell a manager/HR—they are legally required to follow up on it, and this legal step is important.

If you are feeling a general lack of desire for the work you're doing, talk to someone. Take a break. Talk to a mentor. Talk to a friend you trust. Figure out what excites you and if you can still do it at your job. Breaks are NECESSARY to your physical/mental/emotional well-being. Take them, and if/when you return set up better boundaries so that work doesn't permeate your whole life. If work can't respect those boundaries, then yes—it's probably time to leave.

—Lora Teagarden

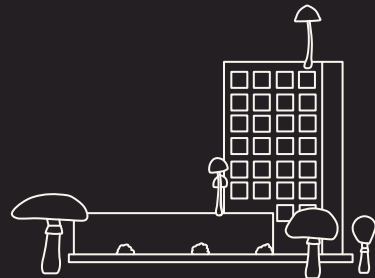
How to know if you're in a bad job (and how to get out):

As you all look for jobs pre/post-graduation, most of your thought process focuses on the right fit. We all want a place where we belong, feel valued, engaged by the work, and we're treated fairly. Unfortunately, many of those running firms feel differently. There is a mentality of “I had to suffer through low pay, intense hours, and being disposed of by bosses—you have to as well”. Suffice to say, we can call that a bad job—so what are the signs that you should leave?

- 1. Most important on the list—what does your gut tell you? Are you waking up in the morning after smashing your snooze button many times for months on end? This is one of the most telling signs you're at the wrong firm. Unfortunately, school enforces the “architecture as a calling you must suffer through” mentality, but this is a sign that you should find a new firm ASAP (and given the way architecture practice impacts mental health, seek out a therapist if you don't already have one).*
- 2. Does your firm refer to the team as a family but the owner and senior people leave at 5pm? That's a sign that they view production staff as workhorses and not future leaders in the firm.*
- 3. Are you constantly pissed off or suffering through a migraine at the end of the day? It's probably impacting people around you as well.*

So, you see the signs? Do you go Scarface from Half Baked on everyone? Not early in your career. Architecture is such a small world that it's better not to burn bridges, at least until you've had a chance to build up your reputation. Be courteous, give the typical two weeks, and word your criticisms constructively in your exit interview. After all, you're going to a better place (hopefully).

—Josh Mings



What experience made you leave architecture to do something else?

I got diagnosed with ADHD.

I'd been job-hunting when the pandemic hit, which turned out to be poor timing on my part. As listings disappeared and the first lockdown began, I started taking on some small graphic design projects through family. I'd been feeling a little alienated from the field since before I started my Master's, so the Whole Situation had me wondering whether I could try out graphic design as a side gig, if not something more. I decided to start looking into it – doing research on competition and rates, writing a business plan, the whole deal.

My boyfriend's firm started to work from home during the first lockdown, so we were suddenly spending a lot more time together in our bedroom workspace. We've coworked in the past, of course, but I think that's when he started to notice something was wrong with how I did things, day in and day out: slow progress on simple tasks, difficulty focusing, apparent carelessness, and a lot of stress associated with scheduling. I was well aware of these issues of mine; in fact, he and I had talked about them a few times since we'd started living together. I assume the confined quarters and increased stress from the pandemic threw them into high relief.

A month or two into the pandemic, my boyfriend caught up with a former coworker and colleague of ours, who mentioned they'd been recently diagnosed with ADHD. After talking it through with them, he returned to our apartment convinced I should talk to my doctor about it. I did, and my doctor referred me to a psychologist. We spoke about my symptoms, I filled in a couple evaluation forms, and I was diagnosed with ADHD.

The diagnosis wasn't a huge surprise, in retrospect. It did a good job of explaining the symptoms I'd been increasingly aware of. What did surprise me, however, was how the diagnosis pushed me to re-examine my personal history with architectural work.

For instance: my general inability to produce or iterate no matter which organization strategy or time management technique I attempted, only to have the floodgates open with the flip of some mental switch in the final three days before a deadline. Or my persistent trouble catching every redline on a drawing. Or, very broadly, my difficult relationship with paying attention outright.

The issues weren't exclusively internal: they frustrated professors and bosses almost as much as they'd frustrated me. These difficulties naturally led to academic and professional conflict, which nobody

involved knew how to deal with. I eventually realized that my increasing sense of alienation from the field was linked, in some way or another, with the consequences of my previously undiagnosed and untreated ADHD.

I've never had the proper capacity or opportunity to develop healthy work strategies and skills, so all I have are coping mechanisms; for me, those can only go so far. As someone who has received a diagnosis and found an effective prescription that helps me, for the first time, to manage my time and focus consistently, I believe the next step is to figure out how, exactly, work should work for me.

I also believe that an architecture firm would be a terrible place for me to learn them.

There are, of course, architects who thrive with ADHD. They may have effective coping mechanisms, time management techniques, and work strategies, or their ADHD presents in different ways that cause them different issues.

When I thought about it, however, I feel that the normal architecture office isn't the kind of environment where learning how to work would fit particularly well. Maybe I'm wrong about that! I've just had enough experiences with negative feedback, intense anxiety, disappointed managers, and even getting fired for the workplace to feel like an appropriate setting for developing healthy work practices. I knew that it would not be a tidy or reliable process, so the only path that I felt was both safe and accessible to me was one where I was solely responsible to myself.

So now my side-gig is a full-time thing. I've also taken up architectural writing on a freelance basis.

I have lots of good days. I'm filling my time, earning enough to pay the rent, and slowly starting to feel competent and capable. My bad days can still send me spiraling. I'm finding ways to deal with it, and I think it's getting better.

I recognize that I'm particularly lucky to be able to do things this way. My family has supported financially; the same is true of my boyfriend, who has been astonishingly understanding and patient as I've taken the time needed figure things out and build myself back up from a particularly low point.

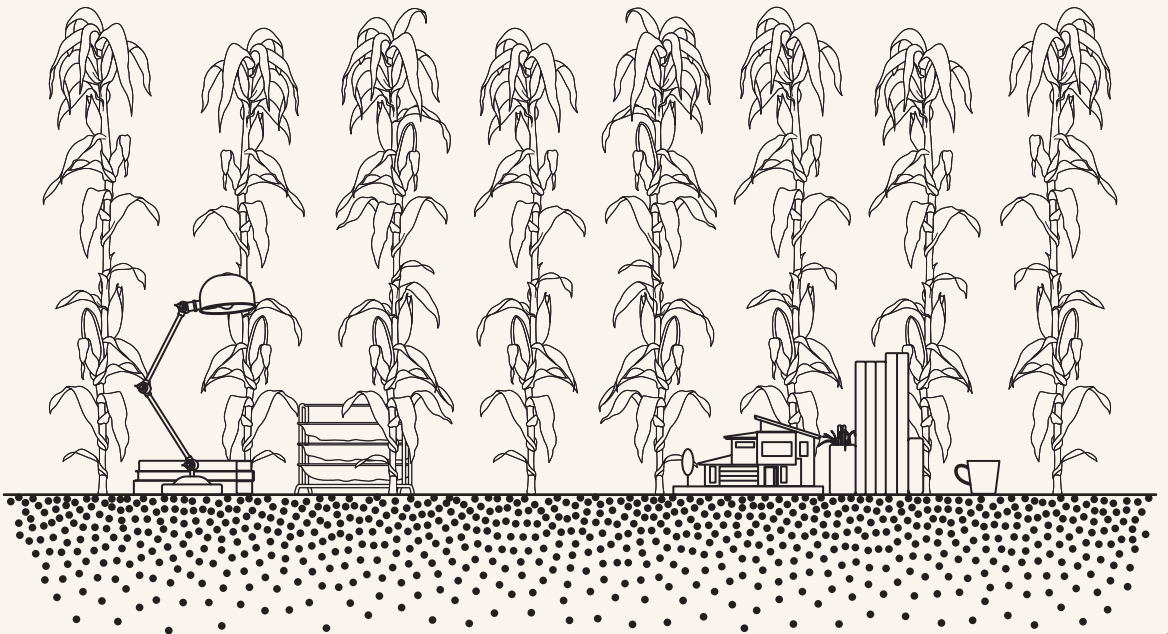
I enjoyed studying and working in architecture, but I don't regret leaving it. Don't stay in it if it doesn't work for you.

—Sean Maciel

Some career options outside of traditional architectural practice

Some of these fields may be easy to move into. Others will require further education or experience. All will make use of things you already know how to do and (ideally) enjoy.

<i>advocacy and organizing</i>	<i>graphic design</i>
<i>architectural criticism</i>	<i>industrial design</i>
<i>architectural history</i>	<i>interior design</i>
<i>architectural photography</i>	<i>landscape architecture</i>
<i>building conversation</i>	<i>production design</i>
<i>building surveying</i>	<i>public policy</i>
<i>construction management</i>	<i>teaching</i>
<i>cost estimating</i>	<i>urban planning</i>
<i>furniture design</i>	<i>and many, many more...</i>



GETTING ORGANIZED

When I was just leaving school, the notion of a union for architects was discussed mostly in hypothetical and academic terms, rather than as an imminent possibility. Architects working in the private sector in the US have not had a union representing their interests since the 1940s, but at the time of writing workers at multiple firms are exploring how and why they might try to unionize their workplaces.

At its core, a union is about a group of workers coming together to advocate for themselves collectively in conversations with the boss. Usually, this will involve discussions around pay, hours, and working conditions, but just about anything related to your duties on the job can be addressed in the collective bargaining process.

Suppose your office wins a project for a prison, or maybe the design of a private home for a controversial public figure. Your refusal, as an individual, to work on the project likely won't keep it from moving forward. If, however, most of your office stood up together to refuse the work, the boss would have a much harder time pushing ahead. And if you were able to withhold your labor within the legal protections and additional resources unionization provides, your position would be even stronger.

There's a common misconception that forming a union is about hating the boss. Not true! Union representation is about having a seat at the table. When the workers and the boss inevitably don't see eye-to-eye on things—usually a matter of structural imbalances and competing priorities, not one of personality—having a union means finding a resolution through dialogue, not a top-down mandate.

I hope everyone reading this guide one day has the chance to decide for themselves if they'd like to be in a union. The choice is yours and yours alone, but I strongly encourage that, should the time come, you vote **UNION YES!**

Learning more and getting involved

Because the architecture office culture of the United States has evolved without unions for the past 75 years, it's not always clear where or how to get involved in changing things. Who do I ask? How do I start that conversation? Where are these discussions taking place?

The Architecture Lobby has been researching and organizing around labor issues for several years, and has a working group devoted to unionization. If you're interested in the theory, research, and big-picture trajectory of labor organizing in architecture, the Lobby is a great place to get involved.

Architectural Workers United is a young organization out of New York, working on making unions a reality in architecture offices today. Their website is a great place to learn more about unionization in architecture.

If you're based in the UK, you may want to look into the **Section of Architectural Workers**, a group with goals similar to the two organizations above but focused on the legal and economic particulars of architecture work in the United Kingdom.

Finally, whether your job is in the realm of architecture or in another field entirely, you can reach out to the **Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee** to be connected to a dedicated organizer who will listen to your situation and discuss options—including unionization—to make your workplace more fair, equitable, and safe.

The increased interest around unionization in architecture has been accompanied by some great research and writing about the particular challenges and opportunities in our industry.

Some more general resources about the labor movement are listed on the final page of this section, but those interested in reading more about the intersection of unions and architecture specifically should check out the resources below:

The Architecture Lobby:

T-A-L Union Pamphlet

New York Review of Architecture:

Issue 26: Union Fever

Marianela D'Aprile and Doug Spencer:

"Notes on Tafuri, Militancy, and Unionization"

Niall Patrick Walsh:

"Unionization in Architecture: Reviving a Dormant Movement to Fix a Broken Industry"



Fixing a paper jam

The dreaded paper jam. Things were going smoothly until, gradually or all at once, they weren't.

Take a minute to think about your all-in-one printer/scanner/copier.

This device may have been great at one point. It could've been the perfect printer/scanner/copier for you at a particular stage of your life.

Or maybe it was just the printing solution that was there when you needed one.

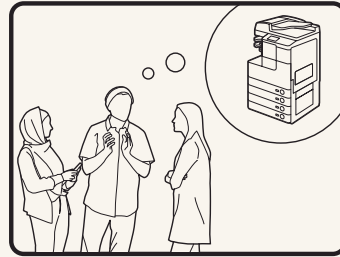
For any number of reasons, you might be unable to go out and get a different all-in-one printer/scanner/copier, so you'll need to find a way to overcome the issues with the one you have now.

To make matters worse, maybe you don't have access to an already-existing Collective Organization of Paper Jam Clearers or anything like that. It would be great if you did, but that's not realistic in the short term and the short term is when you need to get this jam fixed.

Here's one way to get started:



Diagrams on the following pages are based on a CANON imageRUNNER 4545i all-in-one unit. Your printer/scanner/copier may work slightly differently. Use your best judgment in working with these jam-clearing techniques.



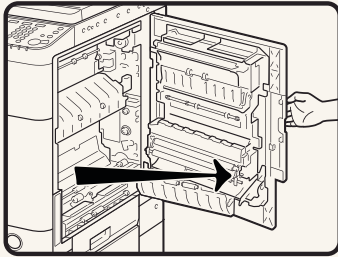
1. Ask around to see if anyone else has been having trouble with the copier.

You're almost certainly not alone in your frustrations. That's the thing about paper jams: if the copier is refusing to copy your documents in a sensible and equitable manner, it's likely that other people are finding their documents mistreated too. Ask a few people you trust if they've been having any problems recently.



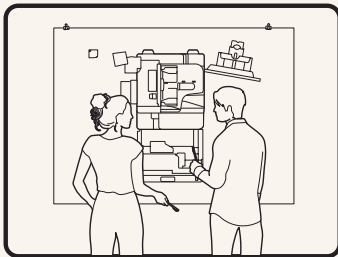
2. Meet up outside of work to talk about the paper jam and its impacts.

Start meeting up with sympathetic coworkers at a bar, a coffeeshop, or someone's home. You don't need to figure out everything at once: the best thing you can do right away is remind yourself and each other that you're not alone. Any steps you take to clear the jam will be more effective if taken collectively, and this can only happen with a spirit of solidarity. This doesn't mean you have to be best friends. Rather, it's about cultivating an attitude of cooperation and identity as fellow workers, despite any personal or professional differences you may hold.



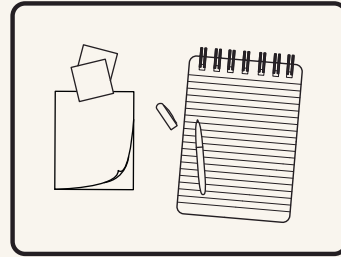
3. Open the side door of the copier to see if you can locate the source of the jam.

What are the copier's constraints and motivations? What are some realistic changes that could be made to improve the situation? It would be a misstep to focus aggressively on Paper Drawer 2 if the jam was caused by something going wrong in Paper Drawer 1. (You don't have to agree with the copier's position or narrative, but you should try to understand it.)



4. Make a detailed chart showing the functional layout of the copier.

No matter what approach you take to resolving the jam, you'll want to have as many people on your side as you can. Make a diagram or map of everyone in the office. How do they feel about the paper jam? How do they feel about the copier more generally? What sorts of power dynamics within the office culture and hierarchy influence those feelings? You'll want to keep this chart up-to-date and reference it as needed.

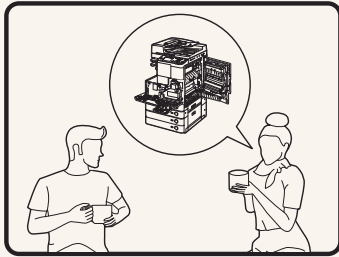


5. Identify who might help you clear the jam and who might be hesitant.

Along with the chart you just made, it can be helpful to keep a list of everyone in your workplace. Write everyone's names and how you think they feel about an organized effort to clear the jam. Some people will be 100% supportive of your goals and are glad to help however they can to clear the paper jam. Some people will be totally and categorically opposed to you and in favor of the jam. Most people will be somewhere in the middle.

Making a list like this helps you in a few ways. One, in the tension of an ongoing paper jam it can be easy to lose track of or overlook key allies. And two, working methodically like this can help you prioritize how you approach the conversations ahead.

Imagine you're standing on a big bullseye shape on the ground. At the center is you and your jam-clearing goal. Everyone else in the office is spaced out at varying distances from you, relative to how willing they are to help you clear the jam. You don't need to get everyone right into that center circle with you. (And you probably wouldn't be able to. Some people are just prickly.) What you want is to bring everyone, wherever they are, just a little bit closer. People who are neutral will become generally supportive. People who are generally supportive will become more actively engaged. And so on.



6. Have some one-on-one conversations with your coworkers.

This is where a lot of the magic of clearing a paper jam happens. It can also be slow, frustrating, and disheartening. You'll have good days and bad days. That's just how it goes.

These one-on-one conversations will go something like this:

You'll ask to chat with a coworker. You'll ask them how they're doing, how their day is going.

"What's going well at work? What isn't?"

Ask if they're familiar with the conversations about doing something to clear that paper jam. How do they feel about that?

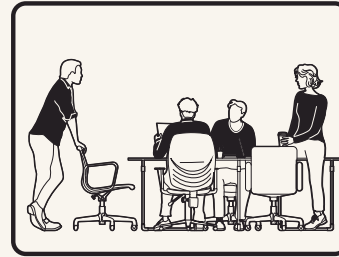
One framework that's frequently taught in the Organized Paper-Jam-Clearing world is known as "stake, take, do." When you're having the one-on-one conversation with your coworker, ask the three questions below, in order:

What is at stake for you in this paper jam?

What will it take to clear it out?

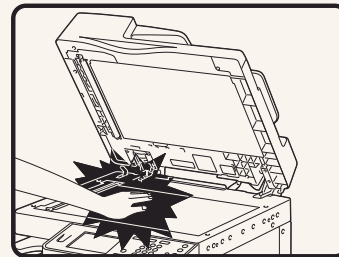
What will you do to help?

You may choose to reframe these questions in your own terms and let the conversation flow more organically. What matters most is to bring people from outside the issue to inside, to bring a sense of ownership and responsibility: the paper jam is *our* problem—what can *we* do to fix it?



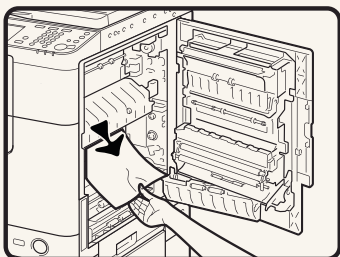
7. Show your support for each other in subtle ways as you build power.

Taking a stand against a paper jam can be uncomfortable. To get everyone's feet wet and see how effective your earlier conversations have been, you may want to begin with a small action, like gathering signatures on an internal petition. You may end up doing multiple rounds of one-on-one conversations and small internal actions to gradually build and strengthen support for your cause.



8. Talk about how the copier might react to the jam being cleared.

The copier might be upset about you and your coworkers acting together to clear the jam. It might stall or delay. It might make threats. It might work behind the scenes to smear the reputations of those leading the effort. You can't necessarily prevent these things from happening: it's part of the paper-jam-clearing process. But if you've discussed the possibilities with your coworkers beforehand, then any element of shock or surprise won't sway your resolve.



9. Clear that jam!

This part will look different for every copier. In general, the most powerful tool you have is in the collective refusal to print things. Maybe this is something you do on one particular afternoon at a given time along with presenting a list of demands. Maybe this represents an ongoing decision to not print anything for a particular project or client.

Whatever you do, it should be strategic and disruptive to business as usual: changing how things are going is the whole point of clearing a paper jam, after all.

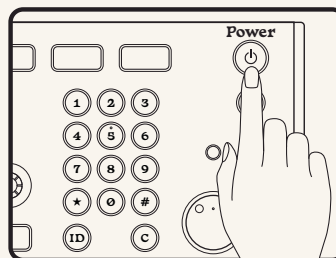
Make sure everybody involved is able to explain what your group is doing and why. It may help to designate one or two people to “speak for” the collective, but this is not a requirement.

Develop a series of plans for how to handle various responses. If the paper jam clears up at the first sign of pressure and all of your demands are satisfied, that’s great! But if there’s resistance or hesitation, what do you plan to do? If you’re able, discuss your plans with a dedicated Paper-Jam-Clearing Organizer, and maybe a handful of trusted members of your community. You might want to call on some of these people for support in the days ahead.

Ultimately, paper jams are just too complex to offer a comprehensive, one-size-fits-all strategy. But by following these steps you should be able to put yourself on a strong foundation, and as architects we all know how important that is.

Be prepared. Be confident. Be resolute.

You can do this.

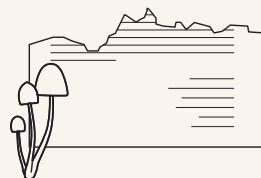


10. Keep up the momentum.

Clearing a paper jam, no matter how big or small, is a powerful experience. You will grow closer with your coworkers and feel more aware of your own abilities to organize and win.

You don’t need to actively chase the next jam and reorient your life around a constant series of actions and escalations. Part of what got you into this in the first place was likely a desire to spend less time struggling with the copier and more time with your friends, family, and hobbies.

Once you’ve given yourself time to relax and recover, though, think back on the sense of accomplishment and solidarity that you built with your coworkers. Find ways, small or large, to maintain that cohesion and camaraderie. Someday, you may decide that you need to organize again. If or when that moment comes, you’ll be glad that you’ve kept up the power and momentum you and your coworkers have come to share.



Some helpful resources related to work:

U.S. Department of Labor:

Know Your Rights Video Series

Occupational Safety and Health Administration:

Worker Rights and Protections

AIA:

Guides for Equitable Practice

NCARB:

Architectural Experience Program Guidelines

Architect Registration Examination Guidelines

Architect Registration Examination Handbook

The Architecture Lobby:

Pocket Guide to Labor Law

Room 1000:

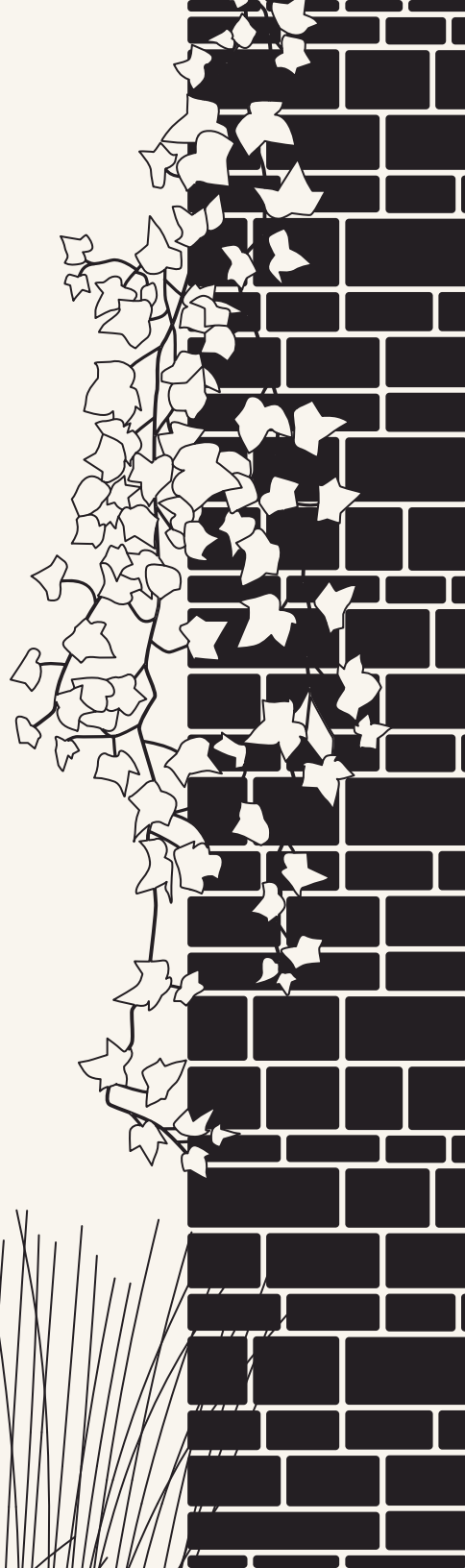
Issue 6 - Work

Labor Notes:

Secrets of a Successful Organizer

Jane McAlevey:

No Shortcuts



GRAD SCHOOL

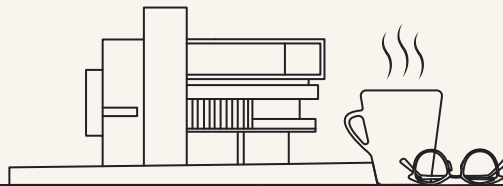
deciding to apply

deciding where to apply

getting in

evaluating admissions offers

making the most of it



DECIDING TO APPLY

Going to grad school can be a great experience, exposing you to new people, new opportunities, and new ways of thinking about the world. It can also take several years of your life and many thousands of dollars to finish.

The decision to go back to school should be yours and yours alone, and you'll have a better sense of your goals and priorities than anyone else. That said, there are better and worse reasons for making this leap. Spend some time thinking about why exactly you might want to go back to school. This will also guide you towards a program that's a good fit for you and help you to make the most of things while you're there.

I'm thinking about going to grad school because...

I want to get licensed

This is one of the top reasons people choose to go back to school—and it's a good one. To become a licensed architect in the US, you'll need what's called a "professional degree," one approved by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB). If your undergrad degree came from a 5-year B. Arch program, that likely suffices for licensure. If your undergrad program was a 4-year B.S. Arch (or similar), or if your undergrad studies were in another field entirely, then you'll need to go back to school for a professional M. Arch to move forward on the path to licensure.

I want to make more money at my job

Going to grad school will probably help you in the long run, but don't count on a huge pay increase right after graduation. There are a lot of factors in play in salary determinations, many of them totally out of your control. If your primary goal is boosting your income in the short- or medium-term, you might be happier looking for a new job or focusing on developing a set of specialized skills to boost your perceived 'value' to your employer.

I want to learn more about architecture generally

This is a great reason! Grad school provides a focused environment in which to think and learn, as well as access to tools, and resources that will be much trickier (but not impossible) to find on your own. You also get to meet a great community of educators and fellow students, many of whom will be friends for life.

Be sure, though, that your desire to learn is more than just a casual interest. Going to grad school for architecture is a serious commitment of time and energy. Even with the healthiest work/life balance, it's still a lot. Just know what you're getting into.

I want to learn more about a specific facet of architecture (fabrication, sustainability, etc.)

Also a great reason! Keep an open mind throughout the whole process, but don't be afraid to chase this specific interest. This might mean looking at programs with, for example, extensive fabrication labs and course offerings. You may even want to look into specialized degrees (that is, something like an M. Des or M.S. Arch) but keep in mind that these generally *do not* fulfill the education requirements for licensure.

I just have a gut feeling

A gut feeling might be masking something else. Maybe you're dissatisfied in your job, or wanting to move into a different type of work. Grad school may or may not be the right move. Trust your gut, but spend some time reflecting to see what else might be going on before making any big decisions.

All my friends are doing it

Ask yourself this: would you be interested in going to grad school even if your friends weren't applying? If grad school is definitely in your future anyway, it can be nice to go through the process with friends and compare notes along the way.

I want to try out a new city

The advice above about friends is relevant here, too. If you're planning to go at some point and you want a change in environment, grad school can be a great way to get there. But if, deep down, you're thinking about school just as an excuse to move, you might be happier just applying for a new job.

I feel bored, unfocused, unsure of what to do next

This works for some people, but it's also a very expensive and time-consuming way of figuring out your next steps. The worst-case scenario here would be coming out the other side still unsure of where you're heading. Plus, if you don't really know why you're there, you won't be able to make the most of your time in school.

I don't really want to but I feel like I'm supposed to...

Nope! Don't do it! If you don't actively want to be there, you will not have a good time. There are a range of options and programs, including some designed to move you toward a degree in an accelerated timeline, but even these are only worth doing if you're interested and invested and doing it for you, not to satisfy someone else's expectations.

DECIDING WHERE TO APPLY

You've given it some thought and you're ready to go to grad school. That's great! The next question to think about is where you're interested in going. You certainly don't need to apply to a dozen programs, but it's good to have options. With a bit of research and planning, you can put together a list of 3-5 programs that would all be a great fit for you and your interests and, ideally, have your choice of several great schools once admissions decisions come in.

You likely have a few general preferences (*I'd like to go to school in a big city*) and some non-negotiable requirements (*I need to stay within driving distance of my parents*). Use these preferences and requirements to help narrow down the programs you consider.

Because it's the most common choice (and the most flexible for a range of career paths), the rest of this section is tailored to NAAB-accredited M. Arch programs. But the same methodology and advice can be applied to other degree options with a bit of additional research.

What about an M.S. Arch?

Or an M.Des? Or some other post-professional degree program? Because these are not tied into the NAAB-accreditation process, their curricula and format varies significantly across institutions. They can be a great way for a focused student to tailor their education and skills to a certain sector if you want to work in and around architecture but not in a traditional licensure path.

For example, if you're passionate about digital technologies and robotic fabrication, these sorts of programs can give you more resources, connections, and experience in those areas than you would get from a standard M. Arch.

What about a PhD?

You're looking at 5-7 years of study (at least), with an enormous amount of reading and writing along the way. If that sounds unpleasant, a PhD may not be for you. If that sounds thrilling, then it might be a great choice (but keep reading..)

Many people choose the PhD route because they're interested in teaching. This is thorny. The academic job market has always been competitive, and the last 30 or so years have seen more and more applicants for fewer stable, tenure-track positions. A PhD will help your odds and open some doors, but it's far from a guarantee of long-term employment in academia.

Dive in to a world of possibilities with

COFFEE

Hot or iced; with cream and sugar or black; full-strength or decaf—any way you like it, coffee is there for you. This wonder bean has fueled human progress and innovation for centuries, and it's not stopping anytime soon.

Coffee can be made at home, at the office, or purchased from any number of restaurants and cafes along the way.

Some people love coffee for its rich aroma and robust taste. Others crave the extra jolt of energy it brings to their mornings. Some people avoid it entirely, for any number of reasons. That's okay, too.

Try talking about coffee at the office sometime or asking a coworker to grab a cup with you. It can be a great way to make a splash.



Some factors to consider:

Program size and setting

I earned my M. Arch at a large architecture program within a large public university. My undergrad experience was at a different large program in a different large university. In both cases that environment worked well for me, and in both cases I had friends and classmates who probably would've felt happier in a different type of program.

Larger universities (speaking of the institution as a whole, not just the architecture department), will have additional resources for libraries, labs, extracurricular groups, events and lectures, interdisciplinary classes and collaborations, etc. At the same time, they can also make some people feel anonymous and overlooked, just one of the masses.

And while smaller colleges can offer more direct relationship with the institution's leadership and a greater camaraderie between students, they have their own limitations and drawbacks.

Think about settings where you've thrived before, and ones where you've struggled to fit in. Does the idea of knowing everyone in all of your classes feel welcoming or stifling? Do you prefer an environment where everyone is always focused on the same things, or one where goals, agendas, and areas of focus are all over the map?

Most schools, of course, are somewhere in the middle: neither huge nor tiny, and you can find a comfortable niche in any program. Just be sure, in your thinking about where to apply, that you know what you're getting into.

Public or private?

You may not notice much (or any) difference between public and private institutions in the classroom or studio itself, but you'll certainly notice it in the administrative side of applying, enrolling, and studying. Private institutions are, on average, more expensive than their public counterparts. They're also subject to different laws and regulations regarding funding and transparency. In some cases, they'll be harder to get into. None of these qualities are inherently better or worse, just different and worth thinking about.

Program location

If you choose to look at public institutions, keep in mind the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition. Each state has slightly different residency requirements attached to their tuition. You might, for example decide after some research to move somewhere, work for a few years, and then go back to school as an in-state student.

Also, in many institutions the distinction between in-state and out-of-state might be complicated by special regional agreements. For example, residents of 15 western states are eligible for in-state tuition at the University of Arizona. Other schools have similar arrangements, or ones in which residents of neighboring states pay more than in-state but less than the "full" out-of-state tuition. Take a look at what options might apply to your specific situation and don't leave any money on the table.

Program culture

This is one of the most important factors in looking at M. Arch programs and, unfortunately, one of the hardest to define or measure from a distance. Much like the question of program size, this doesn't have any right or wrong answers, but rather just a series of questions and values to consider:

Do students tend to be highly competitive? Highly collaborative? Somewhere in the middle?

Do students and faculty engage with the community or keep their focus on campus?

Are faculty celebrated for their built work? For their research and publishing? For their teaching?

Is work produced by students credited to the students themselves? Or to their studio instructors?

When looking at student work, do you see the specific ideas and interests of the students shining through, or the guidance and direction of the faculty?

And when looking at faculty work, do you see their interests and ideas, or the influence of the institution itself?

What types of projects are elevated and celebrated by the program? What interests and methods unite them? Sustainability? Fabrication? Technical research? Historical and theoretical questions?

Look at the websites, social media accounts, and publications of any schools you're interested in and see how they do things. Ask some current students or recent graduates about their experiences and perspectives. If possible, visit the school and make a note of how the environment makes you feel.

Specific faculty

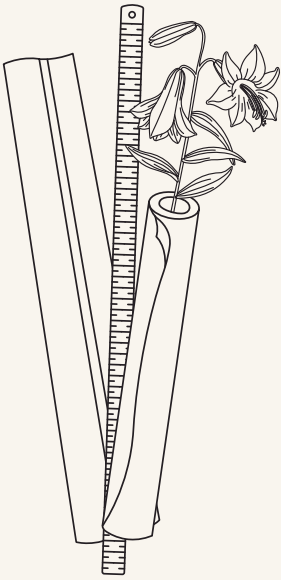
Some people apply to certain programs out of a desire to study with a certain professor. There's nothing necessarily wrong with this approach so long as you understand that faculty move institutions, take sabbaticals, have children, retire, and so on. You may do everything "right" and by pure chance still miss out on that studio or seminar you dreamed of.

A better approach is to look at the interests, research, and publications of the department as a whole. Ideally, you'll find a group of people you want to learn from, not one specific individual.

Troubled times on the horizon?

Writing in May of 2022, the political situation in the United States seems fairly bleak. The Supreme Court looks poised to roll back the *Roe v. Wade* decision that has guaranteed the right to an abortion for the past 50 years. Already there are rumblings of possible future decisions impacting gay marriage, contraception, and a host of other important rights and protections. This is happening in tandem with a number of state legislatures making moves to restrict the ability of educators to speak openly and honestly about race, gender, and sexuality in the classroom.

These reactionary forces were certainly around when I was applying for grad schools, but not with the same strength and ferocity as they exist today. My strongest hope is that attempts to turn back the clock and make the country a smaller, meaner, and more dangerous place do not succeed. But being clear-eyed about the years ahead means considering the worst-case scenarios alongside the best-case ones. Think about the political climate and likely direction of state legislative priorities in addition to the other research you're already doing.



There are NAAB-accredited M. Arch programs in 41 states, plus Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico. Some states have just one school with an M. Arch program, while some cities have multiple programs just a few miles apart. Some architecture schools are huge. Some are tiny. Most are in the middle. This map gives an overview of where M. Arch programs are located and their relative sizes. The ODDS & ENDS section at the back of this guide has more info about every program on the map.

Where are M. Arch programs located?



Lists & Rankings

You'll almost certainly encounter some of these in your research. It's worth looking into what exactly they measure and deciding for yourself how much you want to let them influence your thinking.

When you hear someone talking about “top ranked” architecture schools, they're usually referring to the rankings put together each year by **DesignIntelligence**. These rankings are assembled from surveys filled out annually by students, recent graduates, academic deans, and hiring professionals. The DI rankings aren't random, but they are inevitably subjective and it's hard to separate out how much name recognition, program size, and marketing influence the results. It's also tricky to make any clear separations within the rankings: even if the number 2 school is “better” than the number 12 school, it's hard to say exactly how much better it really is. You might not notice any difference at all in your education and career path.

If you are going to look at the DI rankings in making your decisions, I recommend looking at the lists prepared for the specific focus areas most aligned with your interests. There are 12 of these focus areas in the most recent DI rankings. I've copied three of them here. As you can see, some schools are widely-admired in a range of areas, while others are more highly-placed on a technical or theoretical side.



DesignIntelligence Focus Area: Engineering Fundamentals

Cornell University
Columbia University
Harvard University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Virginia Tech
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Illinois Institute of Technology
Kansas State University
SCI-Arc
Cal Poly - Pomona

DesignIntelligence Focus Area: Design Theory And Practice

Harvard University
Columbia University
Princeton University
Yale University
Cornell University
SCI-Arc
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Virginia Tech
Rice University
Kansas State University

DesignIntelligence Focus Area: Sustainable Built Environments/ Adaptive Design/Resilient Design

Harvard University
Columbia University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cornell University
University of California - Berkeley
SCI-Arc
University of Oregon
Virginia Tech
Yale University
Georgia Institute of Technology

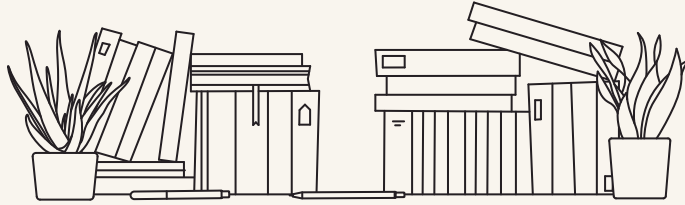


Remember, too, that you won't be learning from a school as an abstract entity but from specific teachers—and great teachers are everywhere. You can see some of the most admired educators and their institutions (compiled from the same DesignIntelligence surveys as the rankings themselves) below:

DesignIntelligence Most Admired Educators

David Allison	<i>Clemson University</i>
Amale Andraos	<i>Columbia University</i>
David Bell	<i>Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute</i>
Deborah Berke	<i>Yale University</i>
Mohammed Bilbiesi	<i>Oklahoma State University</i>
Hans Butzer	<i>University of Oklahoma</i>
Tim de Noble	<i>Kansas State University</i>
Hernán Diaz Alonso	<i>SCI-Arc</i>
Evan Douglis	<i>Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute</i>
Donna Dunay	<i>Virginia Tech</i>
Margaret Fletcher	<i>Auburn University</i>
Thomas Fowler	<i>Cal Poly - San Luis Obispo</i>
Matthew Hall	<i>Auburn University</i>
Daniel Harding	<i>Clemson University</i>
Rodney Hill	<i>Texas A&M University</i>
Alison Kwok	<i>University of Oregon</i>
Stephen Lee	<i>Carnegie Mellon University</i>
Peter MacKeith	<i>University of Arkansas</i>
Jonathan Massey	<i>University of Michigan</i>
Thom Mayne	<i>SCI-Arc</i>
Kevin Moore	<i>Auburn University</i>
Kate Schwensen	<i>Clemson University</i>
Michael Speaks	<i>Syracuse University</i>
Larry Speck	<i>University of Texas - Austin</i>
Nader Tehrani	<i>Cooper Union</i>
Ingalill Wahlroos-Ritte	<i>Woodbury University</i>
Peter Waldman	<i>University of Virginia</i>
Robert Weddle	<i>Drury University</i>
Sarah Whiting	<i>Harvard University</i>





Institutions With High ARE 5.0 Pass Rates (2021)

NCARB tracks who passed their ARE 5.0 exam divisions based on the alma maters of each test taker. Graduates from the following institutions had a pass rate of 67% or better on ARE exams taken in 2021.

Andrews University
Ball State University
Carnegie Mellon
Harvard University
Judson University
Kent State University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
North Dakota State University
Ohio State University
Pennsylvania State University
Portland State University
Princeton University
Rice University
Rochester Institute of Technology
South Dakota State University
Tulane University
University of California - Berkeley
University of Cincinnati
University of Memphis
University of Notre Dame
University of Oregon
University of Texas - Austin
University of Virginia
Virginia Tech
Yale University

Institutions With IPAL M. Arch Programs

Integrated Path to Architectural Licensure (IPAL) is a special curriculum offered by some universities in collaboration with NCARB. Student in IPAL options complete some or all of their required work experience and ARE tests while enrolled, allowing for licensure shortly after graduation. The institutions below offer or are developing IPAL options:

Ball State University
Boston Architectural College
Catholic University of America
Clemson University
Florida International University
Lawrence Technological University
New York Institute of Technology
NewSchool of Architecture and Design
North Carolina State University
Portland State University
Savannah College of Art and Design
Southern Illinois University
Texas A&M University
University of Cincinnati
University of Detroit Mercy
University of Florida
University of Kansas
University of Massachusetts - Amherst
University of North Carolina - Charlotte
University of Southern California
Wentworth Institute of Technology
Woodbury University

Institutions With M. Arch Programs And Unionized Graduate Student Workers

*If you're interested in a teaching assistantship or research assistantship during grad school, you may want to consider an institution where those positions are represented by a union. Being covered by a union as a grad student worker can be incredibly valuable, both monetarily (stipends and/or tuition reduction) and for your wellness more generally (stronger protections around hours and working conditions). The institutions below, from a **list** prepared by student workers at Washington University in St. Louis, offer M. Arch degrees and have graduate workers unions which are*

certified and formally recognized. Certification and formal recognition means that the bargaining power of union membership is in full effect. There are a number of other schools across the country where unions are fighting for recognition or dealing with aggressive legal challenges designed to slow their progress and limit their power. These are great places to learn more about organized labor, but they won't necessarily have the same level of existing protections as more-established grad student worker unions.

Cal Poly - Pomona
Columbia University
CUNY City College
Florida A&M University
Florida State University
Harvard University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Montana State University
New Jersey Institute of Technology
The New School (Parsons)
Portland State University
Southern Illinois University
Temple University

University at Buffalo
University of California - Berkeley
University of California - Los Angeles
University of Florida
University of Illinois - Chicago
University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign
University of Kansas
University of Massachusetts - Amherst
University of Michigan
University of New Mexico
University of Oregon
University of South Florida
University of Washington



The colleges and universities on this page all fall into one or more federally-designated categories based on their enrollment.

You can learn more about these designations and associated programs at the links below:

HBCUs

AANAPISIs

HSIs

Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)

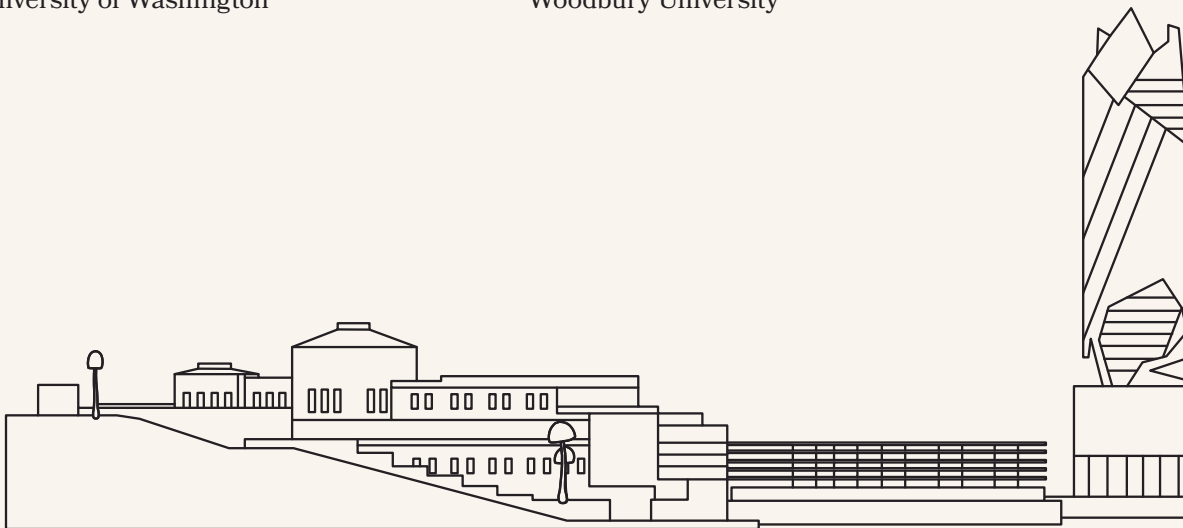
Andrews University
Cal Poly - Pomona
CUNY City College
New York Institute of Technology
Portland State University
University of Houston
University of Illinois - Chicago
University of Minnesota
University of Nevada - Las Vegas
University of Washington

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Florida A&M University
Hampton University
Morgan State University
Prairie View A&M University
University of the District of Columbia
Howard University

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)

Ana G. Méndez University
California Baptist University
Cal Poly - Pomona
CUNY City College
Florida International University
Kean University
Texas A&M University
Texas Tech University
University of Arizona
University of Houston
University of Illinois - Chicago
University of New Mexico
University of Puerto Rico
University of Texas - Arlington
University of Texas - San Antonio
Woodbury University



Institutions With M. Arch Programs Emphasizing Classical Architecture

Some people wish to focus their studies on traditional and classical architectural styles. The institutions below are recommended by the International Network of Traditional Building, Architecture, and Urbanism (INTBAU) for their emphasis on classical architecture:

Andrews University
Catholic University of America
University of Colorado - Denver
University of Miami
University of Notre Dame

Institutions With Fully-Online M. Arch Programs

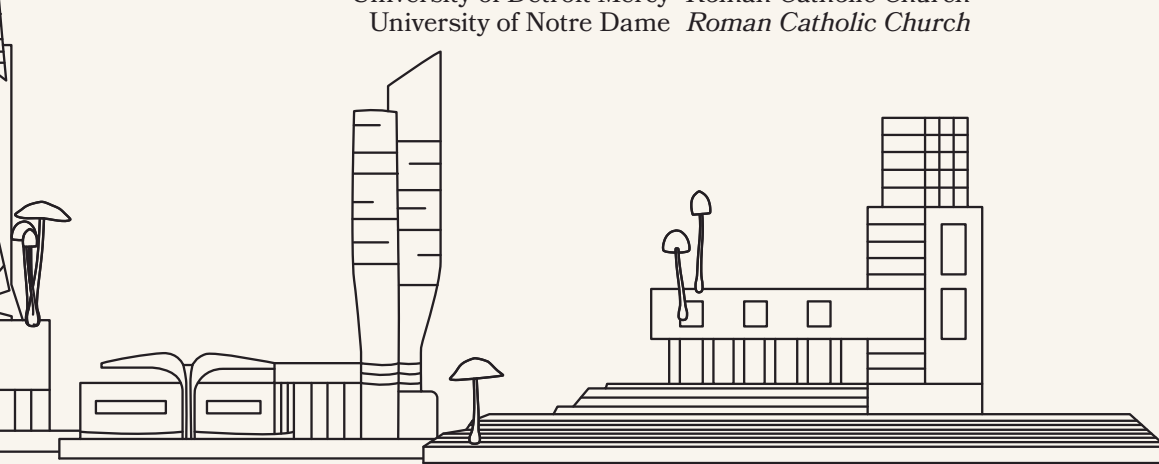
I really valued the in-person experience in grad school, both for the physical and material components of the instruction itself and also for the social environment of the studio. This isn't always the best option for everyone, though, and programs exist for hybrid and online instruction. The institutions below offer fully-online M. Arch programs:

Arizona State University
Boston Architectural College
Lawrence Technological University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Southern Illinois University

Institutions With Religious Affiliations

The programs listed below all have some level of connection with various religious organizations in the United States.

Andrews University	Seventh-Day Adventist Church
California Baptist University	Southern Baptist Convention
Catholic University of America	Roman Catholic Church
Drury University	United Church of Christ
Judson University	American Baptist Churches USA
Samford University	Southern Baptist Convention (informal)
University of Detroit Mercy	Roman Catholic Church
University of Notre Dame	Roman Catholic Church



GETTING IN

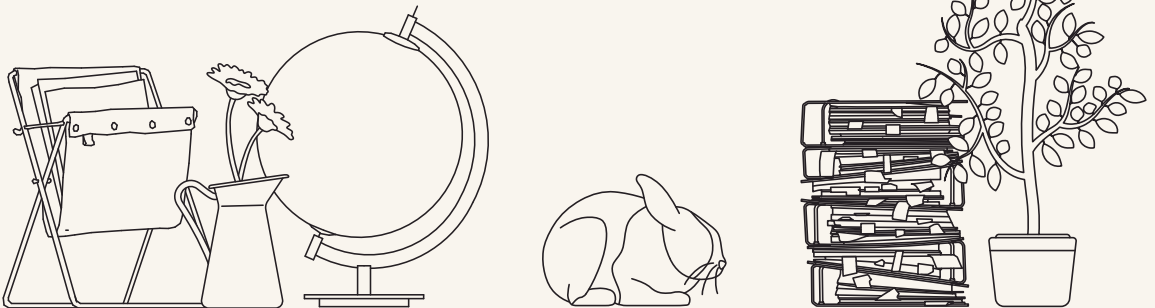
Once you have some schools picked out, you'll need to think about applications.

A few misconceptions to dispel right away:

1. How selective a school is in admissions is a reflection of the quality of the education you'll receive
2. Getting admitted (or not admitted) to a particular program is a reflection of the quality of your own work and experience.

It probably feels obvious now that the above beliefs will lead you astray, but you may need to actively remind yourself of this throughout the process. Yes, having a polished portfolio and well-crafted statement will take you further than an application thrown together at the last minute, but there's always an element of chance involved.

Narrow your selections to a handful of schools, look up their application requirements and deadlines, make a plan to get everything submitted on time, and do the best you can.



Some thoughts about money...

Grad school is expensive.

There's no hack or secret trick to get around this fact. Going back to school likely means spending thousands of dollars of savings, or taking out big loans, or both.

Okay, but *how* expensive is it?

This will vary a lot based on your program, location, living situation, etc.

Most colleges and universities have a cost estimator tool that you can use before applying to get a rough estimate. Be warned, though, that some architecture programs charge additional tuition and fees that aren't always reflected in the university-wide estimating tools.

One year of in-state M. Arch tuition at a public university in the United States costs, on average, \$17,000.

Looking at all of those same public university programs, a student paying out-of-state tuition would owe, on average, \$33,000 / year in tuition and fees.

And when looking at private colleges and universities, average tuition and fees come out to around \$47,000 per year.

On top of these costs, you'll want to estimate your costs for rent, food, transportation, and all the other stuff of daily life.

To get a better sense of the cost of living in a particular area (and especially valuable for comparing costs between areas) the **MIT Living Wage Calculator** is a great resource.

Once you have annual tuition and expected cost of living figured out for the programs that most excite you, you'll want to think about

how realistic those schools are relative to your budget and begin exploring scholarship and aid options.

In a better world, the cost of an education wouldn't play such an outsize role in your decision-making, but in this world it has to. That said, it's frequently the case that the most expensive programs "on paper" are less expensive once scholarships and aid come into play. Don't let a high sticker price prevent you from at least thinking about and maybe applying to a program you're interested in.

Different architecture programs have varying levels of funding that they distribute to students in vastly different ways. This will be just about impossible to predict from the outside or to understand after the fact. Some Ivy League schools offer relatively little in aid to prospective students despite billion-dollar endowments. Some public colleges with much smaller overall budgets will have well-funded architecture departments able to give significant scholarships to admitted students.

Most of the decisions at the department level about funding and financial aid will be made based on materials submitted during the application process. It's in your interest, not just for admission itself, to submit all of these on time, and filled out as thoroughly as possible. Give the people reviewing your applications every possible chance to help you out.

Also, remember that applying for financial aid or scholarship opportunities will never impact your chances of admission to a particular program.

What's in an application?

Resume

Keep this clear, concise, and focused. This should be one page that highlights your undergraduate education, work experience, organizations you belong to, any awards or accolades, and any skills or experience particularly relevant to your desired program.

Test Scores

Many schools have paused or removed their requirements for **GRE** scores over the past few years. If you are required to take the GRE, I recommend doing so early in the process. This way, if you're happy with your scores it's one less thing to worry about and if not, you'll have plenty of time left to schedule another test.

Applicants who are non-native English speakers may be asked to submit scores **TOEFL** or **IELTS** scores to demonstrate English proficiency. Review the requirements for the programs you're interested in and, as with the GRE, try to get testing taken care of well-before the last minute.

In both cases, review the free resources on the testing websites so you know what to expect. You can look through sample questions, try a mock version of the exam, and read more about how your answers will be scored.

There are a wide range of study guides and apps, both free and paid, to help you achieve the best scores possible. Whatever study methods have worked well for you in other contexts will be helpful to you here as well.

If a program requires a minimum score on a particular test, be sure you achieve at least that score. Beyond that, the benefits of testing and retesting are minimal. You might choose to retake a test once if you have a particularly bad day the first time around, but taking it five times to get the best score possible isn't really that helpful to your application.

Transcripts

Typically, you'll request transcripts be sent from your undergraduate institution to you directly. You'll scan and upload these into the application portal. Be ready to request that official transcripts be sent to your new grad school once you accept an offer of admission.

Personal Statement/Essay

The specific language of these will vary from year to year and school to school, but they all work in broadly the same way: Either in response to a specific prompt or as an open-ended composition answer the following questions:

1. Why do you want to study architecture?
2. Why do you want to study architecture at this particular institution?
3. What makes you uniquely well-prepared to study architecture at this particular institution?

Start thinking about these questions in a loose, casual way several months before your applications are due. The real work of preparing your personal statements should be in refining and polishing the statement itself, not in figuring out what you want to say in the first place.

There's nothing wrong with having a common framework that you adapt to fit the requirements of each specific application. Keep in mind, though, that the people reading your statements will want to see that you've taken the time to learn about their specific program. Nobody likes receiving a totally generic form letter.

The personal statement is also the best place to explain anything else that the admissions committees should know about you. Be sure to give additional context to any important parts of your background or experience that don't fit neatly on a resume.

Letters of Recommendation

Many programs will want three letters of recommendation from people who know you well. Former professors and supervisors are the most common choice, but letters can come from anyone who can give an (unbiased) view of your personality, work ethic, and academic potential.

Choose people who you *know* will have positive things to say about you—if this isn't a pretty sure thing with someone you're considering asking for a recommendation, you may be better off asking someone else.

Once you've identified some people, ask them for a letter sooner rather than later. They won't necessarily write it immediately, but the sooner it's on their radar the more time they'll have to get it done. Give them as much information as you can about the deadlines and requirements, and answer any questions they might have as quickly as possible. While most teachers and supervisors will be happy to help and want to see you succeed, don't make them do the extra work of finding the website or keeping track of deadlines. These people are doing you a favor; make it as easy as possible for them to help you out.

Someone may decline, for whatever reason, to write a letter for you. Thank them for their time anyway and don't push back. There will always be other people you can ask.

If the application deadline is creeping up and letters haven't been submitted, it's okay to gently follow up with your letter writers. But do so with gratitude and appreciation.

Application Fee

Typically \$75-100 for each school. Many programs will reduce or waive this fee for applicants with financial hardships. It's always okay to ask about this, and it won't hurt your application to do so.

Portfolio

The portfolio plays a large role in how admissions committees evaluate applications and a strong portfolio can make up for lower test scores or spotty undergraduate grades. You want to show your skills and design work in the best light, but don't feel like it needs to be a timeless work of art. After all, if you already knew everything, you wouldn't be applying to grad school in the first place.

As with the personal statement, it can help to make one common version that you adapt to each specific application. Requirements about document length and file size will vary from school to school, so don't count on one particular PDF to be right for every application.

There are many, many resources online for learning more about portfolio preparation. Having a friend or coworker review your portfolio as you put it together is a great way to get feedback and catch things you might miss. Foreground the types of work you're proudest of (renderings, models, detail drawings) but be sure your portfolio demonstrates range. It helps to think of this as a "greatest hits" of your architecture work so far, not a comprehensive catalog of everything you've ever done.

Your personality should show through, but prioritize clarity and ease of understanding over gimmicky formatting or presentation.

Pre-Requisite Courses

If you haven't done so earlier in your education, you'll likely need to take a few math and physics courses. These aren't technically part of the application process itself and usually don't need to be completed before applying, but check into what each school expects so that you aren't blindsided after being admitted. Better to have a plan in place early than to try to cram in everything in the last few weeks before your grad program begins.

A sample application timeline

<i>(Year 0)</i>	<i>July</i>	Schedule any tests you need to take. Get them out of the way sooner rather than later.
	Schools will begin to update their websites with application info and deadlines for the coming year	Begin thinking about the qualities you're looking for in an M. Arch program.
	<i>August</i>	Request information from schools that seem interesting. They'll send you some print or digital materials with more details about their programs.
		Talk with friends and mentors about what programs might be a good fit for you.
	<i>September</i>	Ask for letters of recommendation and provide as much info as possible to your letter writers.
		Finalize your list of schools you plan to apply to and look up their specific deadlines and application requirements.
	<i>October</i>	Begin working on your portfolio and personal statement.
		Request transcripts and any other documents you may need to include in your application.
	<i>November</i>	Continue work on your portfolio and personal statements. If possible, get feedback from friends and coworkers.
		Start filling in the personal info and other simple parts of your applications.
	<i>December</i>	Check in with your letter-writers and make sure nothing has fallen through the cracks
		Make any final edits to your materials (and spell-check all of it.)
	Applications are due	Submit everything by the deadline!

To get in to many programs, particularly the more selective ones, you'll want to start thinking about your application a year or more before you intend to start classes.

The timeline below is a good starting point for planning your own application process. Don't push everything to the last minute.

(Year 1) *January*

Give yourself a little break. You've earned it.

February

Think again about what you're looking for in a grad program, this time with serious conversations about your finances, geography, and other obligations. You'll only have a few weeks to make a decision, so it helps to think through things in a general way before decisions come back.

March

Most schools begin sending out admissions decisions

Visit as many schools you've been admitted to as you reasonably can (Open-House day or not). You'll likely pick up on things in-person that you wouldn't learn from the website.

April

Many schools hold "Admitted Student Open-House" events

Finalize your decision and accept an offer. (You may be asked to pay a deposit at this time.)

Deadline at most schools for accepting an offer of admission

May

If you'll be moving for school, start looking into housing right away. Make plans for any pre-requisite courses you may need to take.

June

Send any final transcripts and required paperwork not already submitted with your application.

July

Summer mini-term begins (often required for students without a B.S. Arch background)

August

September

**Orientation, etc.
Fall semester begins**

Have a great first day of classes!

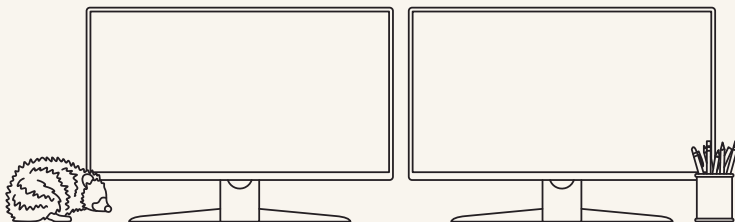
EVALUATING ADMISSIONS OFFERS

Admissions decisions will arrive sometime in the early spring of the year in which you plan to start classes. They might come via email or online portal, or you may get a letter in the mail. There's nothing wrong with reaching out to the admissions office if you're waiting on one particular program to respond. Just don't bombard them with emails and phone calls every day.

The best-case scenario is one in which you get into every program to which you apply and have 4-6 weeks to compare them before making a final decision. Less ideal, but perhaps more common, is that you'll end up with only a week or two to make a decision from some subset of all the programs you applied to.

If you were thorough with your earlier research and have a good sense of the culture of each program, this part will be a bit simpler. If not, start researching the student work and overall vibe of each program you're admitted to as soon as possible and make, even informally, a pros and cons list for each.

Many schools will hold an open-house event for admitted students sometime in the final few weeks before admissions decisions are due. These can be a great way to get a lot of questions answered at once, but don't feel like you have to upend your entire life to get to a particular school on the day of their open-house.



More thoughts about money

In many cases, a letter of admission will also come with information about any financial aid or scholarships you may have been awarded. Read through these details carefully, as there may be some fine print like, for example, a certain GPA requirement for keeping your scholarship beyond the first year. It's not uncommon for schools to distribute more aid as the deadline to accept applications approaches. Don't wait until the last second, but consider that you might be able to get a bit more money by weighing your options for a few weeks. Also, schools may ask what sort of financial offers you've received from other institutions. How aggressively you wish to negotiate is up to you, but don't be surprised by the question if it comes up.

The final decision

You have, ideally, looked carefully at multiple programs, evaluated the financial offers and overall costs, and talked with friends and loved ones about your options. You might still be stuck deciding between two or three good options. Or, alternately, you might think that none of the options in front of you feel very good.

Ultimately, the choice will come down to the particulars of your situation and your goals in architecture. In my grad school journey, I went through two application cycles. The first time around, I applied to multiple schools that weren't a good fit for me, but didn't realize that until after admissions decisions had come in. (Try to avoid doing things this way!) After deciding not to enroll in any of those programs, I worked for a few years and then applied to a different set of schools. Ultimately, I went with what was initially my 3rd or 4th choice school over several programs that I expected to like more. I don't have any regrets about that choice, and if you decide that your own priorities and desires in April are different than they were in December, that's okay.

How to recover from rejection:

As someone who has been rejected from numerous schools, both mediocre and frankly sub-par, it's never a pleasant experience. My first graduate school rejection was at the same institution where I received my B.S. degree. At that point I had to have an honest conversation with myself about my talents and deficiencies. I realized that I did not have the best craftsmanship so I decided to take an intro to architecture course at the local community college to get better at model making. It was extremely humbling to have a four year architecture degree and sit next to individuals without the same level of experience. However, it was something I knew I needed to get better at. If you're not willing to have honest conversations with yourself it is extremely difficult to be successful.

—Germane Barnes

There were two big factors that made the difference for me: money and environment. The program I ultimately went with offered a generous scholarship. While my "top choice" schools did include some scholarship funding in their offers, my final price tag would've been 3-4 times higher at those institutions.

There's maybe a universe where that higher price tag would've been worth it for me, but after visiting my top few schools it became apparent that some of them just wouldn't have been a good fit, so the finances only made the decision easier. In one case, a program I expected to love had a very different vibe on campus than on their websites and social media. In another case, I met up with some friends who were finishing up their M. Arch programs at one of my top choices, and some of the experiences they talked about made me hesitant. And at the school where I ended up, both the program and the surrounding town just felt like a good fit, both for me to study and for my partner who would be moving with me. We talked about it together and agreed that it was the right choice.

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

The skills and habits that served you well as an undergrad will be critical to your success in grad school. You don't need to learn from scratch how to study or how to work effectively in studio. You just need to get back into the proper mindset.

Some people enter grad school a bit overconfident and find themselves humbled by the first few weeks. Others find it hard to shake off feelings of imposter syndrome and take a long time to settle into a place of comfort. You might feel sure of your skills in one area and unsure in another.

Here's the thing, though: *you're there to learn.*

Nobody expects you to know everything on the first day, and you wouldn't have been admitted in the first place if you weren't smart and capable. Some initial discomfort and a period of adjustment is natural. Landing in your first choice of studio or getting into the "perfect" elective will matter a lot less in the long run than your ability to show up, work smart, and forge a few genuine connections with your peers.

Health and wellness

If you memorize one thought from this guide, let it be the following:

No assignment, no model, no presentation, no project is worth risking your health and safety.

Understand what your body and mind need to thrive. This means eating decently well, getting enough water and sleep, exercising every so often, and taking time away from studio to recharge. We've all cut corners on these things, and we all know the price we pay for doing so. Don't spend 2-3 years of your life not sleeping enough and not having a life outside of class. Don't go to the woodshop the morning after an all-nighter. Step in, warmly but firmly, if you see a friend making dangerous choices with their own health.

Extracurricular activities

You'll encounter groups and events large and small, formal and informal, one-time and recurring. You can't do everything, so you'll have to make some choices.

If your program has a welcome event or party at orientation, you might be able to check out a lot of groups at once. What feels interesting? What sounds exciting? Go to a handful of events or meetings. Consider limiting yourself to one or two a week at the start if you're the type to overcommit. If one group or activity stops being interesting, explore another.

If other obligations keep you from making it to most things, that's okay. Try to get to the handful of meetings or lectures you feel most excited about, but don't feel any guilt about having other demands on your time.

Working during school

You may encounter opportunities for work during school, either during the semester or over the summer. Some of these opportunities will be better than others. A few of the options most commonly encountered in an M Arch program:

Teaching Assistantship

This includes work like grading papers, leading discussion sections, and helping with lectures. You may have met grad students doing exactly this sort of thing while you were an undergrad. These positions are almost always structured, organized, and paid through the university, but you may find that particular professors have differing expectations and workloads. In some programs this comes with major benefits, like tuition reduction and stipends. Be mindful, though, of boundaries and impacts on your own workload. Something is wrong if a teaching assistantship is negatively impacting your own learning.

Research Assistantship

Same as above, but work is focused on helping faculty research rather than on helping to instruct other students.

Other Formal University Position

Jobs like working in the print lab, fabrication lab, library, etc. As with assistantships you're employed by the university, but the work itself may be more structured and regular.

Non-University Position

This might mean work in an architecture firm, or helping out with a family business, or picking up some shifts bartending, or any number of other things. Do what you can to set clear expectations and boundaries in both directions: your work should understand and respect that you have school obligations, and your school should respect that your time and availability is not infinite.

Informal University-ish Position

Some instructors will hire students for help with research and projects which are technically outside of the university system. Things like grant money and exhibitions can muddy the waters, but if you aren't working with a university HR department, then the job is probably in this category.

These types of arrangements are, honestly, all over the map.

They can help build great, professional relationships through one-on-one conversation with an instructor who becomes something of a mentor. They can deepen your learning in more "hands-on" ways if the instructor has access to certain university resources like fabrication tools or library collections.

At the same time, the nature of these positions and the incentive structure behind them can easily lead to uncomfortable or exploitative relationships. Instructors want to produce as much high-quality work as possible to move forward in their own careers. As a student, you might feel tempted to always say yes to one more iteration, one more rendering, one more model. Even with everyone having the best of intentions, you could end up in a situation where you're being asked to do a lot more than you thought you were signing up for.

Try to get as much as possible of your working relationship in writing before you begin. If anything comes up later, it'll be much easier for everyone to have a written document to point to. And if you encounter any sort of harassment, mistreatment, or other inappropriate behavior, document as much as you can and find a trusted third-party to reach out to. Just because a work arrangement is informal doesn't mean you have to put up with being treated poorly. It's still a job and you still have rights and legal protections.

How to do your own thing:

I loved grad school. It was a time of serious growth and reflection for me, and I learned an enormous amount about myself and my interests, much of it only vaguely connected to architecture.

The number of opportunities grad school offers—from courses and lectures, to workshops and conferences, to student clubs and organizations—can be overwhelming. In my first semester I felt like I should sign up for everything, like I was missing out on a critical part of the experience if I wasn't at every meeting or lecture. Looking back, I barely remember most of those events. I'm sure they would've left a stronger impression on me had I been more present and focused on one thing at a time, not trying to do everything at once.

By the end of the spring semester I was burned out and needed something different. I talked with some friends in the Architecture Lobby chapter at the school and hatched an idea. We called it Snack Break and it worked like this:

1. Find something you want to talk about with your fellow students (an article, a podcast, a current event)
2. Find a snack you've been craving (cookies, brownies, fresh apple cider donuts from the cider mill down the road)
3. Make some simple posters or fliers advertising that you'll be eating those donuts and talking about that article in the common area next Thursday at noon. (You don't have to do Thursdays at noon.)

The biggest goal we set for ourselves was that the events would be casual and informal. Anyone could drop in or drop out whenever they wanted, no questions asked.

We weren't sure how it would all work, but people showed up. And they kept showing up. Whether lured in by the food and hooked by the conversation or the other way around, people were genuinely interested in this little program we had put together.

It wasn't quite zero effort to set up, but it took a lot less work than I expected. The first Snack Breaks used some leftover Arch Lobby funding to buy the snacks and print the fliers. By the time I graduated, everything had become much more organic: people brought in homemade snacks to share, suggested discussion topics, and generally made the events their own.

The Snack Breaks weren't official school events. They weren't flashy. But they were fun and they were ours. If the big list of events and opportunities at your school isn't giving what you need, do your own thing instead. I promise it's easier than you think.

—Michael Ferguson

How to deal with burnout:

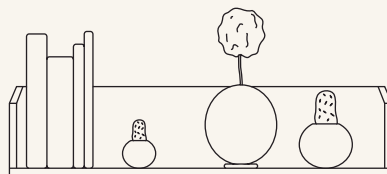
Experiencing burnout is very common—you're certainly not alone! My first advice to you is to consult a medical professional, whether that be your physician or counselor - burnout and exhaustion are so often a combination of physical factors (adrenal fatigue, low iron, lack of sleep, allergies) as well as mental (stress, of course, being a top concern). To really heal and recover, you need to understand and focus on all of the factors contributing to it. There might be something essential your body is running low on that is contributing to how you're feeling, so it's always good to check up on everything that could be contributing to your exhaustion.

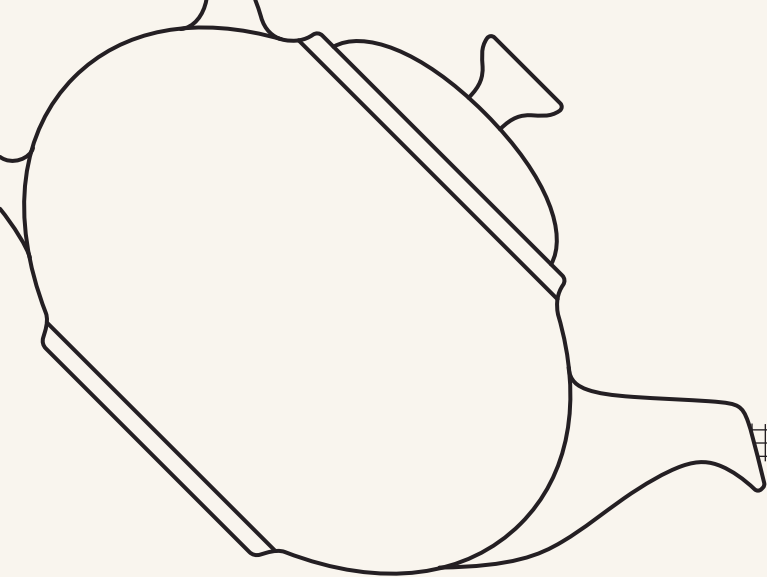
Having said that, one of my favorite quotes, and one I go back to often, is "If you're tired, don't quit. Take a break." Mental health and mental rest are thankfully being talked about more and more, because they are essential to high performance. For athletes it's the same—in marathon training, for example, rest days are built into your weekly training routine, and the same should go for any kind of mental "training". Oftentimes, one feels burnout after being on overdrive for too long, especially in architecture school, and making time for breaks is truly key. How do you do this when you feel you have so much to do that you can't physically make time for time off?

I certainly experienced this in architecture school, especially when completing my thesis and searching for my first job at the same time, and in the early days of Madame Architect before I got a good routine down and before I got help from our gifted editors, Amy, Caitlin, and Gail. The first answer is (and you know this already) sleep. To combat burnout, your basics need to be in good check. If you're having trouble falling asleep, I highly recommend a meditation app. Incorporating both focused work time and regular breaks into your schedule is essential.

To summarize, burnout is often a combination of many physical and mental things, and to combat it, you first need to figure out what the main causes are for you. Once you do, make "rest and recovery" time a priority, figure out a way to maintain the discipline for both work and rest, and find out what works for you.

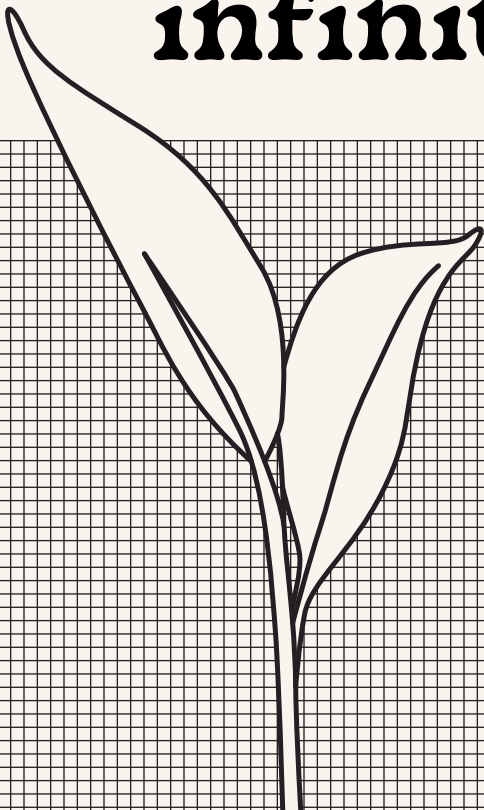
—Julia Gamolina





Tea.

**one leaf.
infinite potential.**



Some people seem to forget about tea. What a big mistake!

Black tea has the caffeine to keep you alert all morning, and a cup of green or herbal tea is a lovely way to wind down at the end of the day.

So what are you waiting for?

Put the kettle on.

How to think about hard skills:

I've been teaching architecture for around six years now. One of the most common anxieties I hear from students is a fear that they are not learning enough "hard skills" or developing enough expertise about "how buildings actually work" during school. I felt this when I was on the cusp of entering the job market, and I'm sure you, the reader, have felt some version of this too.

Elsewhere I've written about how this anxiety stems from the pressures of capitalism - namely the idea that because we as workers must sell our labor in order to survive we must always be cultivating our employability. This generally means collecting skills on a resume as if we were living in some horrible development-themed RPG. Of course any society, capitalistic or not, requires the cultivation of skill, craft, and knowledge. The consequence of this current arrangement, however, is that the social weight of developing human potential is boiled down to an alienating and traumatic market exchange that falls on individual shoulders.

To make matters worse, in many architecture schools there is a certain strata of students and professors who view the technical as a lowly (if necessary) enterprise, one whose proper place is mindlessly supporting so-called "critical" or "forward-thinking" work. Thus you receive competing messages - on the one hand, that it is very important to collect hard skills and technical knowledge ("Qualified candidates for this position must know Revit"); and, inversely, applying hard skills and technical knowledge is fool's work ("I just don't want to end up as a Revit monkey"). This latter fear is perhaps a subconscious realization that architectural production is often not geared toward the common good: in other words, that becoming a cog in the machine precludes contributing to genuine social actualization and growth.

No wonder about the anxiety then! Surely another world absent this nightmare is imaginable. The transformation of matter via individual action aggregating into social collaboration is fundamental to human nature and ought to be a source of fulfillment rather than misery. But in the current state of things the question remains: if you do need a job (you do!), and you do want to participate in building a better world (we all do!), then what are you to do? There are a range of responses to this question, but I'd like to focus on three of them.

First and foremost it's worth recognizing that few employers expect graduating students to have comprehensive skills and technical knowledge right away. If nothing else, keeping this fact in mind will

help you temper expectations and pressures. The goal of architecture school as it pertains to the technical and professional is to provide a foundation for the development of skills after graduation. If a potential employer expects you to be the finished article right out of school, this ought to be a huge red flag that they are not interested in providing a nurturing environment for growth or making investments in their employees.

This question of the content of education also has implications beyond the immediate individual pressures of job-hunting. It would be a social disaster if all architecture programs oriented completely toward skilling future architectural workers and acritically preparing them to labor in the status quo. Education at its best is not simply another stepping stone to a job, but rather a means to developing our full humanity. Certainly this is not the case in today's neoliberal university, and most certainly our architecture education does not always live up to this high ideal, but over emphasizing job-readiness is a dangerous path. Our current educational paradigm fosters social awareness and critical dispositions and advances human actualization in a limited way. Instead of sacrificing this to the altar of job-readiness, we should be defending, expanding, and making it more accessible at every turn.

Second, if you haven't already, you must abandon the idea that the technical is a space apart from or subordinate to the social, critical, or aesthetic. The aura of objectivity that permeates technical discussions in architecture masks deeply political and social implications. For instance, the building code development process in the 21st century is essentially a story of industry groups lobbying for rules and regulations that favor their own products. Because of the way model codes are developed, these changes operate at a scale well beyond the world of capital-A Architecture while avoiding its critical attention almost entirely. The subordination or separation of the technical has meant that some of the most political aspects of building and construction have been rendered invisible, lowly, and apolitical. In this context, putting in effort to develop technical knowledge alongside and in tandem with critical capacities and socio-political sense has the potential to open up new, powerful agencies for socially-aware and technically-competent architects to make wide-reaching social impacts. While the fear of becoming a cog in the machine is certainly valid, it's worth remembering that huge machines depend on the actions of tiny cogs.



Thoughts about thesis

A thesis works a little differently in each M. Arch program, and some programs don't have a thesis element at all. If yours does include a thesis, you can probably expect it to work something like this:

First, you'll select (or be matched with) an instructor who will serve as your thesis advisor. Ideally this will be someone you've studied with before and who knows a bit about your interests and how you work on projects in studio.

With this advisor, you'll spend a semester on "thesis prep," which means a lot of reading and exploratory work to figure out what exactly your thesis will be about and how you plan to accomplish it. Afterward comes the thesis semester itself, where your studio work will be to produce the project you spent your research time setting up.

A thesis isn't intended to be the summation of everything you've ever learned about architecture. Nor is it the foundation for everything you will do going forward. One way to think about it as a snapshot of who you are at this point in your education and career. What are you interested in? What are you passionate about? How do you like to work on problems in design and architecture? When you think about the future of the discipline, what are a few particular things you see?

Your thesis might be highly technical, using the resources of the fabrication lab to push the boundaries of a specific idea. Or it might be heavily history- and theory-oriented, with countless trips to the library. Maybe you'll collaborate with other students on a larger endeavor. There's a good chance your work on the thesis will end up changing its shape and scope from what you thought you were setting out to do. That's not a bad thing. It just means you're learning and adapting.

Work smart, do the best you can, and remember the long-term value of a thesis is in the journey, not the final product.

Lastly, and perhaps most relevant to those on the cusp of entering the architecture job market, you must also abandon the idea that the product of your labor (buildings) is where your political agency exists as an architectural worker. Rather, we must conceptualize our labor itself as the key to our political action (as I'm fond of saying, a building never walked a picket line). The stakes here are immense: if we believe that the only way to participate in building a better world is to be doing socially-conscious projects then we have automatically reduced architecture's political capacity to a small portion of the profession's true reach.

To build on this notion, if we are to truly transform both the profession and the world, we must create avenues for all workers to engage in workplace organizing and political action. In some ways, those who are working at explicitly commercially-oriented practices are in the best position to embark in highly political organizing campaigns to win improved labor conditions and build solidarities with other workers beyond the discipline. And even in the many workplaces where such organizing isn't quite yet on the horizon, it's always worth remembering that we are more than our jobs and there are plenty of venues to be politically active outside of architecture: hustling to get a "good" job is not a prerequisite for building a better world.

These ideas that have served me well over the last few years and may do the same for you:

Don't worry so much about knowing everything before getting a job. Focus on building a solid foundation to learn more. Employers won't expect you to know everything.

Don't think about technical knowledge as a necessary but boring thing. See it as integral to your craft, your political agency, and your very humanity.

No job is more political than any other. Organize where you are, when you can: there is always work to do. Certainly there are ethical lines to be drawn in the office (prison design comes to mind), but your morality and contribution to building a better world doesn't hinge on where you work.

—Keefer Dunn



Some helpful resources related to grad school:

ACSA:

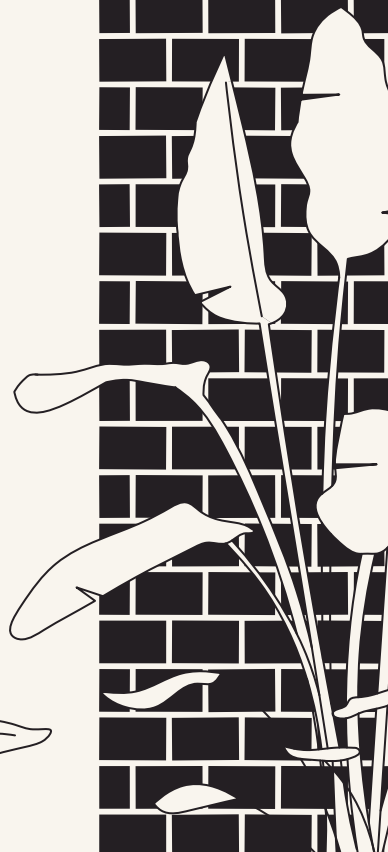
Institutional Data Report

NCARB:

Education Guidelines

AIAS:

Scholarship Listings





LIFE

finding your people

finding your place

finding yourself

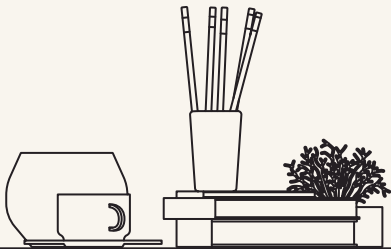
getting involved

fun zone



FINDING YOUR PEOPLE

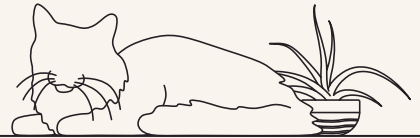
(The pages ahead are a bit less structured than the rest of this guide. Think of the headings as rough groupings, as many of the contributed pieces move seamlessly through multiple ways of thinking about making a life in architecture.)



How to talk to your family about architecture:

Be normal. Seriously, be normal. Non-architects understand space as well. Their language may be different however. For example, my grandmother, who is not architecturally trained, understands the spatial configuration of a kitchen at a granular level that I could not fathom. Her units of measurement are plates, pots and pans as opposed to inches and feet, but it is still architecture. All of those fancy words you learned in graduate school or heard during a pin-up review, do not use them. It just makes you look like a dork.

—Germane Barnes



How to transcend what's trendy:

Don't force yourself into this box or that box, the right side or the left, if it's simply to conform to the group, especially if you don't feel you belong there. Too often, we abandon our convictions simply because the group says we should. The group can be anything: colleagues, family, political parties, social media groups. There's a saying attributed to Mark Twain that goes: "When you find yourself on the side of the majority, it's time to pause and reflect."

Notice he's not saying to always go opposite the group. Sometimes the group is correct, and if you go off alone, you might slip and fall with no one around to help you. Simply, you want to push yourself to know why it is you think what you think. Don't adopt someone else's ideas without understanding them, no matter how influential or intelligent or famous they are. And if, after some reflection and some investigation, you come to the same conclusion as the group, then great, but if you come to a different one, pursue it and see where it leads you.

—Sean Joyner



I get 8 hours

*Unless I were to retreat from this life
And begin a small self sustaining commune
Which is not easy and also not a bad idea...*

*The CDC recommends I get sleep,
7 or more hours.
So while I'm awake
I get 8 hours a day for me.
I'm a worker.
Contractually obligated to a company handbook.
I signed those papers.*

*8 hours a day for me,
And my responsibilities,
To myself and others.
This is my precious, beautiful time to listen to birds in my backyard. To make a
coffee, but not just any coffee, to make a coffee in a very slow way so that I can smell
it.*

*I've lost a strong sense of smell,
Since I was about 12 or 14.
I've never been diagnosed anosmic,
But I tell myself it was this one particularly terrible sinus infection 20 years ago.*

—pause, my dog is eating something he shouldn't—

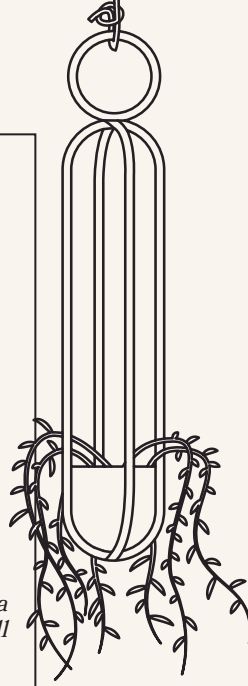
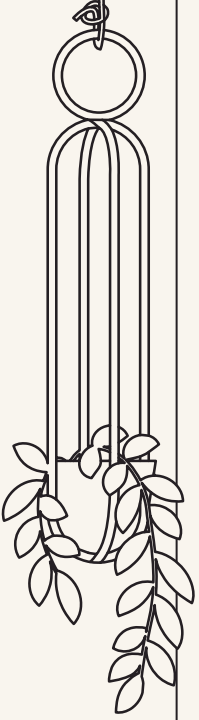
*See, it takes me longer to really smell my coffee because I'm not a good smeller.
So I need that time, to sniff, intentionally, deliberately.*

*It's my time to give my dog a treat,
Before the lights on the street turn off,
As the sun rises,
And we shift from that dark blue purple,
To a bright blinding red orange,
And Venus disappears,
And my boss sent me a string of emails during that 8 hours,
And invited me to a meeting during that 8 hours,
And told a client that we could "spin around the model" during that 8 hours,
which is something my boss would have terrible difficulty doing on their own during
that 8 hours.*

*As I'm standing in my kitchen in a post-exercise stink, walking my dog, cleaning
my kitchen, listening to the birds, giving my dog a treat, making my coffee, sniffing,
hearing the service employees picking up my recycling on the street, sniffing my
coffee,
sniff,
smelling my coffee.*

Anosmics need every second of that 8 hours.

—Chas Wiederhold



Married to the Grind:

How A Toxic Relationship With Architecture Goes Beyond the Architect

A little background on me, the woman next to Mr. Vitruvius Grind: I love to sleep. I have always been a person who needs a lot of sleep and rest. My friends would wake up hours before me at sleepovers and be bored while I snoozed. My parents had to help wake me up well into high school because my body resisted the alarms. I am the definition of “don’t talk to me until I’ve had my coffee.” I am a feral animal in the morning. Do not cross me—I will bite your head off. (Ask VG, he asked if I wanted breakfast once. He learned his lesson.) It’s easy to learn how to integrate a balance of work and rest when not getting enough rest makes you feel physically ill. I need more sleep than most; it’s just built into my DNA.

In school, I was the “pleasure to have in class” because a lot came naturally to me. The need for downtime combined with things coming easily to me kept me in a place where I never truly pushed myself. I was passionate about things, particularly photography, but again, it was natural and I didn’t get pushed, just praised, so I stayed complacent. I bobbed along until graduation and somehow graduated with honors. I really don’t know how, which I think shows my indifference towards school at the time.

I met VG at the art/architecture/design school we both attended, and his passion blew me away. I was so enthralled with how he worked, how he dedicated himself to his education. He desired to learn and grow the way I desired a nap after my 8am studios. It inspired me to push myself. I started working harder, staying up later, researching, making flash cards for art history tests. I rewired my way of learning because of him. His passion taught me how to care deeply about what I did in a way I never knew before. While he worked late nights in the architecture studio, I spent evenings at the pottery wheel a few floors down, sat next to him editing photos while he built intricate models, shared our most fascinating tidbits from our respective history classes. I became a better student, a better artist and a better person because of him. But it can be a double-edged sword.

While my nights got later, I still had to make space for sleep and rest. I found ways to work smarter, not harder so I could be in bed by 11pm and function the next day. I did one all-nighter in my four years in undergrad and I learned quickly it was something that my body just could not sustain. However, VG seemed to be able to work endlessly with little or no sleep. We’d return from

the studio at the end of the day only for him to whip out his laptop and tip tap into the night while I slept beside him. He did multiple all-nighters every semester with plenty of late nights in between. The honeymoon period eventually fell away and the reality of loving someone in a passion-based career came into focus.

Once I truly saw how hard VG worked, it became clear it was unhealthy and unsustainable. As I got to know him on a deeper level, I found his relationship with academia was harmful for many reasons. Combine that problematic relationship with the die-at-your-desk culture of architecture and throw in the fact our school openly pushed this attitude onto the students and you end up with the most toxic of work/life balances.

This attitude culminated in one of the most traumatic experiences of my life, election day 2016 (but not for the obvious decent-into-fascism reasons). VG and I sat on the couch watching those horrifying little numbers roll in. I sat there openly weeping, asking for reassurance that this wasn’t happening while VG tried to find hope in votes yet-to-be-counted. Eventually reality set in and we dragged ourselves to bed, hopeless and scared for the future.

At the time, VG worked at a small boutique firm with long hours and low pay. We sometimes fought about the way he threw himself into his work back in school and those fights continued as we graduated and entered the workforce. We were young and emotional and didn’t always communicate well, but the feelings were real and valid. There were times it felt like we wouldn’t make it, that I wasn’t important enough and there wasn’t room for both me and architecture in his life. This toxic relationship with architecture was a lifestyle I didn’t ask to be a part of—and it hurt me. It hurt to see what he went through for that stupid office that gave nothing back after he gave himself to them. It hurt to see him ask his parents to loan him rent money when the sexy atelier of a firm was days or weeks late with paychecks time and again. It hurt to see how they strung him along with little projects after they laid him and most of the staff off only to throw them aside once they got what they needed. But what hurt the most was what happened after we went to bed on election night.

In the middle of the night, I jolted awake from a loud noise in the apartment. I saw the light was on in the bathroom and called out VG’s name. He didn’t answer. I called again. No answer. The panic set in. I ran to the

bathroom to find a scene that is seared into my brain forever: VG on the ground, not moving, blood on his face. I was holding him in my arms calling to him when he came back to me. It sounds dramatic and cheesy, but I've never been more scared in my life. I can still feel that fear deeply when I think about that night. He had passed out and hit his lip on the bathtub on his way down. Something the doctor explained away as "just a fainting spell" and "unlikely to happen again."

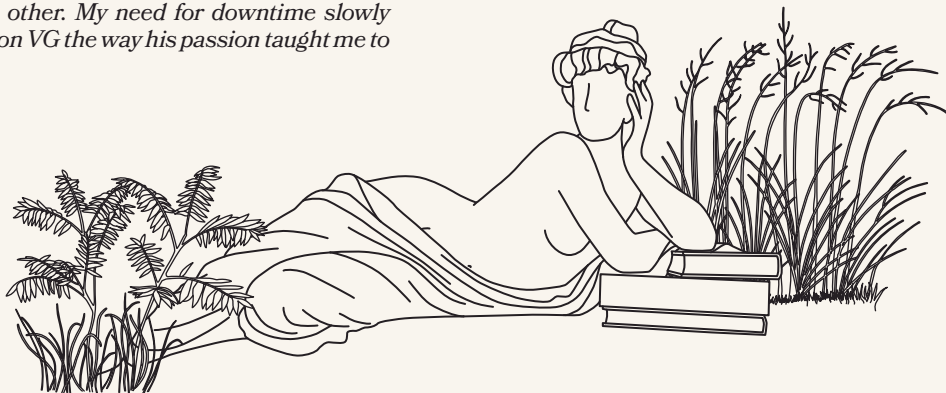
But the damage had been done. The rest is blurry but I know I kept him up for a few hours because I was worried he had a concussion. Eventually, we did fall asleep. I woke up around 6am to him getting ready for work, several hours before he usually went in. I begged him to stay home, to go to the doctor, to take care of himself. He didn't. "Deadline." That's what mattered. He put his health and safety on the line for a company that did not care about or respect their employees. I was horrified. I felt crazy as I watched him leave the apartment. I could not understand what compelled him to put a work presentation over his own health and my asking him to stay and take care of himself. I just didn't get it. But I do now.

The uproar over SCI-Arc's painful-to-watch panel about working in an office was cathartic for me as a partner of someone dedicated to this field. Since election night, VG has grown and learned balance. He falls back into his toxic ways of working from time to time, but he makes real efforts to have a life outside architecture. When he does go all-in, it's because it's something meaningful to him, not just to get ahead in the studio or office. We moved out of state and away from our families for VG to get his M. Arch. I was so scared it would be a repeat of the all-in behavior of undergrad (or worse). But it wasn't. It was better. We learned to communicate our needs after that horrible night and actively worked to be better partners for each other. My need for downtime slowly started to imprint on VG the way his passion taught me to

work harder years earlier. He taught me to care. I taught him to rest. When he started writing a response piece to SCI-Arc's "How To Be In An Office" panel, I urged him to be as transparent and honest as possible about his experiences in a toxic architecture firm and he did. He did it so beautifully. He called out the structures he had been hurt under. He used his experiences to address the problems and now he's actively defying the "I suffered for architecture so you should too" mindset that was so clearly on display in the panel and that stubbornly persists in the field as a whole. Even with the making of this guide, VG extended the timeline he originally set. There's a version of VG who, instead of giving himself the time to finish everything in a healthy way, would've done multiple all-nighters and thrown everything else aside to get it out when he said he would. That article and this guide feel like a beautiful story arc where the character learns from their mistakes, makes changes for the better, and ties the loose ends neatly together. But it's real.

Architecture often feels like a calling. Architecture will ask a lot of you. But Architecture isn't everything. Your toxic relationship with Architecture extends to those you love. Don't miss out on your life because of it. Don't miss that family gathering or long weekend out of town. Don't let it consume you. Don't let it make you lose what else life has to offer. And most importantly, don't pass out on election night, hit your head on the tub, then go into work early the next morning to meet a deadline. The grind will be there once you rest.

Wife of the Grind,
Mrs. Vitruvius Grind

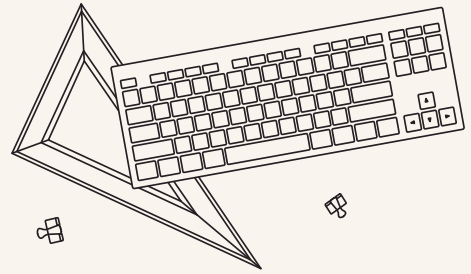


FINDING YOUR PLACE

What have you come to love?

I love that I have many other interests outside of architecture. I love that my closest friends are not architects. I love that architecture is not at the top of my priority list (it's #5, I made a list). It is for these reasons that I can continue to love architecture and what I do for a living. Burnout is real and architecture can be so time-consuming that one loses their ability to see themselves. By having so many other interests and not allowing architecture to dominate my life it allows me to have fun with larger groups of people. People never believe me when I tell them "I don't really care about buildings. They're cool for a few minutes then I'm ready to move on. I'm infinitely more interested in the rituals within space than the space itself. Architectural Anthropology is my passion, I just needed to know how to design spaces to conduct my research."

—Germane Barnes



How to recover from losing something important:

The hardest part of life is always loss. And the next hardest part is how you pick yourself back up after. Whether it's a job, a project, or an opportunity, there will be loss throughout your life. As the pandemic has shown for many of us, loss won't live only within the walls of our career, and the personal losses will always be harder. So the first thing to do after a career loss is to take stock in what you do still have and how much that truly matters to your overall wellbeing.

When you're in a good mental space to honestly think through the loss, the best way I've found to approach it is from the idea: "what can I learn from this to make my next interview/job/opportunity better?" Could you rally supporters, allies, or professional peers? Could you have engaged in a more meaningful way? Are there skills you need to hone before you try again? Did you read the room well and present your case confidently but humbly without arrogance? And most of all - is this really what you want or would you like to focus on a different aspect of architecture and design? Loss can provide a pause moment, a new opportunity to truly rethink what it is you're doing and where your career is headed. Use them wisely and you'll do even better the next time you try.

—Lora Teagarden



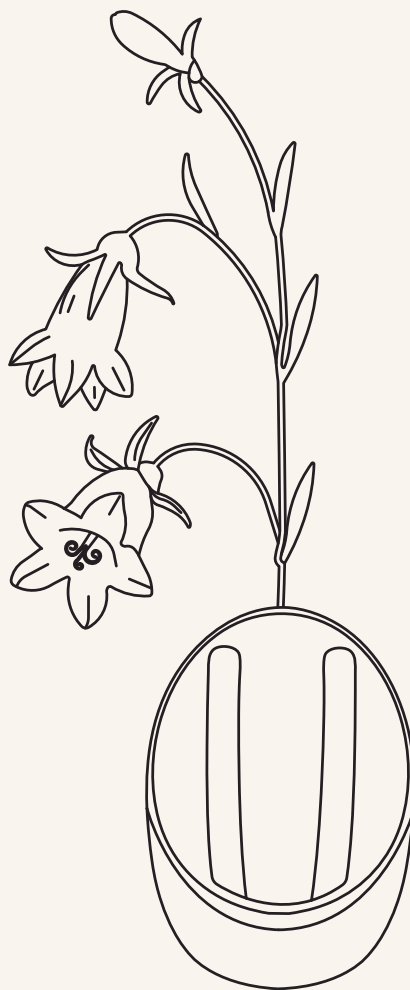
How to recover from rejection:

Everyone deals with rejection their own way. Some people I know immediately delete the rejection email and move on, others keep them as motivational reminders. Personally, I try to subscribe to the latter method, to have rejection fuel my motivation. Or at least, that's the goal. I would like to be the person that looks at an unsuccessful endeavor as an opportunity to reflect and be better, but that doesn't mean it doesn't hurt. Rejection hurts. It is a kind of damning confirmation that you're not good enough or that someone doesn't like you. It feels like high school all over again. And that's ok.

One of the biggest myths perpetuated in American entrepreneurial culture is that individuals must always "lift themselves up by their bootstraps." Another one is to "never take no for an answer." These myths are rooted in traditions that are long outdated and increasingly disconnected from the way the world works today. The fact of the matter is that not everyone can land their dream job just by working hard. Nor can everyone achieve their goals through sheer power of will. You will get rejected. Sometimes this will be because there are others more qualified. Other times it will be because there are some specific expectations that need to be met. Still other times it may be due to nepotism or other social situations.

This year I have received around twenty rejections. Most of them for academic jobs, but some were from grant applications and other miscellaneous opportunities. What has helped me deal with these rejections is understanding that we are all embroiled in a messy network of circumstances outside of our control. I share some of my rejections on social media to illustrate the grueling realities of academia, but also for catharsis. I know that others have also been rejected and want to share this experience with them in some way. Sometimes it becomes too much and it's incredibly frustrating. But what's important to remember is that you're not alone. It happens to all of us. It's ok to feel frustrated. It's also ok to quit. I'm not here to say that you must persevere because there might be some other opportunity that may arise out of quitting. It's all good.

—Galo Canizares



What have you decided to just not tolerate anymore?

Disrespect. Racism. Bigotry. Homophobia. Inequality.

We are all humans trying to create community where we live, performing our jobs professionally. Hate should not be tolerated.

—Lora Teagarden



WATER

*Are you
getting enough?*



Will staying hydrated solve all of your problems? Sadly, no. (If only things were that simple...) But not staying hydrated definitely won't help anything. Consider bringing a water bottle along with you to class or to work.

The "right" amount of water will vary from person to person. If you find yourself dealing with a lot of late nights, pay attention to your nutrition and hydration. You might be surprised how large a difference it can make.

Against Professional Identity

Sometimes I miss how single-mindedly intense my time in architecture school was. I pushed myself hard to seize every opportunity and learn such a vast array of things. I knew professional life would be deeply precarious and competitive and I wanted to be the most clever, versatile architect possible.

Yet when I graduated I felt so lost. I'd go to work each day, drafting, sending emails, and learning how a building comes together, but I missed the rush of creative exploration in my school days. Life felt less thrilling and I was deeply insecure. I felt like I'd failed somewhere along the way. "What am I doing in this job where I don't even use the skills I've learned? Was my education worth it? Am I a failure because I'm not in the most cutting-edge office right now?"

Honestly, I still don't think I have any of these questions figured out.

Yet I think I've become good at dealing with uncertainty. I can do this because I keep my career at a certain distance and I think you'd benefit from doing the same. Now that you've graduated, it's crucial you divest yourself of the identity of "an architect." The system preys on your infinite desire to do meaningful work and will largely try to exploit you and blunt the efficacy of your actions at every turn. The idea of architecture as "a calling" or of "architect" being a valid identity for your life is a key part in this. Drive this notion from your life entirely. Doing so will draw you closer to your fellow workers and give you the mental space for a greater personhood and realm of possibilities than school ever offered.

On a practical level this is going to be important as you transition from a student, individually producing design ideas, to a worker in a firm, laboring together on behalf of someone else. The work you do is never going to be an individual act of world-shaping creative genius. It's all a group project, and one with a scope and effect dictated to you by capital. Where any sort of power lies is in your role as a worker and as a private citizen engaging with mass politics off the clock. Understanding this will help you understand where you have agency and how to avoid a career of ineffectually posturing against a broken status quo, exploiting both yourself and others in the futile project of resistance through valorized design. Ironically, being able to compartmentalize your work will leave you less stressed and maybe more effective. I often joke that I'm putting in my shift at the architecture factory every time I go to work. I take pride in the work I do, but I don't identify with the commodity I produce. It's not the most important thing in the world and I don't let it take a mental toll on me.

For so many years I instrumentalized everything I was learning, all of the personal qualities I was developing, towards this ultimate goal of becoming an architect. School accustomed me to think constantly in terms of productivity. After graduating I really didn't know what to do with my creative impulses if I wasn't going to connect it in some way to my career. What helped me break this impasse was to realize that much of what we learned in school aren't things that are valued by this profession. Many of the things we're taught—how to draw, how to make models, how to understand, read, and write about architecture—do not factor directly into our day jobs. They make you into a more conscientious designer, and ideally more attuned to human needs. However these aren't skills that society or the market often value you for. It's hard to tell if you're good at something, or if that skill will pay off and navel-gazing on how productive and talented you are is deeply exhaustive.

I do think we're lucky, though, for learning such an odd set of skills that aren't related to our jobs. Instead of viewing them as tenuous professional trajectories, we can view them as potential connections, paths to explore, and communities to be part of outside of architecture. I've learned a lot about this from friends who are musicians and artists who've spent their lives pursuing their craft in their spare time. I'm finding it easier to explore creative projects when I don't have to think about how they fit into the long arc of my career. Especially right out of school, I think the less time you spend in architectural circles the better. Detach what you like and what you're good at from architecture. Find ways to connect your passions to like-minded people in a nonproductive noncompetitive capacity.

This is how I've been spending my free time lately. I'm more devoted to the people in my life. Sometimes I make a poster for a friend's band. Sometimes I build a chair in my yard when the weather's nice. Sometimes my friend Mr. Vitruvius asks me to write an advice piece. I don't do things with an expectation that they'll help me professionally, though I maintain a mild optimism that one of my hobbies could expand into something greater one day. But they don't have to and I'm not rushed. For now I'm just hanging out. I'm not busy now but if the right opportunity appears, I'll devote myself to it with a deeper support network behind me this time. I firmly believe it's better to organically find yourself in interesting and positive places rather than to follow an institutionally-prescribed career path and the alienating lifestyle it requires.

—Daham Marapane

FINDING YOURSELF

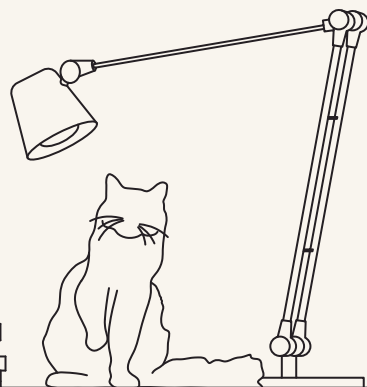
How to find your own path:

I write this on Mother's Day, a week after the draft decision overturning Roe v. Wade was leaked. I had my daughter at 19, during my second year of architecture school. When applying to grad school I never mentioned being a single mother (seriously, I just double checked my admissions essays). I assumed this detail would concern the admissions committee about my ability to keep up with the demands of graduate school, influenced by my understanding of the profession. Who knows if it would have changed the outcomes, but it's true that architecture is woefully behind when it comes to supporting women, especially mothers. The pandemic is reinforcing this as more women leave the workforce because our systems of family support and our structures of career advancement are broken.

Rather than making this a full editorial about the conditions and statistics of women and mothers in the workforce, I want to give a personal example. I co-founded SYNECDOCHE in the final semester of undergrad—to create a studio that responded to the needs and support I needed and couldn't find.

How do you then find space in the field for support? There are a growing number of founders and leaders with lived experiences different from the archetype architect. Seek ways to contribute and collaborate in firms by looking more at the people rather than the projects. Seek out mentors who may have similar experiences who help navigate the circumstances. Reach out to others to understand situations that may not be similar to your own. Empathy will help you create and discover supportive spaces to both work in and create for others as architects.

—Lisa Sauv 

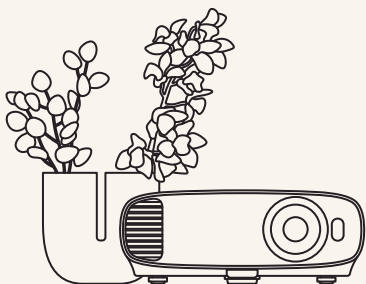


What advice did someone give you that ended up being exactly right?

One day, after a grad-school seminar, I found myself chatting with a classmate. Helen must have been about ten years older than me, and she was asking me about my plans for the summer. I don't remember what I was saying, but it must've involved some level of uncertainty or strife because she interrupted me and said "yeah, your twenties are just really hard." It was true — my life did feel really hard at the time. I wasn't sure where I was going or what I was doing. Every decision felt laden with meaning and consequence — and I felt like every decision I was making was the wrong one. But suddenly, thanks to Helen's comment, I felt free. The problem wasn't me! It was just my twenties! Everyone went through what I was going through!

This didn't mean that I could let myself off the hook. I had to keep trying. But I could take the pressure off. Not every decision was as consequential as I thought. I could take a job just to pay the bills, even if it wasn't the perfect gig. I could, conversely, turn down a seemingly perfect job just because it didn't feel quite right. (I did both of those things.) As long as I could figure out a way to feed and house and clothe myself, I could simply do the things I wanted to be doing without worrying about whether they were things I should be doing. I could focus on developing myself, both personally and professionally, and simply trust that things would get easier. They did.

—Mariana D'Aprile



What advice did someone give you that ended up being completely wrong?

I am not an architect. Heck, I studied art history in undergrad, and was bored to tears learning about the International Style from one of my old, white, male art history professors. That guy was the worst. Boring, exhausting. But this isn't about him; this is about advice I got from a different professor, someone I saw as a mentor.

We'll call her Kara, for the purposes of this story. Kara had recently come to the institution when her husband, a Big Deal Contemporary Art Curator, got a Big Deal Curator Job at the Denver Art Museum. She also got a job, teaching modern and contemporary art history to me and my peers. I loved all her classes; I learned about weirdo Italian art movements and guilt-ridden German artists whose works were rife with conflict. I took all of her classes. She was smart, and she thought I was smart, too, so she gave me permission to join her graduate seminars even though I was a senior; she met with me frequently to provide feedback on papers and discuss subjects of interest

I was an in-state student riding on a diversity scholarship at a so-so institution, so I had to work. I worked in the campus library sorting microfiche (this was 2006), and at the campus recycling facility where I sorted trash. But because I wanted to be in the arts, working campus jobs in the art department was important to me. I was a security guard at the campus art gallery, and slowly was entrusted with installation and packing duties. I worked. Constantly.

At the school's MFA gallery opening in 2008—the final exhibition opening where my duties were to greet people and hand out programs—Kara saw me behind the sad folding table and we began chatting about my life post-graduation. She said a lot of things that I now don't remember. What I do remember her saying to me is:

"Whatever you want to do, it's going to take a long time to get there."

Because I loved her so much, I immediately allowed myself to buy into this advice. What's interesting about this advice is that it doesn't alleviate any of the internal pressures I had to get a job in the arts—it was 2008 and the economy melted down that year, so the pressure was even greater—and, instead, it allowed me to diminish myself.

Diminishing oneself looks like a lot of different things, but for me, it looked like doing a lot of unpaid labor

in the hopes that I would someday do something big, something good, in the field. Eventually, Kara set me up with an unpaid internship at the Denver Art Museum under her husband, where I did menial work for more than a year. When Very Important Artists came to Denver, I worked—unpaid—at their home, slicing salamis and cheeses for their fancy guests who would arrive at their sparse, modern home. I served them. I cleaned up after, and they let me stay the night in their house on a chair that unfolded into a smaller-than-twin bed.

I never made excuses for doing this type of work. Well, no, that's a lie. The excuse I made was more of a noise ringing in my ears: that no matter what I wanted to do, it would take me a long time to get there. This was my work, my penance, in that journey to becoming the ultimate version of myself.

Having covered architecture for more than seven years now, I hear the same noise ringing from architecture students. Knowing that it takes time to get licensed, to build a portfolio of built work, to be acknowledged in the expansive field as an artist or a scholar of architecture—that phrase "whatever you want to do, it's going to take a long time to get there" has become a motto for disenfranchisement. It is the slogan we use when we allow ourselves to be belittled.

The fact is: Who cares how long it took for other people to 'arrive?'

The one thing I try to teach my students, now, is that no matter where you are in your career or practice, it is just another version of yourself in 5, 10, 25 years. And that version is no less valid than the version of you, right now. A lot of the ways we are raised, and I was definitely raised, was to believe that if you just do these certain things at the right times in the right order, your life will be fine. And that isn't always true; maybe your generation is better about understanding this, because many of my peers are constantly wondering when they, themselves as people, will ever be enough. It seems like people younger than us have a better understanding that, sometimes, it's not about doing the right things at the right time in the right order. That sometimes, the systems that we work and live with are set up to make you feel like you aren't enough. It took my generation decades to learn that, and we are just unlearning it now.

It has taken you a long time to get here. There's more to come. This, right now, right here, is enough.

—Anjulie Rao



GETTING INVOLVED

While architecture shouldn't be your entire life, participating in an architectural organization outside of work can be an exciting and fulfilling way to meet people and pursue your own goals and interests. There are dozens if not hundreds of groups out there of varying size, structure, and focus. If none of these catch your interest, poke around and see what else you can come across, or round up a few friends and start something of your own.

American Institute of Architects (AIA)

The American Institute of Architects is the largest professional organization for architects working in the United States. The AIA operates in a variety of ways, including through research, advocacy, and professional development, in addition to organizing events and resources for members.

Aside from the work done at the national level of the organization, AIA chapters at the state and city level offer special programming and resources for architects and designers in the region.

There are a wide range of member groups, committees, and knowledge communities across the national and local organizations, each dedicated to developing and advancing particular facets of the profession. The center and two groups to the right are good places for recent graduates to learn more and get involved with the AIA at the national level. Be sure to check out what's happening in your local area as well.

Center for Emerging Professionals (CEP)

In addition to serving as an umbrella for the two groups below, the Center for Emerging Professionals collects information and resources for early-career architects and designers and organizes an annual exhibition of architecture and design work.

Young Architects Forum (YAF)

"The Young Architect's Forum is a program of the American Institute of Architects and the College of Fellows (COF) and is organized to address issues of particular importance to recently licensed architects, within 10 years after licensure."

National Associates Committee (NAC)

"The National Associates Committee is dedicated to serving Associate members of the AIA in the advancement of their career. The NAC aspires to be the catalyst for progress within the Institute and the profession."

The eleven groups on this page are separate from the AIA.

Check them out online or go to a meeting to learn more about their mission and activities.

American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS)

“The American Institute of Architecture Students is an independent, nonprofit, student-run organization dedicated to providing unmatched progressive programs, information, and resources on issues critical to architecture and the experience of education.”

Architects Designers Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR)

“ADPSR advocates for a society where investments are made in buildings that lift people up, and where willful human rights abuses are a thing of the past.”

Architexx

“Architexx is a 501c3 non-profit organization for gender equity in architecture transforming the profession by bridging the academy and practice.”

Association for Women in Architecture + Design (AWA+D)

“The Association for Women in Architecture and Design is a Professional Society dedicated to supporting career and educational endeavors for women working in the built environment.”

Build Out Alliance

“Build Out Alliance promotes and advocates for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community within the building design and construction industry.”

Design as Protest (DAP)

“Design as Protest is a collective of designers mobilizing strategy to dismantle the privilege and power structures that use architecture and design as tools of oppression.”

National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA)

&

National Organization of Minority Architecture Students (NOMAS)

“NOMA’s mission, rooted in a rich legacy of activism, is to empower our local chapters and membership to foster justice and equity in communities of color through outreach, community advocacy, professional development and design excellence.”

NOMAS chapters (the student-focused side of NOMA) exist in nearly 100 universities across the United States.

QSPACE

“QSPACE is a queer architectural research organization that pushes for organized action through exhibitions, publications, digital archiving, and design guidelines; QSPACE is a hub for students, professionals, and academics to connect and collaborate on LGBTQ topics in the built environment.”

Society of Architectural Historians (SAH)

“The Society of Architectural Historians is a nonprofit membership organization that serves a network of local, national, and international institutions and individuals who, by profession or interest, focus on the history of the built environment and its role in shaping contemporary life.”

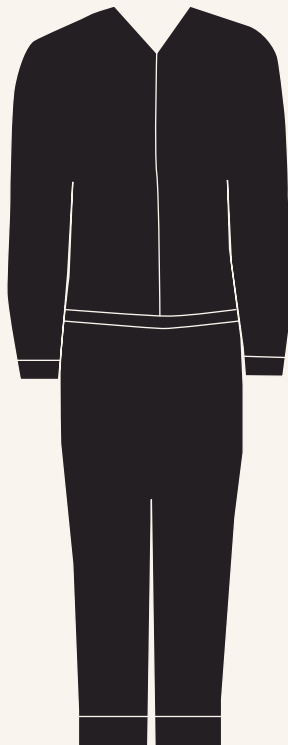
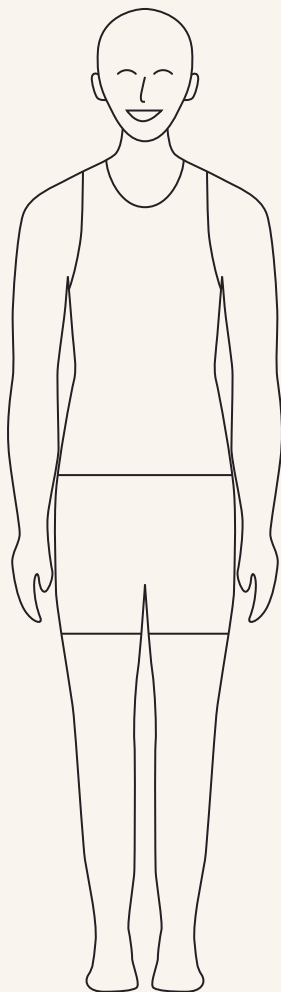
The Architecture Lobby (T-A-L)

“The Architecture Lobby is an international organization of architectural workers, planners, and designers advocating for the value of architecture in the general public and for architectural work within the discipline.”

Help Alex get ready for work!

This young architect slept through their alarm and is about to be late to work!

Print this page out then grab your X-ACTO knife to pick out an outfit for Alex to wear to the office.

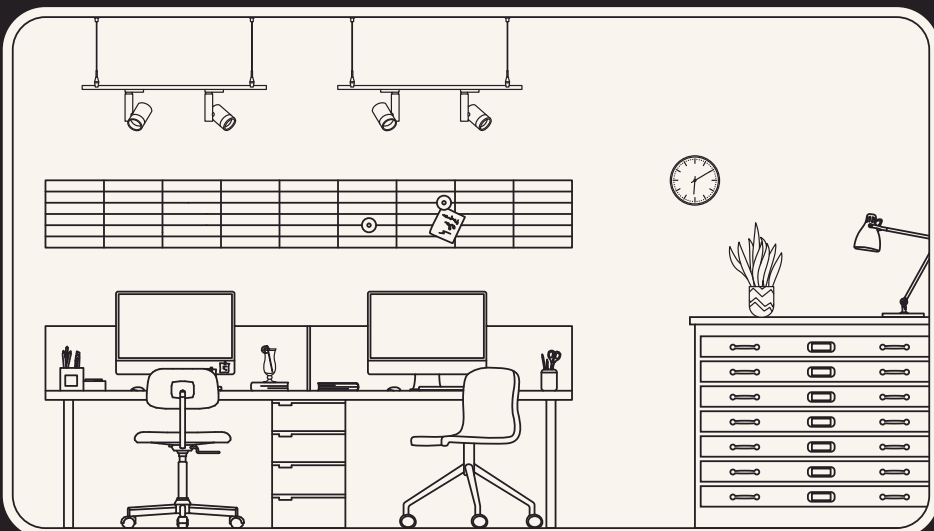
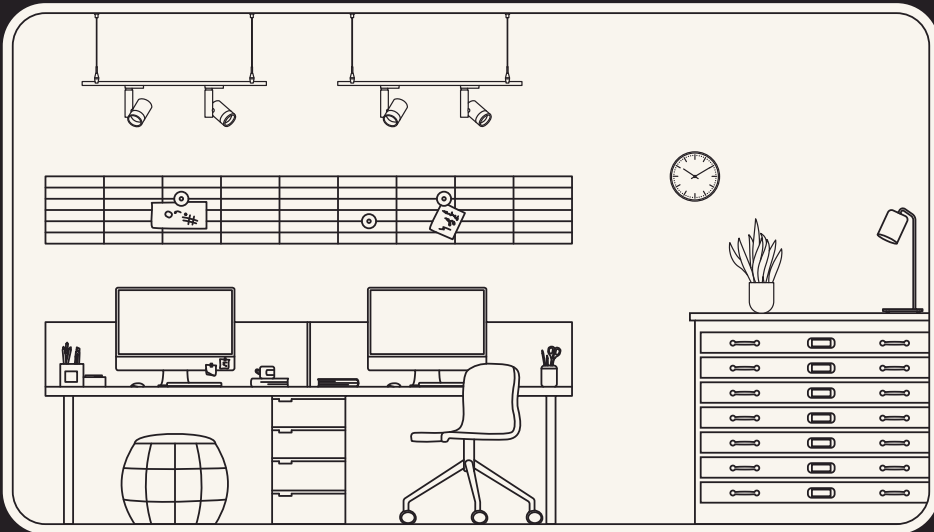






Spot the difference!

There are seven differences between these two pictures.
Can you find them all?



Silly Storytime

Ask a partner to give you answers to fill in the prompts below, but don't show them the story itself. Once you have the full set of answers, fill in the blanks and read off the story for a laugh.

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. First name: _____ | 7. Building product: _____ |
| 2. Noun: _____ | 8. Chain restaurant: _____ |
| 3. Breakfast food: _____ | 9. Celebrity: _____ |
| 4. Beverage: _____ | 10. Animal: _____ |
| 5. Vehicle: _____ | 11. Really big number: _____ |
| 6. Typology: _____ | 12. Dessert: _____ |

The First Day!

1 _____ woke up to the sound of the alarm clock and jumped out of bed. It was time for their first day at 2 _____ Architecture. After eating a big helping of 3 _____ and washing it down with a cup of 4 _____ they ran out the door.

One quick trip in the 5 _____ later, they made it to the office where they were welcomed with open arms. Right away, they were put on a team designing a 6 _____. The office environment felt great and before they knew it, lunchtime had arrived.

A sales rep was in the conference room, getting ready to talk about their new line of 7 _____. The rep brought boxed lunches from 8 _____. (Everyone loves a free lunch!)

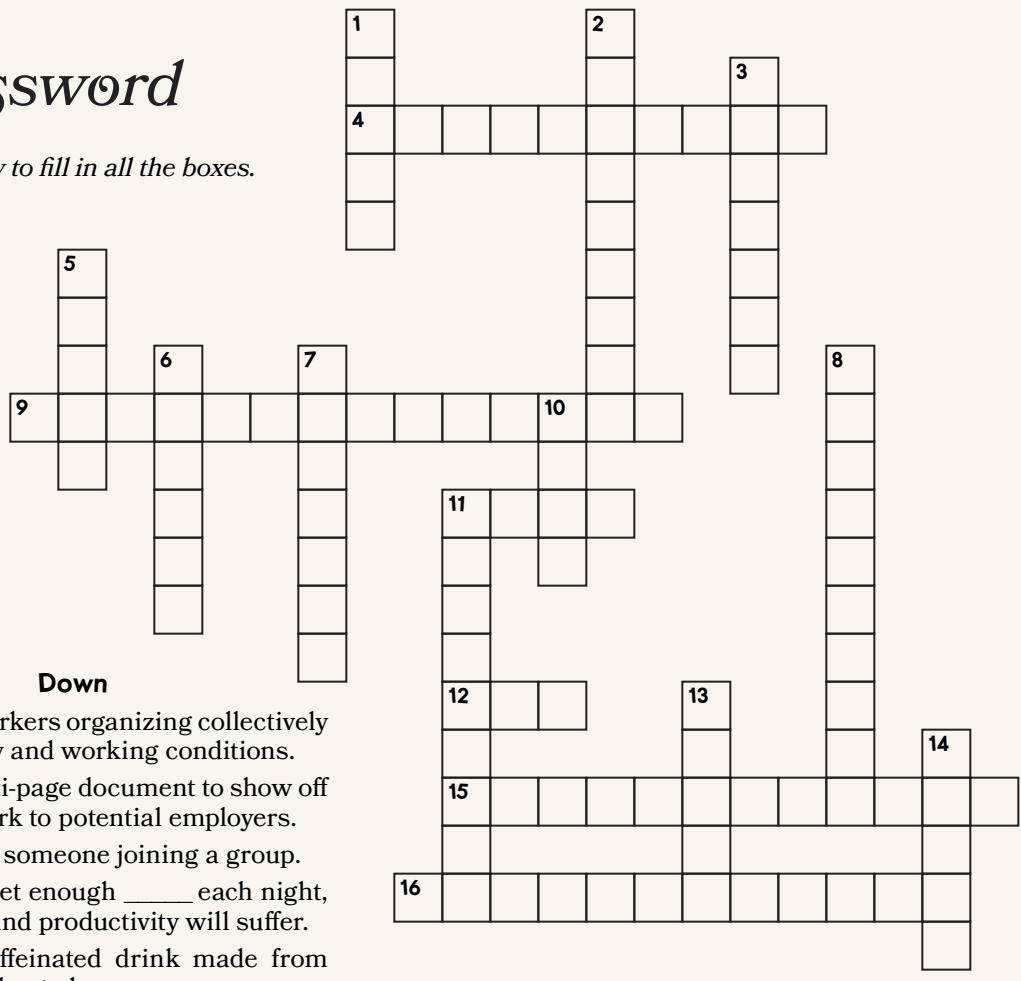
Right after lunch, the principal got a frantic call from 9 _____ who was having the office design their new home. The client didn't like any of the ideas presented so far and wanted a new massing proposal right away. 1 _____ put together a quick collage for a home inspired by the silhouette of a 10 _____ and both the client and boss were thrilled.

On their very first day, the boss gave the new employee a raise of 11 _____ percent as a recognition of their hard work. Wow! They went home and treated themselves to a delicious 12 _____.

As they fell asleep, they knew tomorrow would be even better.

Crossword

Use the clues below to fill in all the boxes.



Down

1. A group of workers organizing collectively for better pay and working conditions.
2. Use this multi-page document to show off your past work to potential employers.
3. A greeting to someone joining a group.
5. If you don't get enough _____ each night, your health and productivity will suffer.
6. A strong caffeinated drink made from arabica or robusta beans.
7. This state has ten institutions with M. Arch programs, including Columbia and Syracuse.
8. An official record of your academic performance at a college or university.
10. A program designed to speed up the licensure process by having students gain work experience and begin ARE testing before graduation.
11. You may wish to do this with a salary offer to get more pay.
13. Make sure you drink enough _____ every day.
14. Rise and _____.

Across

4. A meeting with a potential employer to discuss an open position and your qualifications for it.
9. Ask for letters of _____ as early as you can when preparing grad school applications.
11. This group regularly evaluates schools of architecture to make sure they're covering all required content.
12. A delicious beverage made by steeping leaves in hot water.
15. The discipline that brings us all together.
16. Architect _____ Examination.

Word Search

18 softwares you might use in the office are hidden in the puzzle below. Can you find them all? (Words can go in any direction.)

s t e u p p l r h i n o x y b q
v n z n t h t e s r t b a i l u
k i b h g n o z c m o r m n u s
e o f d r h f t d x v b o d e m
c p f r a g z a o o e i v e b a
d r o w s i c p y s k n i s e e
i e k y s i s z s c h l b i a t
e w k o h z g r d s l o p g m j
t o b c o a o j x u m u p n d r
m p r z p l u o s e p a c s n e
z a c k p u t t m a c g w h z d
g a j e e u r u o r z s t u w z
j t z m r a k j o c h y p p v o
m s j w t u n b l m a d a m l k
y q h o v s a u j z d d u p c e
n d r e s t q r e v i t o s x g

acrobat
bluebeam
grasshopper
outlook
revit
vray

archicad
enscape
illustrator
photoshop
rhino
word

autocad
excel
indesign
powerpoint
teams
zoom

Some helpful resources related to building a life in architecture:

The Architectural Review:

Letters to a young architect

Parlour:

Letters to my younger self

The Architecture Lobby:

Asymmetric Labors



ODDS & ENDS

m. arch program info

a young architect's bookshelf

acknowledgments

how this guide came to be

contributor bios



M ARCH PROGRAM INFO

The second section of this guide covers graduate school from start to finish. If you haven't read that section, head there first and then make your way back here.

The pages that follow have some basic info about every NAAB-accredited M Arch program in the United States. All information was gathered from public sources (universities themselves, NAAB, ACSA, and the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research) and used the most recent data available as of April 2022. The chart on the next page goes into a bit more detail.

Double-check the figures before making any big life decisions—this guide should be a starting point or a helpful reference for your grad school journey, not the final word.



XYZ University^(*)

Location

What the school called and where you'll find it!

* Programs with an asterisk next to their name are "NAAB Candidate" programs. From the NAAB website: "Candidacy is a multi-year effort that starts with an eligibility review by the NAAB and continues with up to three visits to the school. Prospective students who are interested in a program in candidacy should not be discouraged by its candidacy status, but need to understand the program's plan for achieving Initial Accreditation."

Control | Carnegie classification | Enrollment profile

This information is from the Carnegie classifications **website**, maintained by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. Some of their data, in turn, comes from the **Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System**.

The "Control" section refers to whether the institution is public or private. See the next page for info about Carnegie classifications and enrollment profiles.

Department size

These ranges come from the **ACSA Institutional Data Report**. They describe their calculations as follows:

"School size is based on total full-time equivalency (FTE) in both accredited and non-accredited architecture degree programs; 1 Part-time student = 1/3 FTE"

Your M. Arch program will be some smaller portion of this overall number. More students in a department generally means more faculty, more fabrication space, larger libraries, and so on.

Annual tuition and fees

This information is taken from each program's website. In some cases tuition and fees are listed as a flat per/semester rate. In other cases they're shown by credit hour. Whenever there was any ambiguity, I got as close as possible to the following formula:

$2 \text{ terms} \times (15 \text{ credit hours} + \text{mandatory term fees}) = \text{annual tuition and fees.}$

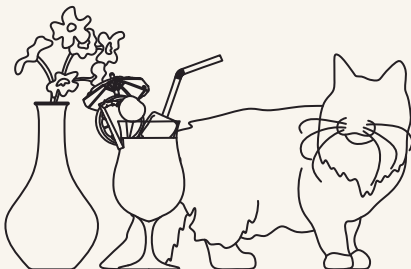
Carnegie classifications and enrollment profiles

Carnegie classifications were developed in the 1970s as a framework for measuring and categorizing higher education. They collect statistics on enrollment, graduation numbers, and research budgets and assign designations to almost every college and university in the US. They aren't rankings, as they don't assess the quality or value of education at any particular institution. Rather, they're a way of grouping and comparing institutions by their overall size and shape.

You might be looking for a graduate degree program that's similar to (or different from) your undergraduate experience. There are no exact equivalencies here, but an R1 and another R1 will feel more alike than an R1 and an M3

Carnegie classifications are based on colleges and universities in their entirety, not just their architecture departments. So the underlying enrollment figures and research budgets will (in most cases) include programs entirely unrelated to architecture.

The enrollment profiles just represent a ratio of undergrads to grad students. This will probably influence the vibe on campus a bit. These, too, refer to the institution as a whole, not just the architecture program.



What the alphanumeric codes stand for

Find full definitions and descriptions of the Carnegie classification methodology at their website. Each of the abbreviations in the following pages corresponds to one of the classifications below.

- R1: Doctoral Universities – Very high research activity
- R2: Doctoral Universities – High research activity
- D/PU: Doctoral/Professional Universities
- M1: Master's Colleges and Universities – Larger programs
- M2: Master's Colleges and Universities – Medium programs
- M3: Master's Colleges and Universities – Smaller programs
- SFI: Special Focus Institutions

Enrollment profiles

Very high undergraduate:

Less than 10% grad students

High undergraduate:

10-24% grad students

Majority undergraduate:

25-49% grad students

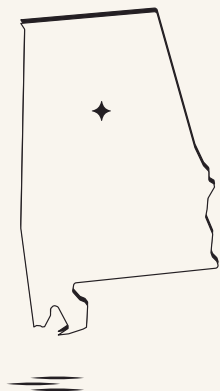
Majority graduate:

50-99% grad students

Exclusively graduate:

100% grad students

Colleges and universities with NAAB-accredited M. Arch programs (alphabetically by state)



Alabama

Samford University*

Birmingham

Private not-for-profit | D/PU | Majority undergraduate

Fewer than 100 students

\$28,000/yr

Arizona

The School of Architecture

Paradise Valley

Private not-for-profit | SFI | Exclusively graduate

Fewer than 100 students

\$29,000/yr

Arizona State University

Tempe

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$19,000/yr (in-state) | \$40,000/yr (out-of-state)

University of Arizona

Tucson

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$16,000/yr (in-state) | \$36,000/yr (out-of-state)



California

University of California - Berkeley

Berkeley

Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$22,000/yr (in-state) | \$34,000/yr (out-of-state)

Academy of Art University

San Francisco

Private for-profit | M1 | Majority undergraduate

More than 600 students in department

\$39,000/yr

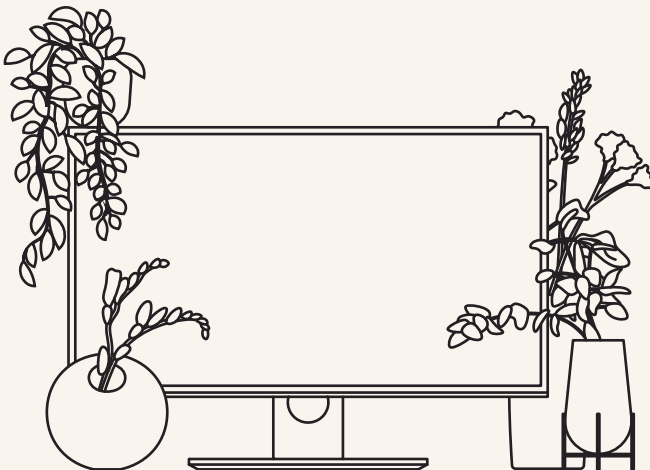
California College of the Arts

San Francisco

Private not-for-profit | SFI | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$39,000/yr





Woodbury University

Burbank

Private not-for-profit | M3 | Very high undergraduate
400-600 students in department
\$44,000/yr

SCI-Arc

Los Angeles

Private not-for-profit | SFI | Majority undergraduate
400-600 students
\$51,000/yr

University of California - Los Angeles

Los Angeles

Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate
100-200 students in department
\$23,000/yr (in-state) | \$35,000/yr (out-of-state)

University of Southern California

Los Angeles

Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority graduate
More than 600 students in department
\$65,000/yr

Cal Poly - Pomona

Pomona

Public | M1 | Very high undergraduate
100-200 students in department
\$9,000/yr (in-state) | \$21,000/yr (out-of-state)

California Baptist University

Riverside

Private not-for-profit | M1 | Majority undergraduate
100-200 students in department
\$30,000/yr

NewSchool of Architecture and Design

San Diego

Private for-profit | M3 | High undergraduate
400-600 students in department
\$31,000/yr

Canada

Most—but not all—U.S. jurisdictions have reciprocity agreements with the Canadian Architectural Certification Board and the Canadian Architectural Licensing Authorities.

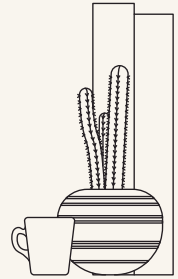
You may choose to study in the United States and become licensed to practice in Canada, or vice versa, or move between the two countries throughout your career.

While other reciprocity agreements exist and are under development with other countries, the relationship with Canadian programs is the longest-standing and most-developed.

Find more information about reciprocity agreements by using the **NCARB Licensing Requirements Tool**.

The M. Arch programs offered by the 12 schools listed below are accredited by the Canadian Architectural Certification Board. Maybe one of them is right for you.

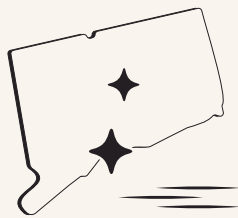
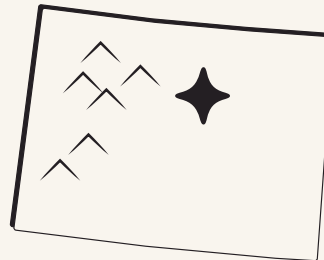
Carleton University
Dalhousie University
Laurentian University
McGill University
Université Laval
Université de Montreal
University of British Columbia
University of Calgary
University of Manitoba
University of Toronto
University of Waterloo
Toronto Metropolitan University



Colorado

University of Colorado - Denver

Denver
Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate
400-600 students in department
\$16,000/yr (in-state) | \$40,000/yr (out-of-state)



Connecticut

University of Hartford

West Hartford
Private not-for-profit | D/PU | High undergraduate
100-200 students in department
\$26,000/yr

Yale University

New Haven
Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority graduate
200-400 students in department
\$54,000/yr

Florida

Florida A&M University

Tallahassee

Public | R2 | High undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$7,000/yr (in-state) | \$19,000/yr (out-of-state)

University of Florida

Gainesville

Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$16,000/yr (in-state) | \$38,000/yr (out-of-state)

University of South Florida

Tampa

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$13,000/yr (in-state) | \$26,000/yr (out-of-state)

Florida International University

Miami

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$12,000/yr (in-state) | \$31,000/yr (out-of-state)

University of Miami

Coral Gables

Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$71,000/yr



Georgia

Georgia Institute of Technology

Atlanta

Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$20,000/yr (in-state) | \$35,000/yr (out-of-state)

Savannah College of Art and Design

Savannah

Private not-for-profit | M1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$40,000/yr





Idaho

University of Idaho

Moscow

Public | R2 | High undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$11,000/yr (in-state) | \$30,000/yr (out-of-state)

Illinois

Judson University

Elgin

Private not-for-profit | M3 | High undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$38,000/yr

Illinois Institute of Technology

Chicago

Private not-for-profit | R2 | Majority undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$51,000/yr

School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Chicago

Private not-for-profit | SFI | High undergraduate

Fewer than 100 students in department

\$57,000/yr

University of Illinois - Chicago

Chicago

Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$23,000/yr (in-state) | \$36,000/yr (out-of-state)

University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign

Champaign

Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate

More than 600 students in department

\$18,000/yr (in-state) | \$33,000/yr (out-of-state)

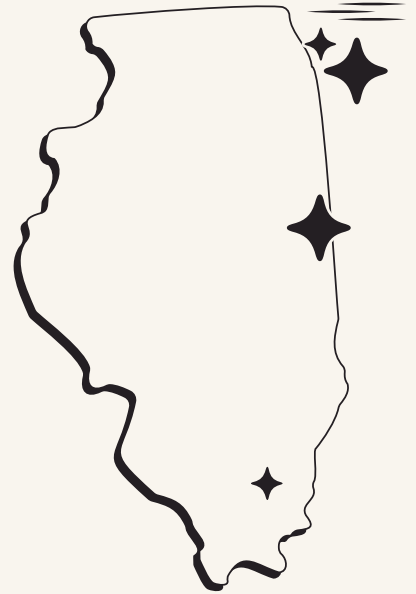
Southern Illinois University

Carbondale

Public | R2 | High undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$20,000/yr (in-state) | \$41,000/yr (out-of-state)



Indiana

University of Notre Dame

Notre Dame

Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$55,000/yr

Ball State University

Muncie

Public | R2 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$16,000/yr (in-state) | \$39,000/yr (out-of-state)

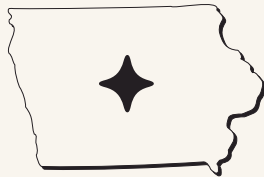
Indiana University*

Columbus

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

Fewer than 100 students in department

\$17,000/yr (in-state) | \$37,000/yr (out-of-state)



Iowa

Iowa State University

Ames

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$13,000/yr (in-state) | \$29,000/yr (out-of-state)

Kansas

Kansas State University

Manhattan

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$15,000/yr (in-state) | \$30,000/yr (out-of-state)

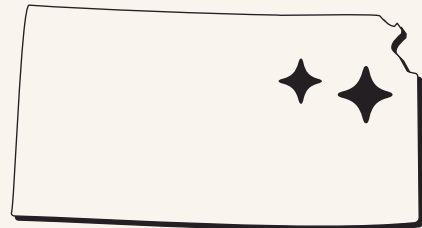
University of Kansas

Lawrence

Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$16,000/yr (in-state) | \$33,000/yr (out-of-state)



Kentucky

University of Kentucky

Lexington

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$15,000/yr (in-state) | \$35,000/yr (out-of-state)

Louisiana

Louisiana Tech University

Ruston

Public | R2 | High undergraduate
100-200 students in department
\$11,000/yr (in-state) | \$22,000/yr (out-of-state)

Louisiana State University

Baton Rouge

Public | R1 | High undergraduate
200-400 students in department
\$13,000/yr (in-state) | \$30,000/yr (out-of-state)

University of Louisiana - Lafayette

Lafayette

Public | R1 | High undergraduate
200-400 students in department
\$12,000/yr (in-state) | \$26,000/yr (out-of-state)

Tulane University

New Orleans

Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority undergraduate
200-400 students in department
\$62,000/yr



Maryland

Morgan State University

Baltimore

Public | R2 | High undergraduate
200-400 students in department
\$16,000/yr (in-state) | \$29,000/yr (out-of-state)

University of Maryland

College Park

Public | R1 | High undergraduate
200-400 students in department
\$24,000/yr (in-state) | \$52,000/yr (out-of-state)

Massachusetts

University of Massachusetts - Amherst

Amherst
Public | R1 | High undergraduate
100-200 students in department
\$17,000/yr (in-state) | \$37,000/yr (out-of-state)

Harvard University

Cambridge
Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority graduate
200-400 students in department
\$54,000/yr

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Cambridge
Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority graduate
100-200 students in department
\$56,000/yr

Boston Architectural College

Boston
Private not-for-profit | SFI | Majority graduate
400-600 students
\$32,000/yr

Massachusetts College of Art and Design

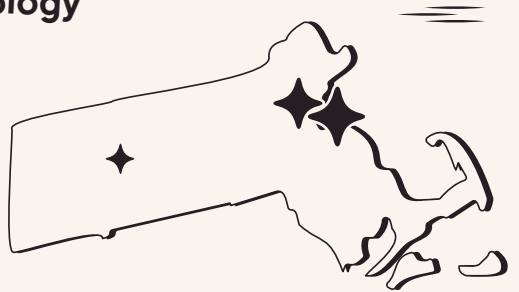
Boston
Public | SFI | Very high undergraduate
Fewer than 100 students in department
\$34,000/yr (in-state) | \$34,000/yr (out-of-state)

Northeastern University

Boston
Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority undergraduate
200-400 students in department
\$52,000/yr

Wentworth Institute of Technology

Boston
Private not-for-profit | M3 | Very high undergraduate
400-600 students in department
\$40,000/yr



Michigan

Ferris State University

Grand Rapids
Public | D/PU | High undergraduate
200-400 students in department
\$36,000/yr (in-state) | \$36,000/yr (out-of-state)

Andrews University

Berrien Springs
Private not-for-profit | D/PU | Majority undergraduate
100-200 students in department
\$38,000/yr

Lawrence Technological University

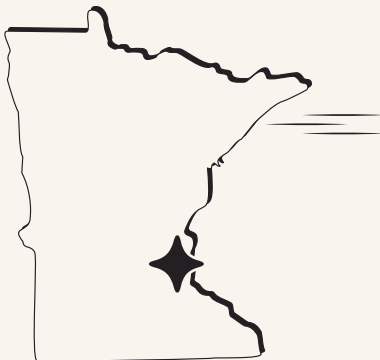
Southfield
Private not-for-profit | M1 | High undergraduate
400-600 students in department
\$41,000/yr

University of Detroit Mercy

Detroit
Private not-for-profit | D/PU | Majority undergraduate
100-200 students in department
\$35,000/yr (in-state)

University of Michigan

Ann Arbor
Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate
400-600 students in department
\$34,000/yr (in-state) | \$51,000/yr (out-of-state)



Minnesota

University of Minnesota

Minneapolis
Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate
400-600 students in department
\$29,000/yr (in-state) | \$29,000/yr (out-of-state)

Missouri

Washington University in St. Louis

St. Louis

Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$58,000/yr

Drury University

Springfield

Private not-for-profit | M3 | Very high undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$34,000/yr



Montana

Montana State University

Bozeman

Public | R1 | Very high undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$9,000/yr (in-state) | \$31,000/yr (out-of-state)

Nebraska

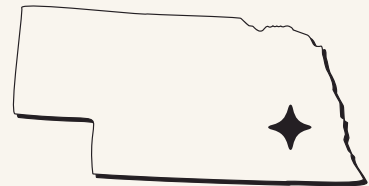
University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Lincoln

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$15,000/yr (in-state) | \$38,000/yr (out-of-state)



Nevada

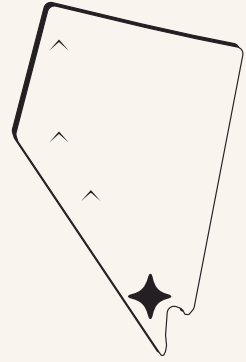
University of Nevada - Las Vegas

Las Vegas

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$18,000/yr (in-state) | \$35,000/yr (out-of-state)



New Jersey

New Jersey Institute of Technology

Newark

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

More than 600 students in department

\$25,000/yr (in-state) | \$35,000/yr (out-of-state)

Kean University

Union

Public | D/PU | High undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$17,000/yr (in-state) | \$22,000/yr (out-of-state)

Princeton University

Princeton

Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$59,000/yr



New Mexico

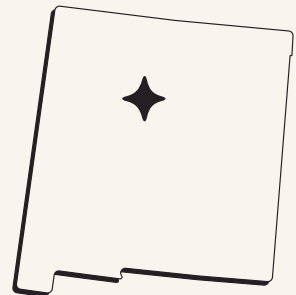
University of New Mexico

Albuquerque

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$12,000/yr (in-state) | \$37,000/yr (out-of-state)





“What’s your sign?”



Find your birthday on the chart below and meet some architects who share your sign!



Aries (March 21–April 19)

competitive, direct, bold

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe
Jørn Utzon
Natalie de Blois



Libra (September 23–October 23)

friendly, balanced, diplomatic

Christopher Wren
Denise Scott Brown
Maya Lin



Taurus (April 20–May 20)

grounded, logical, patient

Walter Gropius
I.M. Pei
Peter Zumthor



Scorpio (October 24–November 21)

independent, intense, stoic

Frank Furness
Rem Koolhaas
Zaha Hadid



Gemini (May 21–June 21)

curious, adaptable, expressive

Frank Lloyd Wright
Charles Rennie Mackintosh
Bruce Goff



Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)

adventurous, passionate, energetic

Andrea Palladio
Lina Bo Bardi
Minoru Yamasaki



Cancer (June 22–July 22)

empathetic, perceptive, cautious

Antoni Gaudí
John Hejduk
Michael Graves



Capricorn (December 22–January 19)

hardworking, determined, self-reliant

Gunnar Birkerts
Thom Mayne
Samuel Mockbee



Leo (July 23–August 22)

warm, ambitious, charismatic

Eero Saarinen
Richard Rogers
Eduardo Souto de Moura



Aquarius (January 20–February 18)

assertive, eccentric, analytical

Eugène Viollet-le-Duc
Julia Morgan
Paul Williams



Virgo (August 23–September 22)

organized, practical, loyal

Tadao Ando
Louis Sullivan
Renzo Piano



Pisces (February 19–March 20)

imaginative, romantic, intuitive

Karl Friedrich Schinkel
Frank Gehry
Jeanne Gang

New York

University at Buffalo

New York

Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$18,000/yr (in-state) | \$30,000/yr (out-of-state)

Rochester Institute of Technology

Rochester

Private not-for-profit | R2 | High undergraduate

Fewer than 100 students in department

\$55,000/yr

Cornell University

Ithaca

Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$59,000/yr

Syracuse University

New York

Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$28,000/yr

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

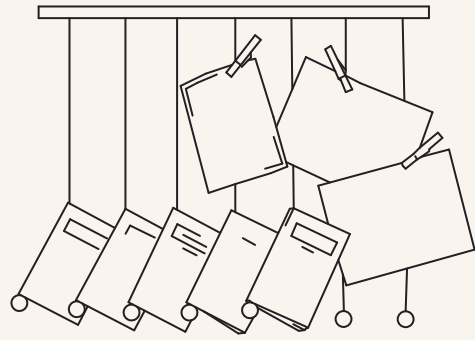
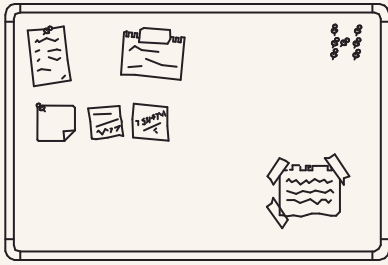
Troy

Private not-for-profit | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$62,000/yr





CUNY City College

New York City (Manhattan)
Public | R2 | High undergraduate
200-400 students in department
\$14,000/yr (in-state) | \$35,000/yr (out-of-state)

Columbia University

New York City (Manhattan)
Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority graduate
200-400 students in department
\$62,000/yr

The New School (Parsons)

New York City (Manhattan)
Private not-for-profit | R2 | Majority undergraduate
100-200 students in department
\$57,000/yr

Pratt Institute

New York City (Brooklyn)
Private not-for-profit | SFI | Majority undergraduate
More than 600 students in department
\$62,000/yr

New York Institute of Technology*

Old Westbury
Private not-for-profit | M1 | Majority undergraduate
400-600 students in department
\$45,000/yr



North Carolina

University of North Carolina - Charlotte

Charlotte

Public | R2 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$11,000/yr (in-state) | \$24,000/yr (out-of-state)

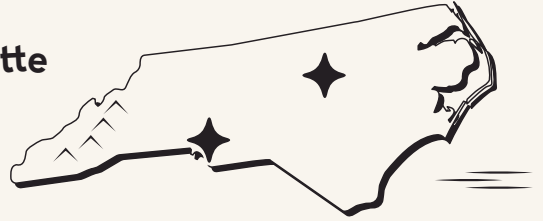
North Carolina State University

Raleigh

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$13,000/yr (in-state) | \$31,000/yr (out-of-state)



North Dakota

North Dakota State University

Fargo

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$16,000/yr (in-state) | \$23,000/yr (out-of-state)

Oklahoma

University of Oklahoma

Norman

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$15,000/yr (in-state) | \$34,000/yr (out-of-state)



Ohio

Bowling Green State University

Bowling Green

Public | R2 | High undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$13,000/yr (in-state) | \$21,000/yr (out-of-state)

Kent State University

Kent

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$12,000/yr (in-state) | \$22,000/yr (out-of-state)

Ohio State University

Columbus

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$13,000/yr (in-state) | \$39,000/yr (out-of-state)

Miami University

Oxford

Public | R2 | Very high undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$15,000/yr (in-state) | \$33,000/yr (out-of-state)

University of Cincinnati

Cincinnati

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$18,000/yr (in-state) | \$33,000/yr (out-of-state)



Oregon

Portland State University

Portland

Public | R2 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$15,000/yr (in-state) | \$22,000/yr (out-of-state)

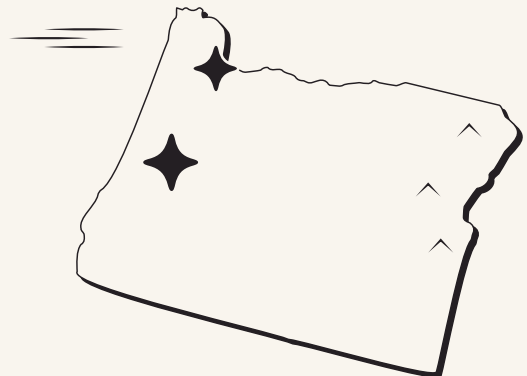
University of Oregon

Eugene

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$26,000/yr (in-state) | \$37,000/yr (out-of-state)



Pennsylvania

Carnegie Mellon University

Pittsburgh

Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$13,000/yr (in-state) | \$21,000/yr (out-of-state)

Pennsylvania State University

University Park

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$12,000/yr (in-state) | \$22,000/yr (out-of-state)

Temple University

Philadelphia

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$15,000/yr (in-state) | \$33,000/yr (out-of-state)

Thomas Jefferson University

Philadelphia

Private not-for-profit | R2 | Majority undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$13,000/yr (in-state) | \$39,000/yr (out-of-state)

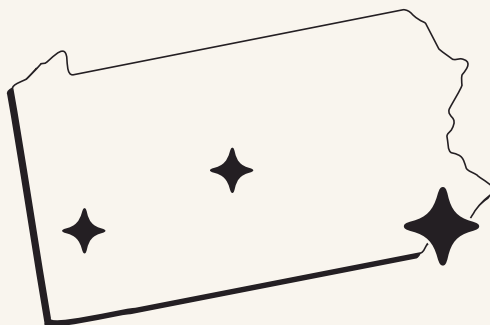
University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia

Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority graduate

200-400 students in department

\$18,000/yr (in-state) | \$33,000/yr (out-of-state)



Rhode Island

Rhode Island School of Design

Providence

Private not-for-profit | M1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$58,000/yr

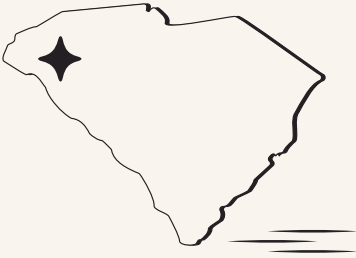
Roger Williams University

Bristol

Private not-for-profit | M2 | Very high undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$42,000/yr



South Carolina

Clemson University

Clemson

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$14,000/yr (in-state) | \$28,000/yr (out-of-state)

South Dakota

South Dakota State University

Brookings

Public | R2 | Very high undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$21,000/yr (in-state) | \$34,000/yr (out-of-state)



Tennessee

University of Memphis

Memphis

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

Fewer than 100 students in department

\$11,000/yr (in-state) | \$22,000/yr (out-of-state)

University of Tennessee - Knoxville

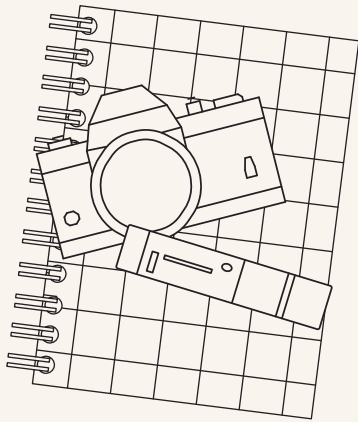
Knoxville

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

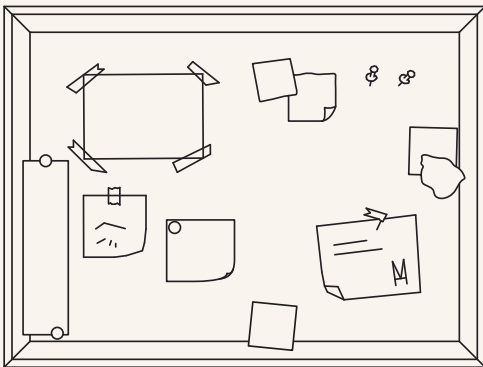
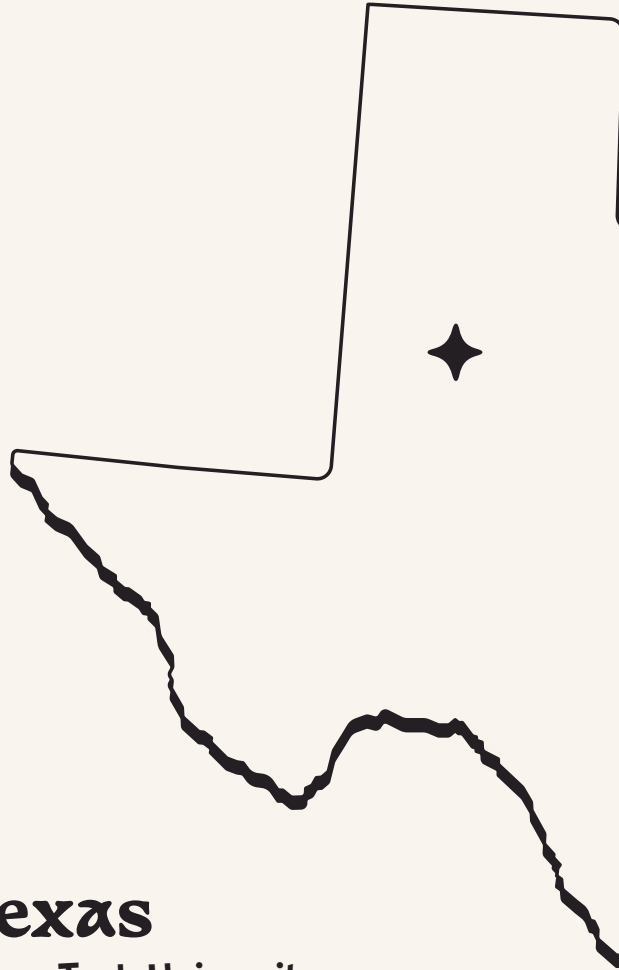
200-400 students in department

\$13,000/yr (in-state) | \$32,000/yr (out-of-state)





Next time you have a three-day weekend, do your future self a little favor: document all the old projects you've been hanging on to. Make a copy of everything in an external hard drive or in your cloud storage. It will take a few hours and be not terribly exciting, but the next time you need any of your old work you'll be glad you've already archived it!



Texas

Texas Tech University

Lubbock

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$14,000/yr (in-state) | \$26,000/yr (out-of-state)



University of Texas - Arlington

Arlington

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$14,000/yr (in-state) | \$33,000/yr (out-of-state)

Texas A&M University

College Station

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$16,000/yr (in-state) | \$32,000/yr (out-of-state)

University of Texas - Austin

Austin

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$36,000/yr (in-state) | \$49,000/yr (out-of-state)

University of Texas - San Antonio

San Antonio

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$15,000/yr (in-state) | \$45,000/yr (out-of-state)

Prairie View A&M University

Prairie View

Public | R2 | Very high undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$13,000/yr (in-state) | \$28,000/yr (out-of-state)

Rice University

Houston

Private not-for-profit | R1 | Majority undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$36,000/yr

University of Houston

Houston

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

400-600 students in department

\$18,000/yr (in-state) | \$33,000/yr (out-of-state)

Utah

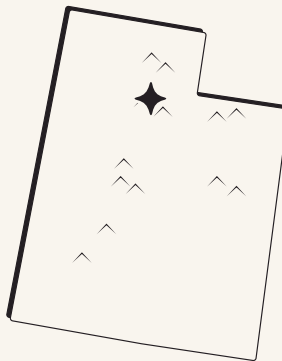
University of Utah

Salt Lake City

Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$20,000/yr (in-state) | \$47,000/yr (out-of-state)



Vermont

Norwich University

Northfield

Private not-for-profit | M1 | High undergraduate

Fewer than 100 students in department

\$28,000/yr

Virginia

Hampton University

Hampton

Private not-for-profit | D/PU | High undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$26,000/yr

University of Virginia

Charlottesville

Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$20,000/yr (in-state) | \$32,000/yr (out-of-state)

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

More than 600 students in department

\$17,000/yr (in-state) | \$32,000/yr (out-of-state)



Washington

University of Washington

Seattle

Public | R1 | Majority undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$19,000/yr (in-state) | \$39,000/yr (out-of-state)

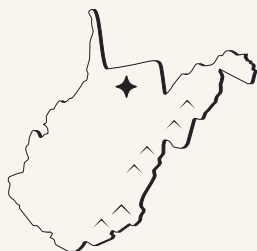
Washington State University

Pullman

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$13,000/yr (in-state) | \$27,000/yr (out-of-state)



West Virginia

Fairmont State University*

Fairmont

Public | M3 | High undergraduate

Fewer than 100 students in department

\$10,000/yr (in-state) | \$20,000/yr (out-of-state)

Wisconsin

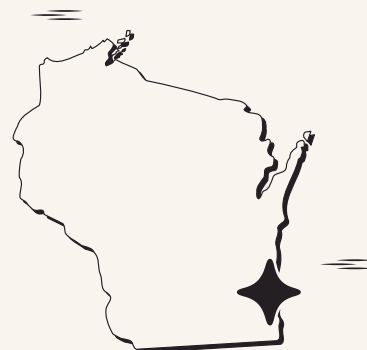
University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

Milwaukee

Public | R1 | High undergraduate

More than 600 students in department

\$12,000/yr (in-state) | \$26,000/yr (out-of-state)



Washington, D.C.

University of the District of Columbia

Washington, D.C.

Public | M2 | High undergraduate

100-200 students in department

\$17,000/yr (D.C. residents) | \$31,000/yr (non-D.C. residents)

Catholic University of America

Washington, D.C.

Private not-for-profit | R2 | Majority undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$52,000/yr

Howard University

Washington, D.C.

Private not-for-profit | R2 | Majority undergraduate

Fewer than 100 students in department

\$35,000/yr



Puerto Rico

University of Puerto Rico

San Juan

Public | R2 | High undergraduate

200-400 students in department

\$6,000/yr (PR residents) | \$12,000/yr (non-PR residents)

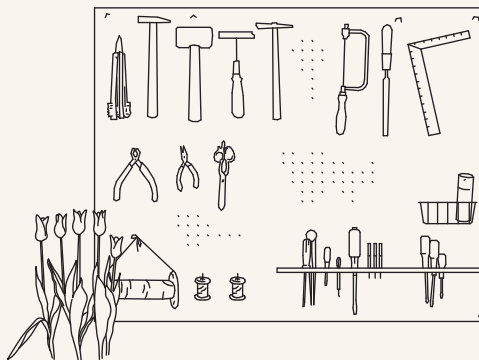
Ana G. Méndez University

Gurabo

Private not-for-profit | D/PU | High undergraduate

Fewer than 100 students in department

\$7,000/yr





A few dozen scale figures. On the house.

Print this page at 100% scale for 1/8" = 1' figs,
or open the document up in Illustrator to grab
the vectors and make them any size you need.



Magic of Thinking Big

David J. Schwartz

Getting Things Done | David Allen

An Ethic of Excellence

Ron Berger

A YOUNG ARCHITECT'S BOOKSHELF

STUD

Joel Sanders

Design Justice

Sasha Costanza-Chock

The Aesthetics of Equity

Craig L. Wilkins

Evicted

Matthew Desmond

The Democratic Paradox

Chantal Mouffe

Frederick Douglass:

Prophet of Freedom

David W. Blight

A Burglar's Guide to the City

Geoff Manaugh

In Praise of Shadows

Jun'ichirō Tanizaki

Experiencing Architecture

Steen Eiler Rasmussen

Urban Diaries

Walter Hood

Out of Office

Charlie Warzel and Anne Helen Petersen

On Intersectionality: Essential Writings

Kimberlé Crenshaw

I asked the contributors to this guide what books they would recommend a new graduate have on their bookshelf. I haven't had the pleasure of reading all of these, but the ones I have encountered are great. Consider picking up a few of them next time you're at the library.



Mastery

Robert Greene

Grit

Angela Duckworth

Ego Is the Enemy

Ryan Holiday

Piranesi
Susanna Clarke

When We Lost Our Heads

Heather O'Neill

Letters to a Young Poet

Rainer Maria Rilke

My Struggle, Volume 1

Karl Ove Knausgård

Invisible Man Ralph Ellison

What To Watch:

Her
2013

The films of
Peter Greenaway

Russian Doll
Season 1
2019

Patlabor: The Movie
1989

High-Rise
2015

Paddington 2
2017

Arrival
2016

The Lake House
2006

White Noise
2005

Chinatown
1974

The Night House
2021

The films of
Michael Gondry

“Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics”
Claire Bishop

“Eupalinos, or The Architect”
Paul Valéry

“Refusal After Refusal”
Adjustments Agency

I also got some great suggestions for movies, essays, and articles. Check these out too!





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are so, so many people to thank in a project like this.

To everyone who contributed a small piece of writing from their own experience in the field, *thank you*. All of the best parts of this guide are yours.

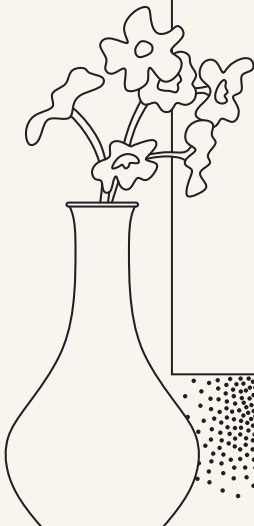
To the students who talked with me about their hopes and anxieties, their passions and uncertainties upon graduation, *thank you*. I hope these pages speak to some of your burning questions about the years ahead.

To my coworkers, past and present, who helped (and continue to help) me find my place in this field, *thank you*.

To my teachers and mentors, who taught me everything I know, *thank you*.

To the kind strangers who donated a bit of their hard-earned money to help get this project off the ground, *thank you*. Your generosity has helped to make this project the best that it can possibly be.

To the many named and anonymous posters who comprise the “Architecture Twitter” community, *thank you*. The joy and inspiration I get from interacting with all of you every day is a constant reminder of what makes architecture so special.





To Eva and Marianela, who looked at the seed of an idea and saw in it all of the directions it could grow, *thank you*. And thank you both for your thinking and writing about architecture over the past few years, which has helped guide my own journey from school into practice.

To Keefer, who provided some critical feedback on the “Getting Organized” section and who has always been a reliable source for valuable advice for years, *thank you*.

To Daham and Michael, who saw just about every chart and illustration in the guide in their earliest forms, and gave valuable feedback at every step along the way, *thank you*.

To Sean, who provided feedback on so many of the drawings; and who proofread much of the main text (without ever losing his temper at my idiosyncratic comma usage); and who put together a wonderful website to host this guide, *thank you*.

And to Amanda, who looked at drafts and drawings for months on end, provided support and feedback at every step of the way, and always knew when and where things could be made better and clearer, *thank you*. None of this would be possible – or worth doing – without you.



HOW THIS GUIDE CAME TO BE

In November of 2021, my friends Michael Nicholas, Kate Wagner, and Kevin Rogan at **Guest Crit**—the best semi-regular Twitch stream devoted to architecture and cities—asked me to join them for a special mailbag episode. Also joining that night’s stream was the wonderful Eva Hagberg, whose writing about architecture I have admired for a long time.

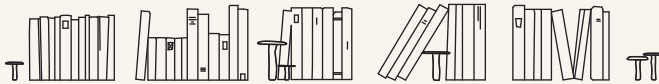
We made some jokes, answered some questions from the viewers, and generally had a great time. I was struck by how many people asked questions pointing to early-career anxieties around finding a job, maintaining work-life balance, and having a stable identity outside of architecture. Ours is a discipline with quite a few resources aimed at teaching young designers to be exceptional—to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, learn a new software in their spare time, worker harder and longer, and eventually rise above their peers in skill and prestige.

The Guest Crit viewer questions were gesturing at something a little different, though, and I couldn’t stop thinking about it. There’s a growing hunger for an architectural culture rooted more in collaboration and mutual support than in competition and individual excellence, or at least it feels that way to me. Recent Pritzker prizes have recognized architects (and teams of architects) doing a softer and more socially-conscious type of work than was the rage in the peak



of the “starchitect” days. Unionization, totally absent from private-sector architectural offices in the US since the 1940s, is now under active discussion at multiple firms in New York. The times, it seems, are changing.

In December I reached back out to Michael (of Guest Crit) to pitch another Q+A episode in the spring, aimed at just-graduated architecture students. He liked the idea but suggested there could be a better venue or format than the Guest Crit stream. (Refer to some of the HOW TO RECOVER FROM REJECTION sections elsewhere in this pamphlet for more about this type of experience.) Thinking about what that might be is where this project began.



The “hippie” and back-to-the-land movements of the late ’60s and early ’70s produced an incredibly rich archive of pamphlets, guides, and instruction manuals for city-slickers and college kids trying to build new lives off-grid. *The Whole Earth Catalog* remains the most famous of these efforts, but dozens of other little guides were published in the same 10-15 year span: guides on building a home from scrap material, on raising goats and chickens, on herbal medicine, on finding yourself in the land.



My favorites—like Alicia Bay Laurel’s *Living on the Earth* or the comprehensive volume put out by the journal *Country Women*—all seemed to share an ethos, something like:

We don’t have all the answers,

But we’ve figured out some of the basics.

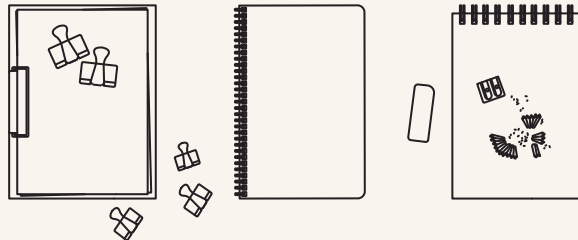
We don’t want you to struggle like we did,

So here’s a bit of help.

As far as ways to think about knowledge and community go, there are some far worse attitudes a person could have.

In their composition, too, these guides reflect something of the collaborative spirit that so many (myself included) wish to see more of in architecture. They weave together technical and practical advice with poetry, personal reflections, interviews, and the like. Everyone in the community has something to contribute to the project, and as a result the guides come to represent a project much larger than any one individual’s knowledge or experience.

Why not try to replicate some of that communal spirit in a small pamphlet for aspiring architects?





In January I asked Eva Hagberg and friend of the grind Marianela D'Aprile for some feedback and advice on some hazy ideas for what became this pamphlet. They asked great questions, pointed me toward some existing resources, and just generally helped sharpen and clarify what were still some vague intentions on my end. I'm grateful for their help.

I began asking friends and acquaintances if they'd be willing to write a small reflection or piece of advice. I wanted to be sure I could compensate everyone for their time and effort. On a finite budget, this meant that there were a lot of incredibly smart, talented, and kind people who I didn't end up reaching out to for a contribution. Perhaps at some point down the road there could be a *Welcome To The Grind 2* with a much larger roster of architects and designers sharing their experiences.

Around the time I was reaching out to contributors and sketching out a framework for organizing the content, a respected institution of architectural education held a live-streamed panel on "How To Be In An Office." The panel caused a minor uproar in the architecture world, both for the comments made by the panelists themselves and with respect to allegations of unfair working conditions in an architecture office partially run by one member of the panel. The whole event was a stark reminder of how much bad advice is out there for young people in architecture and served as something of a motivating force for making this guide the best it could be.



The last few months of focused work on this project involved many, many emails, Google Docs, and spreadsheets. Some of the content was relatively quick to assemble. Other components, like the data for all M. Arch programs, took a lot of work to locate and format.

I made frequent use of in-progress screenshots and polls on Twitter to gauge interest and opinions around certain features. While it was far from scientific, seeing a strong response to a given question usually gave an indication of whether or not I was on the right track for making certain decisions in layout, content, and formatting. I also used Twitter, email, and in-person chats to ask recent and soon-to-be grads about their frustrations and anxieties. These conversations were incredibly helpful and I hope the guide can return the favor in some small ways.

The final composition of the guide took place in Adobe InDesign, with many of the graphic elements created or modified in Adobe Illustrator.

The small graphic details of plants, mushrooms, and office supplies come from a number of sources, most prominently Studio Esinam, TOFFU, and Dimensions.com. The main body text is set in Bookmania, while Basteleur and OC Format Collage are used for various titles and headings. One other typeface, Hobeaux Rococo Borders, was used to construct all the decorative frames throughout.

I asked Sean Maciel of **Redbrick** to put together a simple website to host the finished guide, and I couldn't be happier with what he came up with.



And that's pretty much how it happened. It took a lot longer and ended up being a lot more work than I had anticipated at the start, but all-in-all I'm proud of what we all made together and I hope it helps the newest member of our profession to hit the ground running.

If you think you'd like to make a pamphlet of your own someday, or adapt some portion of this guide to better suit your own local architecture culture, please don't hesitate to reach out. I'd love to talk with you.

Vitruvius Grind



CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

I can't express enough how great it was to work with every single contributor on this project. These biographies are just the smallest windows into the lives of the people who contributed advice and wisdom from their own experiences in architecture. Please check out their work and, if any advice in particular reached out and grabbed you, consider sending the writer a brief note. I'm sure they'd love to hear from you.



Germane Barnes

he/him

Architecture is Germane's job. Basketball is his life.

 @uncleremuschn

 @gmane16

Galo Canizares

he/him

Galo is the author of *Digital Fabrications: Designer Stories for a Software-Based Planet*, a collection of texts on software and design. He is interested in digital art, quoting movies, and making inside jokes.

galocanizares.com

Marianela D'Aprile

she/her

Marianela writes about architecture and also edits a publication about it, the *New York Review of Architecture*. Here is a list of things she enjoys: Vivian Gornick's writing, baking sourdough, walking with her dog, playing soccer, Perfume Genius, the honey-cinnamon scones from the coffee shop across the street from her house.

daprile.work

Keefer Dunn

he/him

Keefer is a sole practitioner and architectural educator based in Chicago. Outside of architecture he's been very active in the organized left for over a decade, currently as a member of Chicago DSA. He's also into road cycling and making (non-architectural!) models.

 [@keeferdunnarchitect](#)

Michael Ferguson

he/him

Michael is a designer based in Michigan. He reads too much but never seems to finish any of the books next to his bed.

Julia Gamolina

she/her

Julia is the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of the online magazine, *Madame Architect*. She is an Associate Principal and Business Development Director at Ennead and a Visiting Assistant Professor at Pratt Institute. She has been learning to play acoustic guitar and to surf in her downtime.

[juliagamolina.com](#)

"Mrs. Vitruvius Grind"

she/her

When she's not sleeping or spending time with Mr. Grind, Mrs. VG spends a lot of time making ceramics, rewatching the Lord of the Rings trilogy, and reading too many feminist retellings of Greek myths. She was recently Board Certified in Vibing.

Sean Joyner

he/him

Sean writes about architecture, often exploring philosophy, history, and pop culture in the process. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife and two sons, just started doing Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, and he loves reading.

[seanjoyner.substack.com](#)

Sean Maciel

he/him

Sean studied architecture but now he is writing and doing graphic design. He also knits and raises houseplants.

 [@seanmaciel](#)

Daham Marapane

he/him

Daham is an architect and dilettante based in Chicago. He's been reading a lot about pickling lately, but he can also still talk to you about Tafuri if need be.

Josh Mings, AIA

he/him

As an architect, Josh focuses on affordable housing, neighborhood planning, and civic projects on a variety of scales. Josh's experience in all phases of projects allows for teams to create the best possible projects through teamwork, critical engagement, and consensus-building. He is a big fan of hiking and exploring cities, painting, and museums.

 [@joshuamings](#)

 [@jmings](#)

Marilyn Moedinger, AIA

she/her

Marilyn prepared her contribution while wearing a t-shirt that reads “I ♥ Buildings.” Her interests include oysters and negronis on a summer afternoon, playing music, lifting heavy, doing needlework, and being on her farm.

 @mwmoedinger

runciblestudios.com

Anjulie Rao

she/her

Anjulie is a Chicago-based journalist and critic covering the built environment. She also teaches various writing courses at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the Architecture + Interior Architecture and New Arts Journalism departments.

anjulierao.info

Quilian Riano

he/him

Quilian is the founder and lead designer of DSGN AGNC, a design studio exploring new forms of political engagement and co-creation through architecture, urbanism, landscapes and art. Quilian has also participated in collectives and organizing efforts within the design community such as The Architecture Lobby and Dark Matter University. He is interested in models for pluralistic democracy—looking at how games can help negotiate conflict in these contexts.

dsgnagnc.com

Lisa Sauv , AIA

she/her

Lisa is the CEO, Principal, and Co-founder at SYNECDOCHE, Visiting Faculty at Taubman College, and a small business and incremental development investor. With a love for equitable cities, Lisa is also a Planning Commissioner for the City of Ann Arbor and supports a community of creatives through interventions in the built environment such as pop-ups, murals, and causes.

Lora Teagarden, AIA

she/her

Lora is an architect at RATIO, the owner of L² Design, LLC, and the author of *ARE Sketches* and *The Little Architect's Alphabet*. She loves problem-solving in the built world and creating a better profession within which to do so. She wishes she was traveling more often than not, but typically can be found working on her house or relaxing with her wife and their pups.

 @L2DesignLLC

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L-2-Design.com

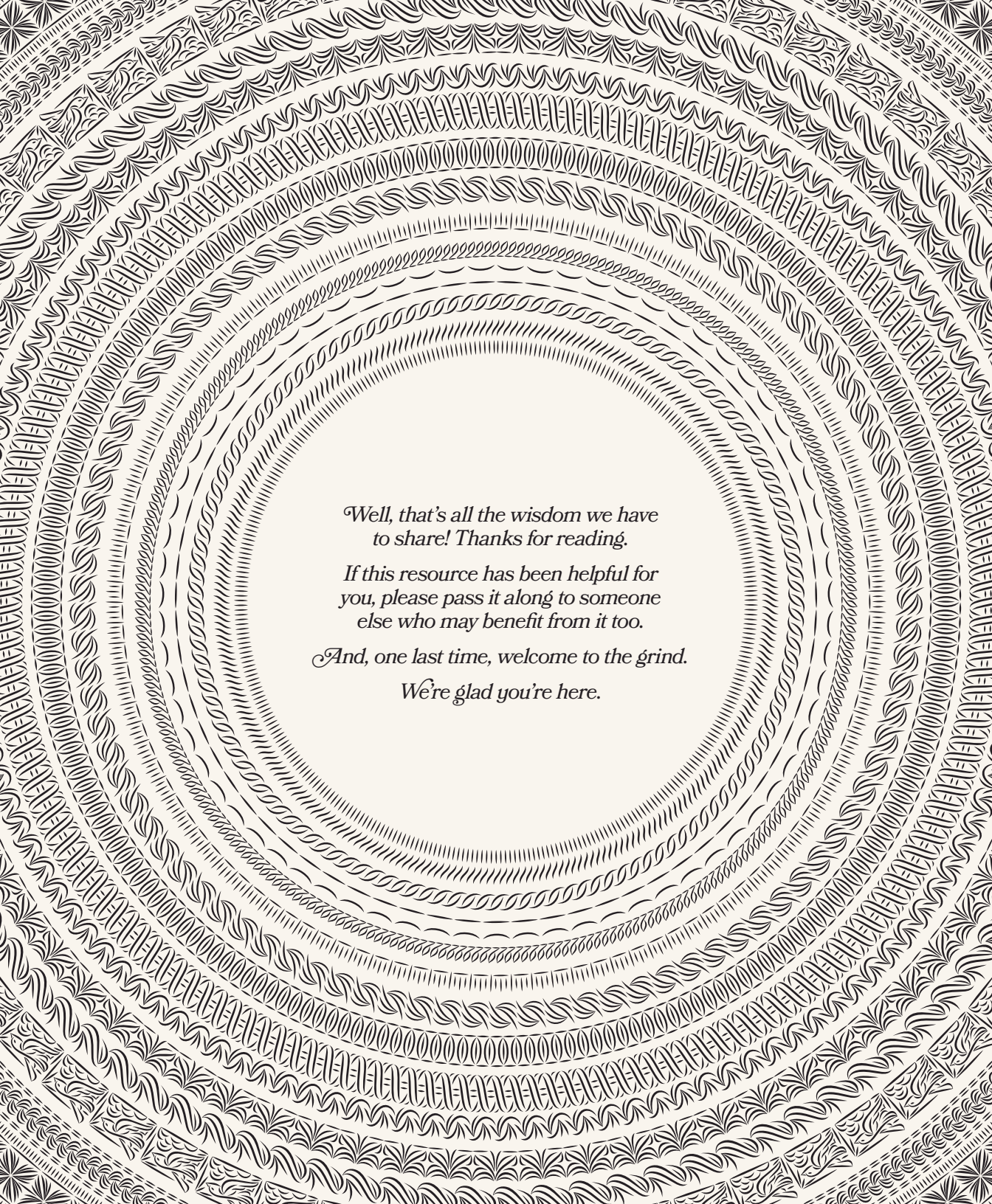
Chas Wiederhold

he/him

Started with wood blocks now thirty years and two degrees later Chas is three exams away from becoming a licensed architect. He plays wordle every morning while making himself a pourover coffee. He and his partner love home projects, bike rides, hikes, street festivals, traveling to forgotten places and meeting joyful people.

 @chaswied

 @chaswied



*Well, that's all the wisdom we have
to share! Thanks for reading.*

*If this resource has been helpful for
you, please pass it along to someone
else who may benefit from it too.*

And, one last time, welcome to the grind.

We're glad you're here.



Never stop grinding.

