

# BUILDING ON BUILDINGS

Art & Design Incubator at former Coca-Cola bottling plant, Houston, TX



Coca-Cola bottling plant, Houston, TX circa 1950

**WONNE ICKX / PRODUCTORA**

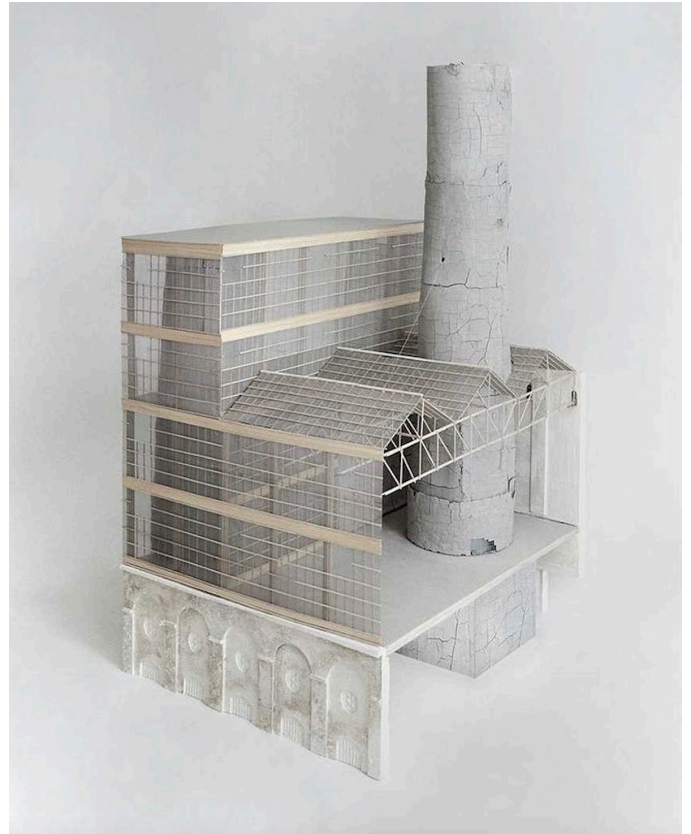
Mentor: Jared Payne  
GSAPP Advanced Studio VI - Spring 2022  
"Translator - Contingency"

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
NEW YORK

## BUILDING ON BUILDINGS

In pre-Hispanic cultures, pyramids were often built on top of another. Layer by layer the structures would grow, understanding that each building would at a certain moment be the foundation for a new work by a new dynasty. The Kukulcan pyramid at Chichen Itza in Mexico, for example, contains three layers: the inner pyramid is only 33 feet high and was realized between 600 and 800 AD. A second layer was constructed on top of that in 800-1000 AD, and the actual construction, also known as “El Castillo”, rises 79 feet and was realized after 1000 AD. The outcome is a massive structure that, like a Russian matryoshka doll contains several smaller versions of itself.

What happens if we would look at architecture, and at the cities we build, as just temporary iterations of built form? Adaptive reuse would no longer be only defined as the repurposing of abandoned historic structures into a new building, but we would understand also that ‘new building’ as the potential site for new construction and new adaptation. This idea resonates with the idea of a ‘circular building economy’ establishing a shift in thinking away from perceiving buildings as monoliths of permanence, but to become the repository for materials that will one day be re-appropriated for other purposes. The conservation of land (by continuously re-activating the same site) and the building as a material bank, will be two important factors to be implemented, underscoring the fact that every building is a temporary answer for temporary need.



Adaptive Re-use Sports Facility at the Old Truman Brewery, Spitalfields Unit 8, London, UK, 2021 / Oli Brenner

Students will work on the site of the former Coca-Cola bottling plant in Houston, Texas investigating the existing structures and the open space in between them. They will explore different possibilities to incorporate a 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> “Incubator for Arts and Design” on the site, while leaving a maximum of possibilities open for future developments. Students can repurpose existing buildings or build new structures.

Research into innovative adaptive reuse projects will help us understand different possibilities for the design task. The title of this studio “building on buildings”, does not only refer – in a literal sense - to the fact that we build on top of previous constructions, but also proposes an architectural thinking that learns from the past and distills lessons from previous building experiences. If architecture is embedded in history, how can we insert new narratives, ambitions and values into the established architectural practice & how can the past be included in the design for the future?



Chichén Itzá in the 1930's Photos: INAH

## HOW TO WORK BETTER.

1 DO ONE THING

AT A TIME

2 KNOW THE PROBLEM

3 LEARN TO LISTEN

4 LEARN TO ASK

QUESTIONS

5 DISTINGUISH SENSE

FROM NONSENSE

6 ACCEPT CHANGE

AS INEVITABLE

7 ADMIT MISTAKES

8 SAY IT SIMPLE

9 BE CALM

10 SMILE

19/36

From

David Green



## EXERCISE 01: HOW TO WORK BETTER

Students work individually.

This exercise is based on Fischli and Weiss's 10 point list "How to work better". Their mural was originally installed in 1991 near a commuter rail line in Zurich, Switzerland. The work is an adaptation of a list the artists saw displayed in a ceramics factory in Thailand. It displays a series of 10 statements ranging from pragmatic tips ("Learn to ask questions") to condescending instructions ("Smile").

Students will study reference projects of adaptive re-use (explain, draw, and summarize key project elements and design methodologies) and will distill out of these examples a list of "rules" applicable to different projects. At the end of this research period, each individual student will present an analysis of their reference project(s) and put forward their 10 point list (a understated manifesto) for adaptive reuse. These "How to work better" lists will be printed on vertical 24"x18" sheets of bond paper (desk crits can be done on tabloide).

The reference projects will be summarized / interpreted in vertical letter-sized pdf documents. Initial list of Reference Projects / Study Cases at the end of syllabus.



Peter Fischli David Weiss, "How To Work Better," Zurich, 1991

"How to Work Better" (1991) is a Manifesto comprising 10 persuasive but empty sentences, each with the aim of improving workplace productivity and morale... . Fischli/Weiss plucked these stock phrases from a factory in Thailand and painted them in large stencilled letters to cover the exterior of an office block in Oerlikon, Zurich, visible on the approach into the city centre by train from Zurich Airport."

- 1 Starchitecture is dead
- 2 New forms are no longer relevant
- 3 Preservation is architecture's saving retreat
- 4 Preservation creates relevance without new forms
- 5 Preservation is architecture's formless substitution

OMA's Preservation Manifesto via <https://www.arch.columbia.edu/books/reader/6-preservation-is-overtaking-us#reader-anchor-3>

### 1. LIST

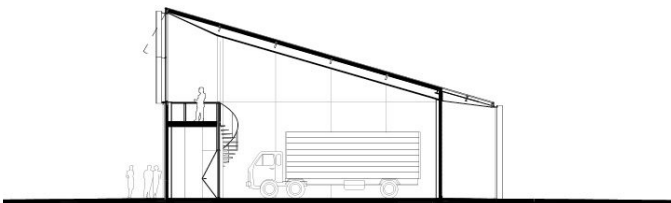
A list is a primitive form of intelligence. It produces a rapid and ephemeral structure out of chaotic facts, events and thoughts. It is a sequence of notations, following an order without the necessity of revealing its inner logics.

A list is almost nothing. It does not produce space. It is an open, cumulative system. According to Hugh of Saint Victor, a german theologist from the 11th century, in the face of chaos and flood, man can do only three things : a list, a map and an ark.

From: <http://www.list-oia.com/theoffice/> (Odo Aivissar)



## EXERCISE 02: ART & DESIGN INCUBATOR



Office KGDVS, Incubator, 2013 - 2016, Waregem, Belgium.

"The building will provide rentable working and production spaces for four young companies in various fields of work. The building is at once very 'box-like' and archetypical but also elegant and refined, to set an example of economy of means and public engagement."

Students work on their project in pairs.  
Exact deliverables to be defined in collaboration with students; but will include a (large) physical model.

### PROGRAM:

LARGE WORK SPACES:  
 $20 \times 100\text{m}^2 = 2000 \text{ m}^2$

SMALL WORK SPACES:  
 $50 \times 40\text{m}^2 = 2000 \text{ m}^2$

COMUNAL WORK SPACES:  
 $2 \times 200 \text{ m}^2 = 400 \text{ m}^2$

RETAIL & REST:  
 $5 \times 100 \text{ m}^2 = 500 \text{ m}^2$   
Restaurant :  $300 \text{ m}^2$

COLLECTIVE SPACES:  
Café / living (including reception) :  $1000 \text{ m}^2$   
Gallery:  $2000 \text{ m}^2$   
Offices:  $500 \text{ m}^2$

EDUCATION & COMUNICATION:  
Class rooms:  
 $5 \times 40\text{m}^2 = 200 \text{ m}^2$   
Auditorium (500 seats) =  $800 \text{ m}^2$

TOTAL:  $9,700 \text{ m}^2$   
This includes 25% of circulation, services, auxiliary (technical & mechanical) spaces.

## SITE:

### Former Coca-Cola Bottling Plant, Houston, TX



The lot on 2800 Bissonnet Street houses the former Coca-Cola bottling plant, designed by architecture and engineering firm Stone and Pitts from Beaumont, Texas. The innovative industrial building became an important reference project for many following bottling plants nation-wide and internationally.

The architects received a Meritorious Design Award by the Texas Society of Architects for the plant in 1950. The following year, 1951, the project also received a First Honor Award by the American Institute of Architects. The U.S. State Department selected it for a traveling exhibition entitled “Distinguished Contemporary American Buildings.” It was featured on the cover of the February issue of Architectural Record in 1951 and showcased as part of a lengthy illustrated article entitled “Industrial Buildings” (many of the historic images shown in this document are extracted from that edition).

One of the most characteristic features of Stone and Pitts’ main building facing Bissonnet Street was the strong dichotomy between the open glazed ground floor level and the limestone-clad upper level. The transparent lower level was not just simply repeating the modernist gimmick of transparency, but also established an experimental new relation between the industrial-mechanical interior of the building and the public realm. Visitors and passerby where encouraged to look into the building at the fascinating modern machinery ‘displayed’.



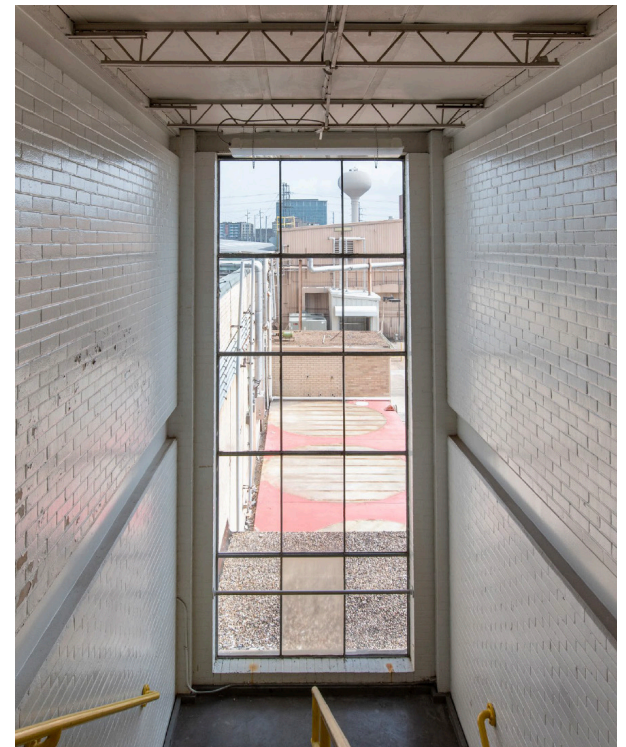
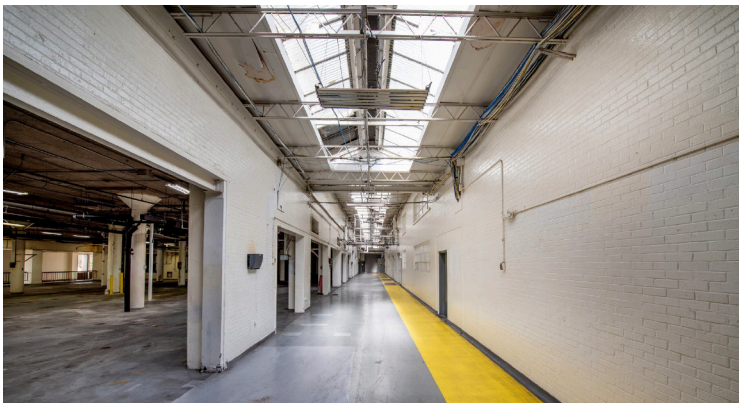
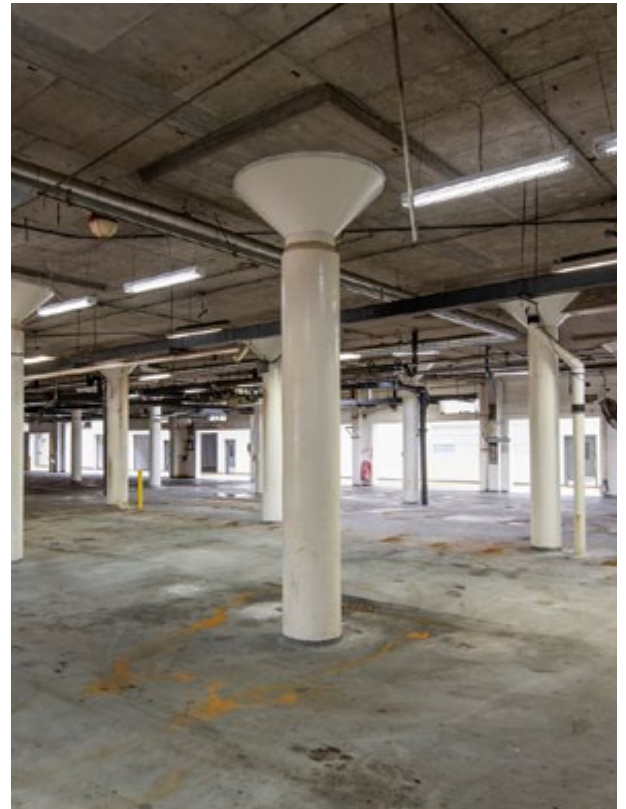
The image here above illustrates how the bottling plant was conceived from its start as a mechanism to show and exhibit the company’s leadership in technology: a large walkway is reserved for visitors, and the building is designed with a prominent public entrance.





Google Earth image of the site at 2800 Bissonnet Street, Houston, TX

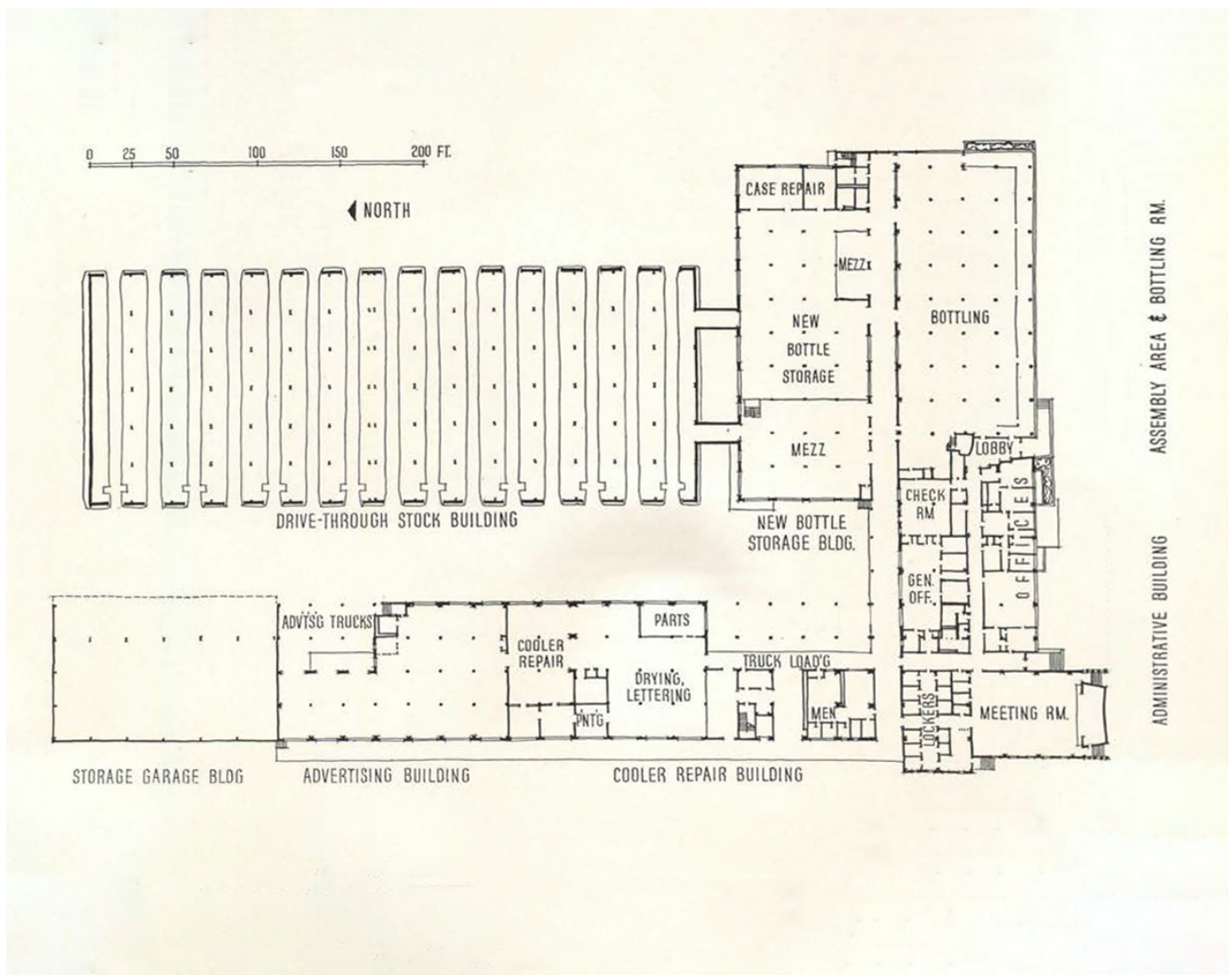




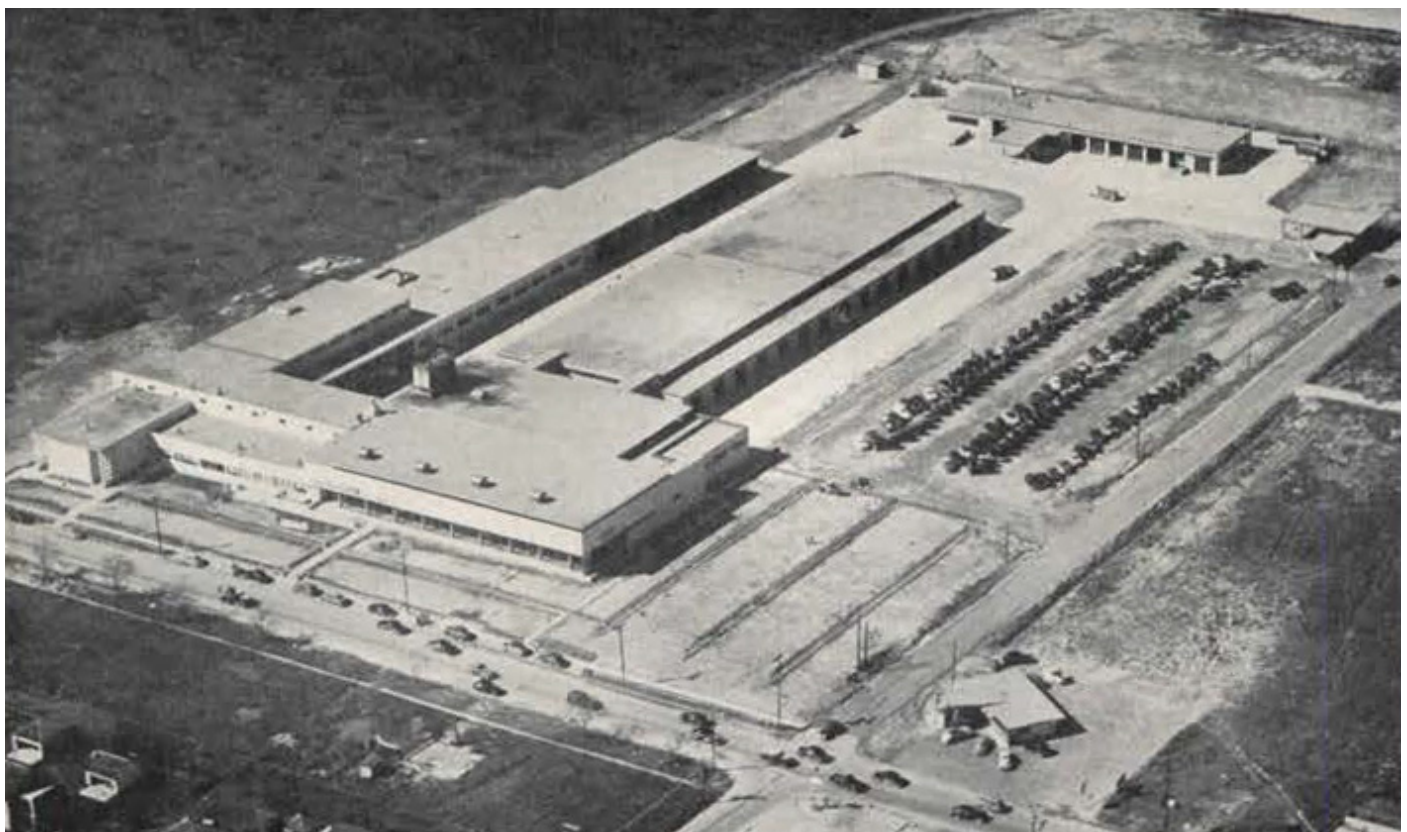
Current condition of former Coca-Cola bottling plant on 2800 Bissonnet Street, Houston, TX

**NOTE:** Thanks to Kirby Liu for providing us all digital files: historic documents and CAD survey, for the studio.

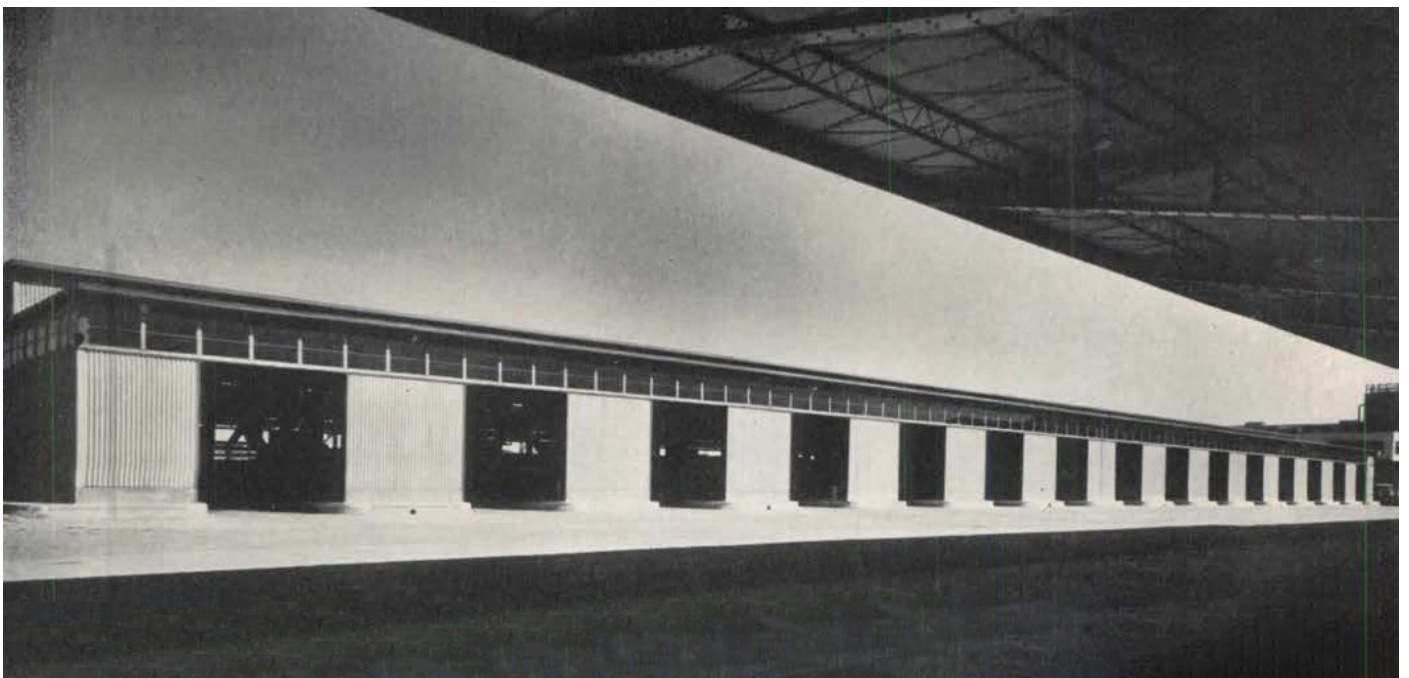
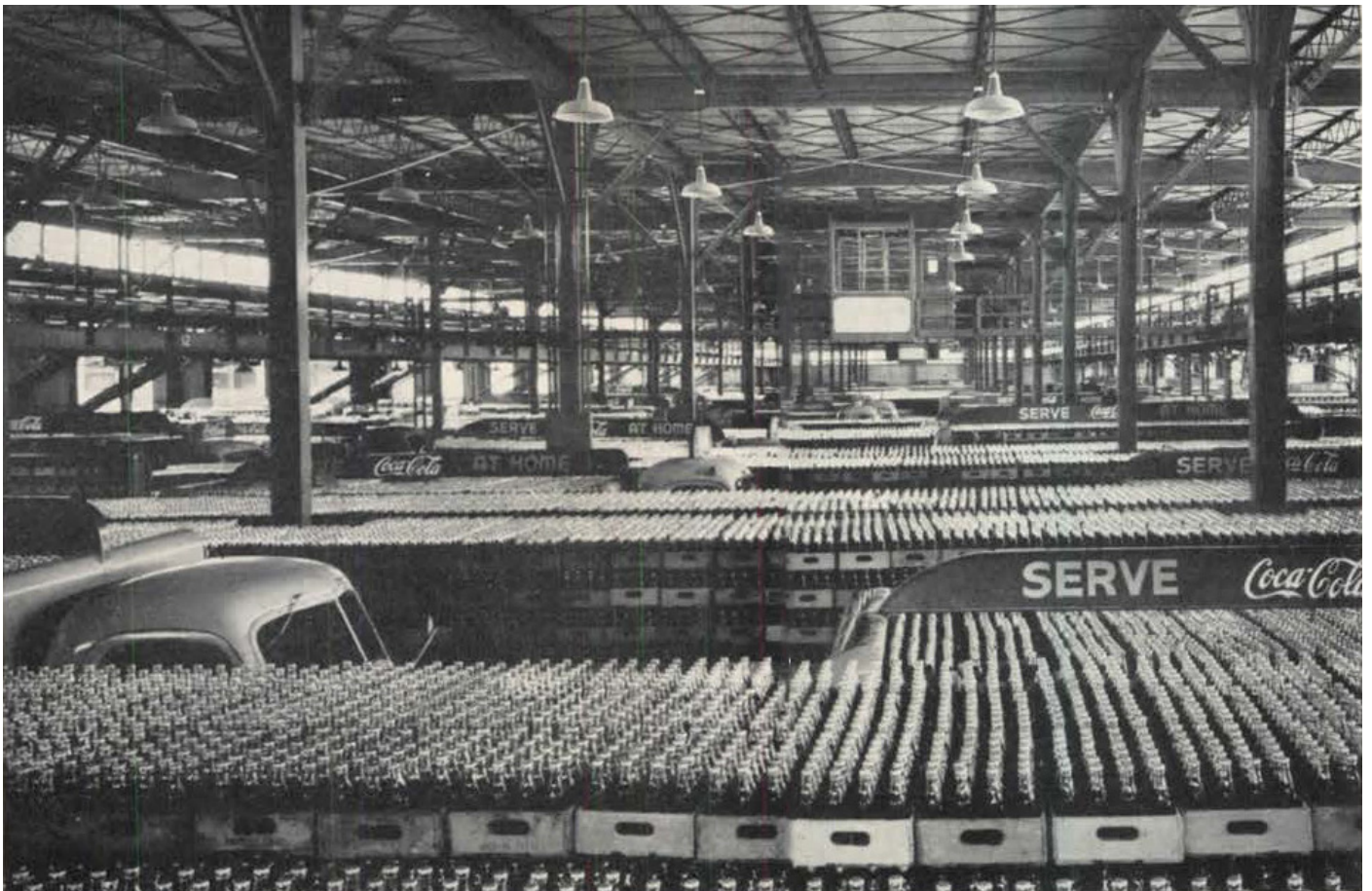




General distribution of buildings  
(From: Architectural Record 1951-2, p. 123)







The 1950's bottling plant pioneered a new system of loading and handling and became an important prototype for several plants constructed afterward. Its central feature was the "Drive-thru Building", a large industrial structure of corrugated asbestos panel walls, with 15 interior lanes where trucks disgorged empty bottle cases and loaded full ones with a minimum of manual handling. Conveyors would take the empty bottles overhead over the truck lines back to the different bottling stations.



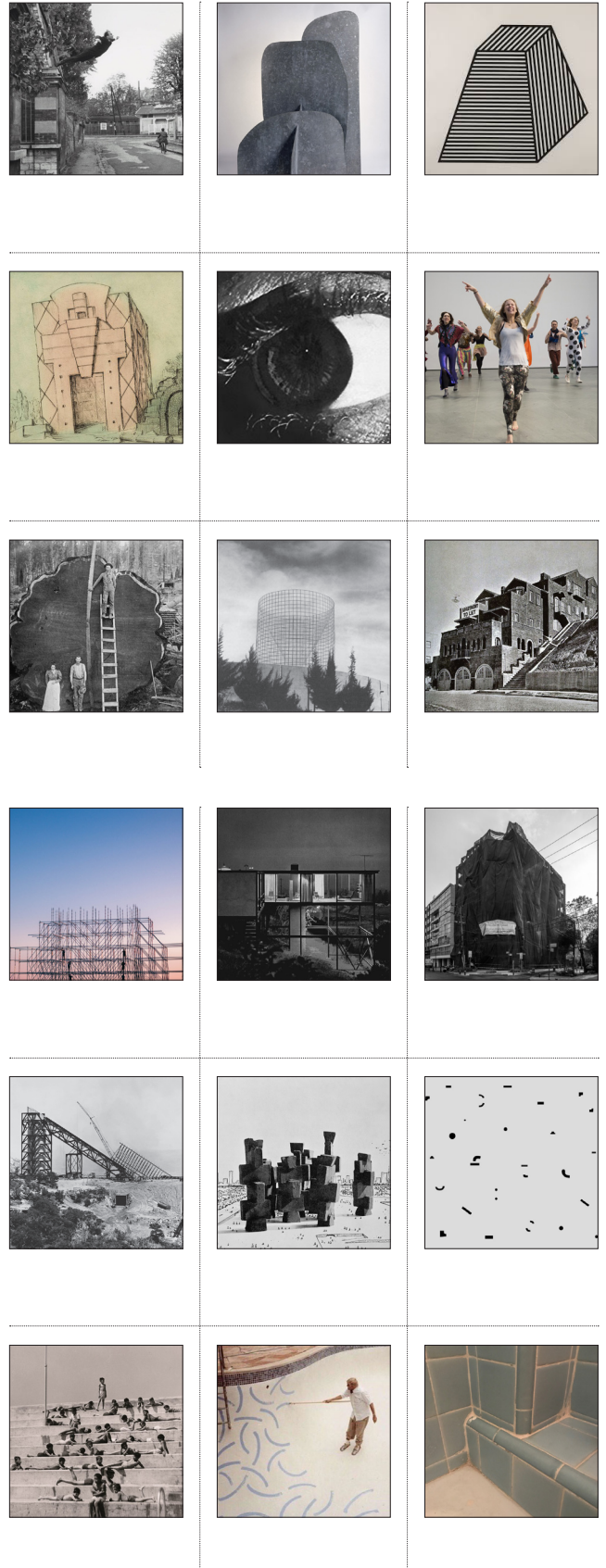
## DETOUR: play cards

Aleatory, the students are handed out 'play cards' with certain images (references) that can help to look at the site(s) through a detour. Students will be asked to produce a physical model that offers a reading of the bottling plant, based on the given play card: a spatial and volumetric proposal implemented on the site.

Although this exercise has a strong formal and compositional component, it is a first approximation to the final architectural problem stated in the final exercise. A first notion of program and mass (cubic square footage) will be incorporated. As in all different parts of this studio, the material investigation and material quality is crucial. The material choices for the models (plaster, concrete, wood, stone, cardboard, paint, paper ... ) will be imperative to indicate the proposed architectural quality of the existing buildings and its intervention.

Deliverables: all students will produce a well-defined physical study models, that will be photographed to include in presentation documents. Scale to be defined.

This exercise is loosely based on set of cards 'Oblique Strategies', a card-based method for promoting creativity jointly created by musician Brian Eno and multimedia artist Peter Schmidt, first published in 1975. Physically, it takes the form of a deck of 7-by-9-centimetre printed cards in a black box. Each card offers a challenging constraint intended to help artists (particularly musicians) break creative blocks by encouraging lateral thinking.



'Detour play cards' for studio assignments.

# TRAVEL - KINNE WEEK

## Houston, Texas

During KINNE week we will travel to Houston Texas where we will:

1. Visit the former Coca-Cola Bottling plant with Kirby Liu from Lovett Commercial, the actual owner of the site and buildings. We will be able to visit interiors and exteriors of the abandoned industrial complex.

2. Visit the recently inaugurated Houston POST, a new adaptive reuse by OMA. (We will also have a meeting with project architect Salome Nikuradze during the semester.)

3. Visit the Textile Mill artist spaces (Nonya Grenader, Houston, Texas, 2019)

4. Visit Project Row Houses.

“Project Row Houses occupies a significant footprint in Houston’s Historic Third Ward, one of the city’s oldest African-American neighborhoods. The site encompasses five city blocks and houses 39 structures that serve as home base to a variety of community enriching initiatives, art programs, and neighborhood development activities.”

5. Visit modern and contemporary architectural highlights in Houston, such as the Menil Foundation by Renzo Piano and the recently finished Nancy and Rich Kinder museum building, Museum of Fine Arts - Houston by Steven Holl.

Further details to be defined...



Houston POST, OMA, 2021



Project Row Houses,  
“The Project Row Houses model for art and social engagement applies not only to Houston, but also to diverse communities around the world.”

# CALENDAR

THIS IS A PRELIMINARY CALENDAR SUBJECT TO CHANGES (note / COVID : “For faculty, staff, and students involved in instructional activity, the first two weeks of classes for the spring 2022 semester will be conducted remotely.”)

**Wednesday January 19:** Studio Lottery

**Monday January 24:** START OF STUDIO

**Thursday January 27:** presentation reference projects and ‘lists’

**Monday January 31:** presentation reference projects and ‘lists’

**Wednesday February 2:**

**LECTURE Translator: Contingency**

**Thursday February 3:** Delivery of reference studies and “How to work better” lists.

**Monday February 7:** Masterplan  
via DETOUR - play cards

**Thursday February 10:** Masterplan - desk crits

**Monday February 14:** Talk by Albert Pope (Rice) on Houston, urbanism and environmental challenges.

**Wednesday February 16:**

**LECTURE Translator: Contingency**

**Thursday February 17:** desk crits

**Monday February 21: MIDTERM REVIEW**

**Thursday February 24:** no class

**Monday February 28:** feedback mid term review

**Thursday March 3:** Talk by Marta H. Wisniewska (Center for Sustainability + Circular Construction Lab at Cornell). Intro to a Circular Building Economy.

**March 7 – 11: KINNE WEEK / HOUSTON, TX**

March 14 & 17: SPRING BREAK

**Monday March 21:** desk crits

**Wednesday March 23:**

**LECTURE Translator: Contingency**

**Thursday March 24:** desk crits

**Monday March 28:** desk crits

**Thursday March 31:** desk crits

**Monday March 28:** desk crits

**Thursday March 31:** desk crits

**Monday April 4:** desk crits

**Wednesday April 6:**

**LECTURE Translator: Contingency**

**Thursday April 7:** desk crits

**Monday April 11:** desk crits

**Thursday April 14:** desk crits

**Monday April 18:** presentation review

**Thursday April 21:** desk crits

**Monday April 25:** desk crits

**Wednesday April 27: FINAL REVIEW**

HOURS:

Studio meets Mondays and Thursdays  
1:30 PM – 6:30 PM





Houston Coca-Cola Grand Opening 1950 -  
2800 Bissonnet - Photographer unknown

# References & readings

## REQUIRED READING:

- Preservation is Overtaking Us ; Rem Koolhaas, Jorge Otero-Pailos · Jordan Carver · Neil Donnelly , Stefan Thorsteinsson · GSAPP Transcripts · 2014 (<https://www.arch.columbia.edu/books/reader/6-preservation-is-overtaking-us>)
- “4. OMA’s Preservation Manifesto, Reconstructed from fragmentary evidence by Jorge Otero-Pailos”
- “5. Supplement to OMA’s Preservation Manifesto, Jorge Otero-Pailos”
- Architecture Without Urbanism, Albert Pope, 2021 <https://zoneresearch.medium.com/architecture-without-urbanism-3b8dfb1a98bb>

## OTHER:

### **On Houston:**

- POPE, Albert, “Ladders” (Architecture at Rice, 34), Princeton Architectural Press, 1997 / Especially review the (short) last chapter Mass Absence, which is a useful summary).
- [www.ricedesignalliance.org](http://www.ricedesignalliance.org)

### **On Adaptive Reuse:**

- Thinking Inside the box, Adaptive reuse takes on the big open spaces, Christof Spieler ([https://offcite.rice.edu/2010/03/ThinkingInsideTheBox\\_Spieler\\_Cite51.pdf](https://offcite.rice.edu/2010/03/ThinkingInsideTheBox_Spieler_Cite51.pdf))
- Wong, Liliane. 2017. Adaptive Reuse : Extending the Lives of Buildings. Basel: Birkhäuser.
- Bollack, Françoise Astorg. 2013. Old Buildings New Forms; New Directions in Architectural Transformations. The Monacelli Press.

### **Social Infrastructure:**

- Klinenberg, E. (2018). Palaces for the people: How social infrastructure can help fight inequality, polarization, and the decline of civic life. New York, NY, Crown

### **On circular building / circular economy:**

- Heisel, Felix, Caroline O’Donnell, and Dillon Pranger. 2020. “New Deconstruction: The Rebirth of a Circular Architecture.” In The Architecture of Waste: Design for a Circular Economy, ed. by O’Donnell + Pranger, , 191–204. New York City, USA: Routledge.
- Heisel, Felix. 2020. “Reuse and Recycling: Materializing a Circular Economy.” In The Materials Book, edited by Ilka Ruby and Andreas Ruby, 156–60. Berlin, Germany: Ruby Press.

# Reference Projects / Study Cases

## ADAPTIVE REUSE STUDY CASES:

- S.E.S.C. Pompeia, Lina Bo Bardi, Sao Paolo, Brazil, from 1977 to 1986
- ZIN (former WTC tower), 51N4E, Brussels, ongoing
- La Fábrica, Ricardo Bofill, 1973 (ongoing)
- S.E.S.C. 24 de Maio, Paulo Mendes da Rocha + MMBB, Sao Paolo, Brasil, 2018
- Rooftop Prim, PRODUCTORA, Mexico City 2020
- Tate Modern, Herzog & de Meuron, London, UK, 2000
- KANAL Centre Pompidou - Competition proposal, noAarchitecten (Brussels), EM2N (Zurich) and Sergison Bates architects (London), Brussels, Belgium, 2018
- Raven Row Gallery, 6a Architects, London, UK, 2009
- Fondazione Prada, OMA, Milano, Italy, 2015
- Gasometer City, Vienna, Austria
- Atocha Station, Moneo, Madrid, Spain, 1984-1992
- Caixa Forum, Herzog & de Meuron, Madrid, Spain, 2008
- Garage, OMA, Moscow, Russia, 2011-15
- Matadero, Madrid, Spain, different architects, 2005
- Centro Nave, Smiljan Radic, Santiago, Chile, 2015
- FRAC Nord-Pas de Calais, Lacaton & Vassal, Dunkerque, France, 2013-2015
- Failed Whitney Breuer Museum Extensions by OMA, Graves and Piano (See: Supplement to OMA's Preservation Manifesto, Jorge Otero-Pailos)
- Mosque - Cathedral in Cordoba (See also: Supplement to OMA's Preservation Manifesto, Jorge Otero-Pailos)
- Margo Leavin Graduate Art Studios, Johnston MarkLee, Los Angeles, CA, 2019
- Sala Becket, Flores y Pratts, Barcelona, 2017
- Palais de Tokyo, Paris, Lacaton & Vassal, 2002
- Museo di Castelvecchio, Carlo Scarpa, Verona, Italy, 1956-1964
- PC Caritas, architecten de vylder vinck taillieu, Melle (Ghent), Belgium, 2016
- Public Space in Can Ribas, Jaime J.Ferrer, Palma de Mallorca, 2011

## **References Adaptive Re-use Houston:**

- Textile Mill, Nonya Grenader, Houston, Texas, 2019
- Post Office, OMA / Jason Long, Houston Texas, 2021
- Dan Flavin, Richmond Hall, The Menil Collection, 1996 (used to be a grocery store).
- Segundo Coffee Lab, UltraBarrio!, at Houston's East End's Ironworks (<https://segundocoffeelab.com>)
- Restaurant Vibrant, Lake Flato, Montrose - Houston (adapted from a 1960s cleaners)
- Sawyer Yards ([www.sawyeryards.com](http://www.sawyeryards.com))
- M-K-T by Michael Hsu (Developer Steve Radom)
- 3201 Allen by Perkins&Will (Steve Radom)



# Wonne Ickx

## PRODUCTORA - LIGA

Wonne Ickx (Antwerp, 1974) studied civil engineering and architecture at the University of Ghent, Belgium and the ETSAM in Madrid, Spain. He continued his studies with a Master's degree in Urban Studies from the Centre for Metropolitan Studies (CEMET) at the University of Guadalajara, Mexico. In 2006, he founded PRODUCTORA in Mexico City, together with Abel Perles, Carlos Bedoya, and Victor Jaime. PRODUCTORA has received many awards for their work, including the Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize for Emerging Architects and the Oscar Niemeyer Prize for Latin American Architecture. Amongst the many publications of the office, their first monograph by Arquine (2010) and the 2G monograph (2014) stand out. They recently published *Being The Mountain*, a book on the relation between modern architecture and topography with ACTAR and IIT.

Wonne Ickx has taught architecture and urbanism at several universities in Mexico, as well as Harvard-GSD, IIT, UCLA, Rice and Princeton. He is founding director of LIGA, Space for Architecture, an independent platform that, since 2011, stimulates an interchange of ideas and investigation on contemporary Latin American architecture in Mexico City. He has been part of Arquine's editorial board since 2010, is an AIA International Associate, and serves on the Board of Directors at the Architectural League of NY.

[www.productora-df.com.mx](http://www.productora-df.com.mx)  
[ww.liga-df.com](http://ww.liga-df.com)



From above to below: PRODUCTORA, Rooftop Prim , 2020 (intervention on the rooftop of an early twentieth-century palace in Downtown Mexico City) / PRODUCTORA + Isaac Broid< Teopanzolco Cultural Center, Cuernavaca , 2017 / PRODUCTORA, La laguna, ongoing & under construction (adaptive re-use of a former textile factory, Mexico City) / PRODUCTORA + PALMA, Pílares, under construction, social infrastructure for Mexico City

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