

# King Kong Manhattan

Advance 6 – New York

Columbia University  
GSAPP  
New York  
Spring 2022

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# KING KONG MANHATTAN

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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY – GSAPP

ADVI STUDIO

Spring 2022

## A New Manhattan

This ADVI studio will challenge formulations of kinship and speculate on new systems for care, taking Manhattan as a laboratory.

The conflictive and outdated distinction between productive and reproductive labor, its spaces and the bodies that carry them out, have perpetuated social asymmetries based on gender, class, race, age, and body conformity. Space -and by extension architecture and the city- are not neutral and have been extensively used to empower gender binaries and heteropatriarchal behaviors, neglecting wider realities. In a moment of systemic change, this studio will analyze how society defines and regulates bodies through the built environment.

Architecture has played a big role within heteropatriarchal societies, in establishing social norms and behaviors, and defining, under the umbrella of an alleged “normality”, a disciplinary system deeply biased and unequal. In particular, the archetype of the home (and its related ideas around public and private realms), have been essential in the creation of gendered relationships within domestic and social spheres. Its development throughout the past two centuries has reinforced social asymmetries which are especially recognizable when analyzing how care labor is defined, mostly unregulated or undervalued.

The US Census Bureau data of the actual domestic legal workforce in New York City shows that 94% of workers are women, among them 38% are Hispanic/Latinx, 27% are Black (non-Hispanic/Latinx) and 18% are Asian. And their median annual income is extremely low compared to all other workers, \$21,320 versus \$51,250.



# THE BARBIE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

DEAR CITIZENS:  
THE BARBIE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION  
(B.L.O.) IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PERFORMING  
CORRECTIVE SURGERY ON HUNDREDS OF  
TEEN TALK™ BARBIE™ DOLLS WHICH ARE  
NOW BEING PURCHASED AT STORES NEAR YOU

RE OUR SURGEONS PERFORMED THE  
IONS, TEEN TALK™ BARBIE™ DOLLS WERE  
IMMED TO SUBTLY BRAINWASH YOUNG GIRLS  
ES THEY SPEAK INDOCTRINATE YOUNG MINDS  
M OF BELIEFS AND VALUES THAT SEEKS TO  
MEN AND PROVIDE THEM WITH LESS  
AN MEN. THE DOLLS ENFORCE  
STUNT THE GROWTH OF  
HT.

ERY, THE DOLLS ARE ART.  
NEW, IMPROVED BARBIE.  
NOW HAS TO SAY.

PHRASES SPOKEN INCLUDE:

BEFORE:  
"MY DESK IS A MESS"  
"LET'S PLAN MY DREAM WEDDING!"  
"WHAT'S YOUR DREAM SHOPPING  
TRIP?"  
"MY SCHOOL CLOTHES ARE HOT!"  
"CHEERLEADING IS FUN!"  
"DON'T YOU LOVE NEW CLOTHES?"  
"KEN'S SUCH A DREAM!"  
"KEN'S A GREAT DANCER!"

AFTER:  
"NO ESCAPE FOR THE GUILTY!"  
"VENGEANCE IS MINE."  
"MUTANTS MUST PERISH."  
"YOU SHALL PERISH."  
"FIRE! FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!"  
"DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES."  
"ALSO: FAIRING, BELCHING,  
AND MACHINE GUN SOULS."

Paying attention to the history of care practices and their effect on both bodies and architecture, can not only reveal how the relationship between space and gender has evolved alongside social and economic systems, but also provide critical entry points to reimagine the present.

Marx characterized the transition from feudalism to capitalism as a process of primitive accumulation: the progressive concentration of land and the emergence of the independent worker. But, as Silvia Federici recalls, the transformation from feudalism to capitalism not only required the transformation of the body into wage earner—a free laborer, independent from the land and predisposed with his own means of production—but also the submission of women for the reproduction of the workforce.

In this sense, primitive accumulation required not only the accumulation of goods, but also the accumulation of differences and divisions within the working class, in which hierarchies built on gender, race, and age become constitutive of the proletariat and society at large. Amidst this process, and in the image of it, the idea of the heteronormative home was gradually built, dividing and progressively separating the productive workspaces occupied mostly by men from the spaces of domestic reproduction, occupied mostly by women.

Today, however, we are aware that distinction was an artificial construction that basically denied the production (and economic force) of part of the society. And beyond grounding ourselves in histories of exploitation and oppression, the actual raising queer social reality is already using the city and understanding former architectures differently. Programmatically speaking, thanks to the atomization of devices and the increasing demand for non-biased services and spaces, on both urban and domestic scales, different uses and functions have begun to merge. The house is no longer just a space for care, instead, it is a transient, productive, and networked space that can—and must—answer to an ambiguous reality. As Paul B. Preciado has recently claimed:

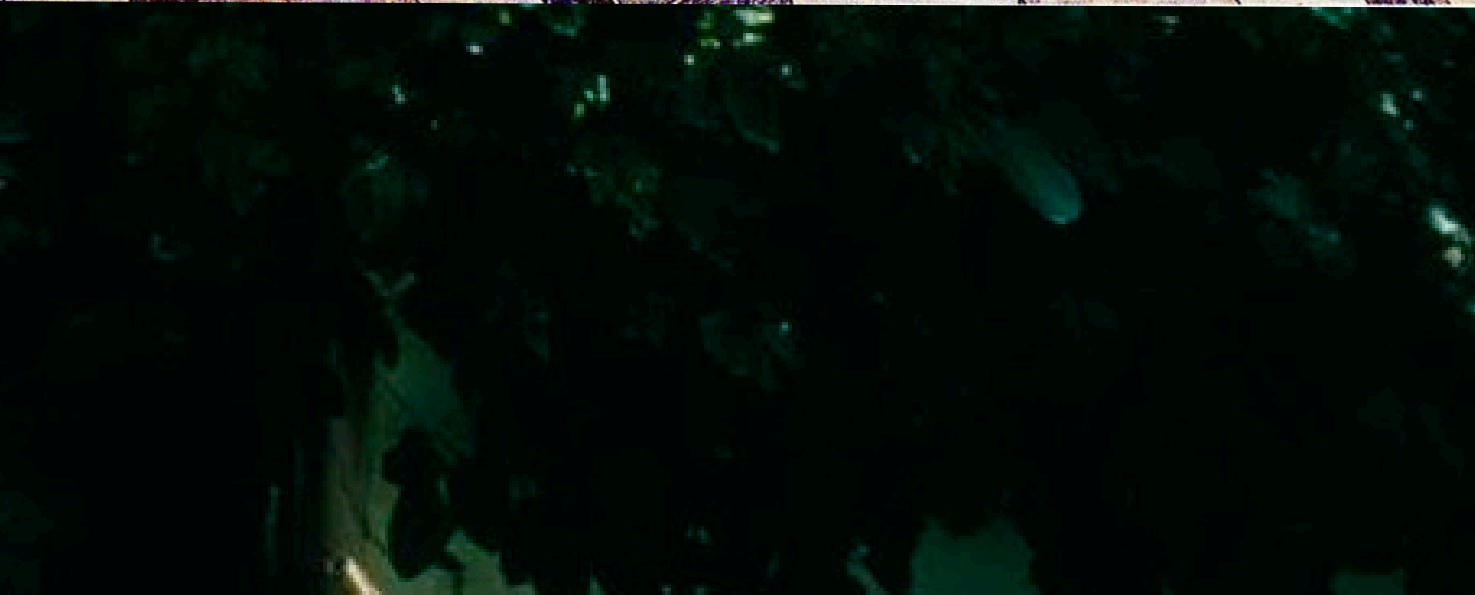
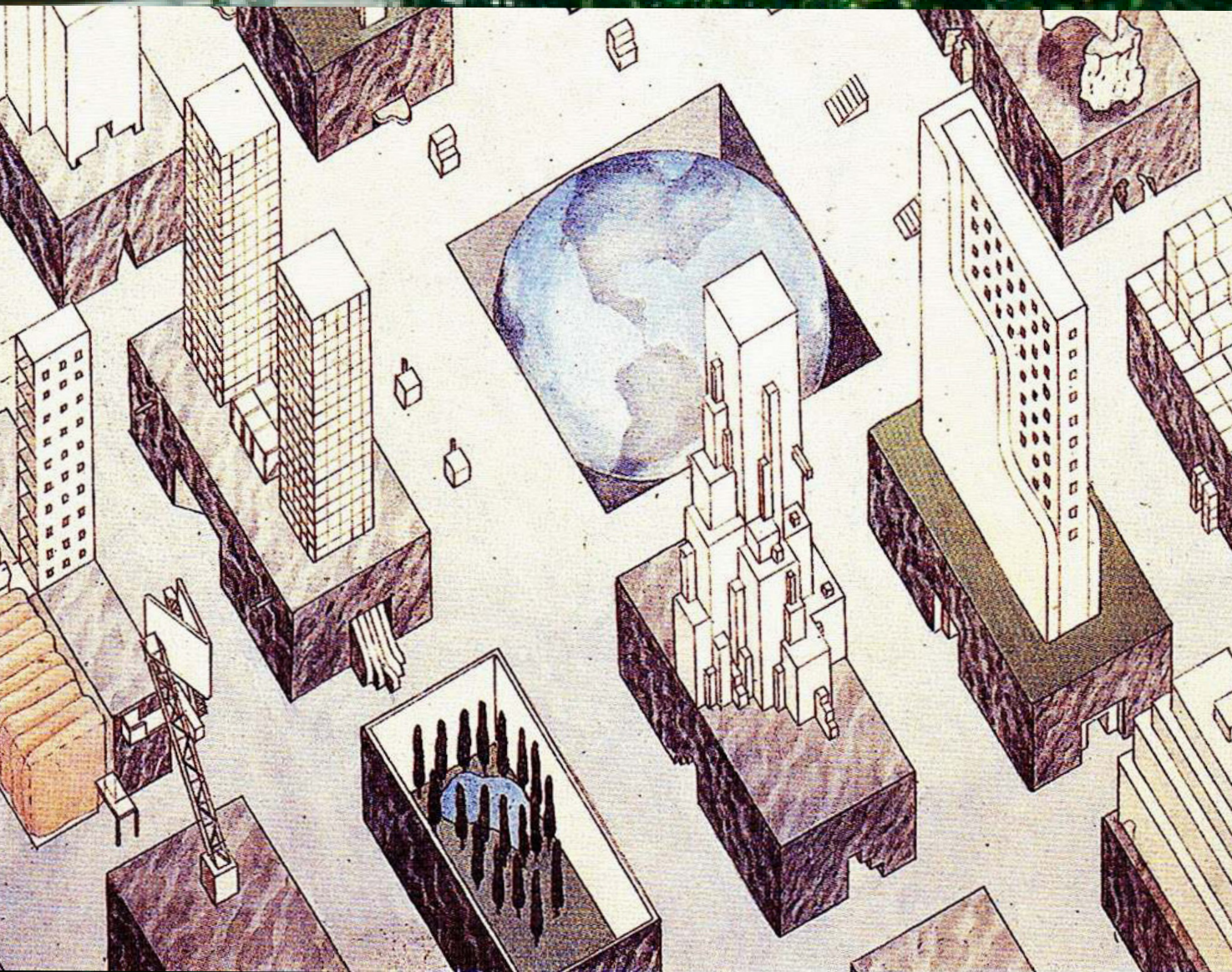
*‘Well before the appearance of Covid-19, a process of global mutation was already underway—we were undergoing social and political changes as profound as those that transpired in early modernity. We are still in the throes of the transition from a written to a cyber-oral society, from an industrial to an immaterial economy, from*

*a form of disciplinary and architectural control to forms of microprosthetic and media-cybernetic control.'*

The nature of the house and the city today is cybernetic and queer, and the former classification between productive and reproductive labor, the spaces it takes place within, and the bodies that carry it out, are once again being reshaped and redefined.

In certain circumstances, this realignment can contribute to generate new forms of rebalance. But we also have to be aware that it might only make further visible the precarity upon which daily life depends. As Mark Fisher states, capitalism has always been able to engulf any kind of opposition or difference, and the fact that caring has become a central topic in our consumerist lifestyle is actually a symptom of the complex extractive logic of late capitalism and its superproduction and commodification of affects. Our role is to remain critical and envision forms of resistance.





## STUDIO TASKS

Studying a fragment of the actual Manhattan grid as a starting point for an architectural proposal, we will imagine -departing from its minimal unit, the block or parts of it- urban forms and architectures that provide alternative living realities in which disruptive values, new kinships and commonalities are set for the collective good.

The actual build form of the island mostly responds to two historical moments: the 1811 Commisioner's Plan and the 1916 Zoning Law. If the Commisioner's Plan was defined in order to set public control and regulation on the streets, and avoid private owner's to define streets within their properties without public jurisdiction, the 1916 Zoning Law regulated the maximum height and form of the build mass as well as enclosed program in order to assure proper light and ventilation among properties and avoid annoyances between urban uses. One was a way of controlling the space of circulation and infrastructure, the other one was a hygienic procedure. Both stablished authority and constraints, probably now something else is needed. As Jack Halberstam claims in his book *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender and the End of Normal*:

*'the "existing conditions" under which the building blocks of human identity were imagined and cemented in the last century—what we call gender, sex, race, and class—have changed so radically that new life can be glimpsed ahead. Our task is not to shape this new life into identifiable and comforting forms, not to "know" this "newness" in advance, but rather, as Nietzsche suggests, to impose upon the categorical chaos and crisis that surrounds us only as much regularity and form as our practical needs require.'*

Responding to that approach, the students will be asked to dismantle the preexistent providing openings that allow new relations to emerge and ways of caring. Recalling also the famous Audre Lorde lecture's title 'Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House', the students will be asked to come up with new ways of producing the island of Manhattan that don't reproduce former process of categorization and normativization. The otherness, the wildness, the diverse, the complex, the queer, the unpractical will be paths to explore. Instead of a city run by infrastructure and real state control, we will imagine a city formalized mainly on care practices and complex social bonds.

## METHODOLOGY

1. The studio will start with an immersion in the studio topics.
2. Each student or group of students will start working with a specific point of interest responding to the syllabus. This point of interest will grow in the form of a research.
3. In parallel, each student or group of students will explore and experiment new ways of architectural representation, able to express queer architectural realities while dismantling preset communication systems. Mixing types of architectural representation, both analog and digital, will be encouraged.
4. Each student or group of students will select a group of Manhattan urban blocks to dismantle.
5. From this point onwards, research and design will start to blur in a complex entanglement.
6. During the semester, the studio will host weekly a lecture, or a conversation, or a visit (online or/and in person) around the challenges addressed in this syllabus.

## LOGISTICS

Working in pairs is preferable, but students will have the option to work individually.

The studio will be mostly run in person. In general, we will host collective sessions, lectures, open conversations, walks, visits, pin-ups on Thursdays. And individual crits on Mondays.

## DUE DATES

February 25th Mid Term Review, 1:30pm-6:30pm, 408 & 409 Avery  
April 27th Final Review, 9am-1pm, Ware Lounge

## KINNETRIP

We will travel to Phoenix and Los Angeles to visit actual and past experimental living proposals. We will follow the path of some of the social utopias described by Dolores Hayden in her book *The Grand Domestic Revolution* as the colony Llano del Rio, and paired these historical cases with ongoing alternative communities as A-Z Enterprise run by Andrea Zittel. We will mainly visit failed -and some of them extremely conflictive- cases as Schindler Chase House, Biosphere 2, Arcosanti or Taliesin West. We will learn from the wrong, the unsuccessful, the deficient, the malfunctions,... and take those as possible design references.



## SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

Mondays and Thursdays 1:30pm-6:30pm

### Week 1

Architecture Pavillion Charrette  
TH Jan 21st First meeting and  
introduction

### Week 2

Architecture Pavillion Charrette  
TH Jan 27th Site visit

### Week 3

M Jan 31st Individual desk crits + Reading  
discussion  
TH Feb 3rd Collective model pin up +  
Guest lecture (tbc)

### Week 4

M Feb 7th Individual desk crits  
TH Feb 10th Visit to the exhibition:  
Revolution, Fulfill Your Promise! at Amant  
Foundation

### Week 5

M Feb 14th Individual desk crits  
TH Feb 17th Collective model + drawings  
pin up

### Week 6

M Feb 21st MidTerm Review rehearsal  
F Feb 25th MIDTERM REVIEW + Lecture  
Dora García at Amant Foundation

### Week 7

M Feb 28th Collective pin up  
F March 3rd Trip warm up session

### Week 8

KINNEWEEK (trip to Phoenix and Los  
Angeles)

### Week 9

SPRING BREAK

### Week 10

M March 21st Individual desk crits  
TH March 24th Collective pin up

### Week 11

M March 28th Individual desk crits  
TH March 31st Collective pin up

### Week 12

M April 4th Individual desk crits  
TH April 7th Collective pin up

### Week 13

M March 11th Individual desk crits  
TH April 14th Collective pin up

### Week 14

M April 18th FinalTerm Review rehearsal

### Week 15

W April 27th FINAL TERM REVIEW

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