

Full Brief / **Building Habits: Learning from the Everyday**

Design 4 / ARCHDES201 / Semester 2 2025 / Oliver Ray-Chaudhuri

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Indiana Avenue, Venice, California, 1979-80 by Frank Gehry, Photograph by Johan Dehlin. From Emerson, Tom. *Dirty Old River*. Zurich: Park Books, 2025.

PEPEHA

Oliver Ray-Chaudhuri is a designer and researcher from Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. He graduated from Waipapa Taumata Rau University of Auckland in 2024 with a Master of Architecture (Prof) and Heritage Conservation. He is interested in methods of making use of existing buildings through alternative representational techniques and the experimental application of preservation theory. He teaches at UoA's Te Pare School of Architecture and Planning, researches spatial practice with Side Walk and is co-editor of Bypass Journal. He practises architecture with Studio Precht + W10 Architects.

TOPIC

This studio asks, how can we harness the 'life' of the everyday to re-animate a building at risk of becoming obsolete? It considers how the routines of daily life – its processes and material systems – might provide a model for habits of building defined by the incremental adaptation of the existing.

Not assuming architecture

The world is on fire, and architecture has a lot to answer for. By now the environmental burden of constructing and operating buildings is well known, and the important work of decarbonising architecture is well under way. 'Sustainability,' measured in newly optimised materials, certificates and green stars, is quickly becoming non-negotiable in the design of new buildings.

While minimising the environmental impact of architecture through the development of technological solutions is essential, green buildings alone will not alleviate the burden of our industry on the planet. We must challenge the very assumption of 'new' that perpetuates endlessly wasteful cycles of demolition, extraction and reconstruction. Such a shift is not just a technical concern, but a theoretical, methodological and aesthetic one too, which requires rethinking the very processes and systems involved in making and living in buildings.

Working with what we have

Building from scratch is a habit we must no longer take for granted, and so this paper proposes working with the existing wherever possible. In starting from what is already there, we are compelled to turn our attention to the richness of life in a building after its supposed completion.

The design and construction of a new building (particularly one planned by an architect) is a privilege granted only to a select few, and so most of us have to make do with the buildings that already exist. As our lives change, we adapt our spaces depending on the means available to us: rearranging furniture, applying a new layer of paint, repairing a leaky gutter, knocking two rooms into one or perhaps adding another out the back. The home is never finished, but continually constructed through the gradual accumulation of everyday life.

Domestic timber vernacular

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the perpetual alteration of the home is frequently defined by the timber framing from which much of our suburbs are fabricated. The ubiquity of the NZS3604 construction system and the relative ease of adaptation and addition it provides enables our residential environments to expand, contract and evolve with the rhythm of domestic life.

Unlike more 'enduring' materials such as stone and concrete, whose eventual deterioration confounds their apparent immutability, we never expect timber to last forever. The timber frames of suburbia (often most captivating before they are sealed away in the final acts of 'completion') are treated in preservatives and enveloped in layers of building paper, foil and plasterboard. Homeowners are quickly initiated into the cycles of care (cleaning, staining and painting) required to maintain the structure and defer damage and decay.

Care through use

This studio suggests that these everyday routines can provide a model for an alternate culture of construction grounded in care and incremental adaptation. We will explore how the cycles of care, maintenance and adjustment that define both domestic life and Aotearoa's timber-frame residential vernacular might help us practice methods of (re)use. How can we develop better habits for making buildings that do not assume the new?

Our work will be grounded in an understanding that *use* is the best way to protect buildings from the peril of obsolescence. We will foster (through walking, photography and 3D scanning) a careful attention to an existing site – its use, misuse and records of change – and then turn these observational skills onto our own everyday routines.

Throughout the semester we will 'occupy' the site gradually through layers of increasing scale and complexity. Our architecture will accumulate across time, beginning with the domestic routines of the individual; expanding these to support the communal; before introducing an additional layer of work or community. How can ordinary NZS3604 timber-frame systems enable the extraordinary?

The existing

Our site is in the Grafton / Eden Terrace area, a near-square planned brick building, two floors to the street and three behind, with a small retail unit extending out the front. It is old, but not heritage listed; ordinary, but distinguished by its patches of colour and boarded up windows. Its current occupation is uncertain: from the outside it seems dormant, but on closer inspection there are signs of life: rubbish bins pulled out to the kerb, curtains closed or drawn and, after knocking on the door, a resident who, although reserved, has given us permission to inspect the building from the outside. The area is in the midst of change, with the continued expansion of the inner city and imminent opening of the City Rail Link.

Outside, an invitation of sorts: "OPEN FOR REPAIR WORK".



Our site: 81 Mount Eden Road

METHOD / METHOD

Collective research

We will seek to foster and maintain a community of like-minded designers and researchers, both within the studio group and with those invited to contribute from the wider profession. While each student will produce their own design project, we will emphasise the collective sharing of resources, knowledge and ideas.

Incremental design

The paper is structured into a series of six parts, which will guide us through a process of design tasks of increasing scale and complexity. While at a macro level the paper will follow the typical design progression of site research, concept, developed and detailed design, in practice the boundaries between these stages will blur. We will begin a cyclical process of design and review early, and continue to engage with the site throughout the semester.

Production as process

In the same way that our design will accumulate gradually, our media practices will be defined by an attitude of incremental construction. We will seek to ease the burden of producing 'final' drawings and models by developing these gradually, starting with a representation of the existing and then adding onto this throughout the semester.

We will celebrate and take care in our process, not in expectation of perfection but to extract as much value from each task as possible. Frequent reviews will represent an opportunity to share our work-in-progress in a conversational and mutually productive manner. The requirements and format of output will be clearly defined, not for the sake of homogeneity but rather to ease the paralysis of choice and to heighten the different approaches and nuances of each design project.

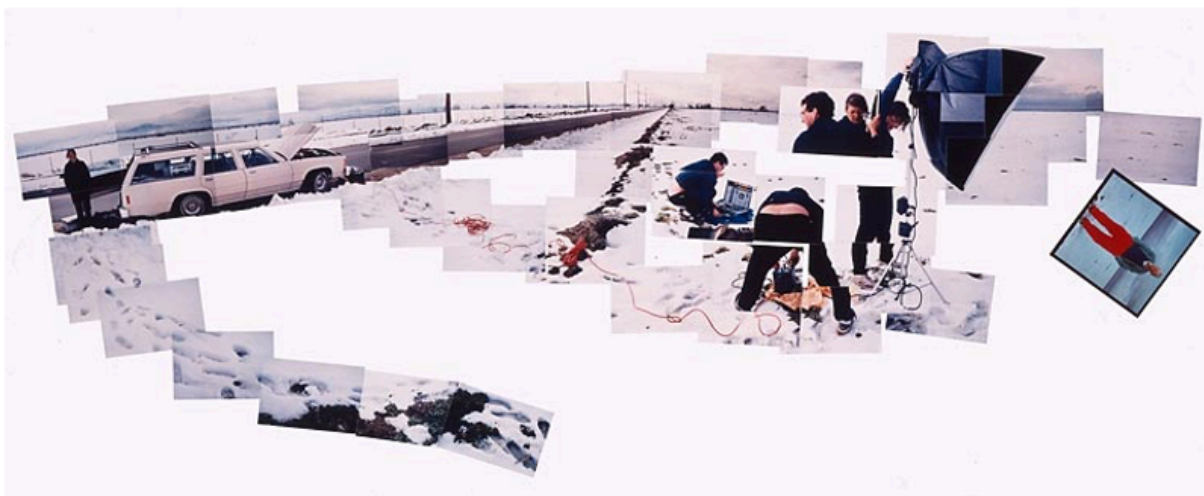
Consistency and communication

The process and tasks will be clearly communicated via canvas and the class page, with descriptions of the work that is expected to be produced for each part. Requests for further clarification about the tasks (in class or via email) are welcome. Any changes to these expectations will be conveyed as clearly and promptly as possible.

Students who gain the most from this design paper will engage consistently and openly with its content and activities. You are expected to participate in every tutorial unless this is not possible for reasons beyond your control. If you are unable to attend class, please communicate this promptly so we can work together to get you back on track. Attending class when possible, even if you feel that your work is incomplete or insufficient, is better in the long run than not attending at all. Extensions are available if extenuating circumstances have disrupted your ability to engage fully with the course content.

Drawing the existing

We will explore how a careful attention to site through a range of media (photography, collage, drawing and 3D scanning) can assist in understanding the existing and imagining a plethora of future possibilities. Taking our time in representing what is already there gives us the space to notice things that we otherwise might not and allows us to recognise the ways the building has changed (and continues to do so) since it was built. We will start from a collective base and then work individually using the drawing methods and mediums that resonate with us.



Photographing Annie Leibovitz While She is Photographing Me, Mojave Desert, 1983 by David Hockney

SCHEDULE

WEEK	EVENT	
	Tuesday	Friday
1	21.07.25 · Studio selection 22.07.25 · Introduction to the Paper, each other and key methods	25.07.25 · Timber Workshop: Stool
2	29.07.25 · Introduction to Part 1: Constructing Site · Site Visit: Eden Terrace	01.08.25 · Part 1 / Pin up and Discussion · Introduction to Part 2: Learning from the Everyday
3	05.08.25 · Part 2 Part 3: Inhabiting Site / Pin up and Discussion	08.08.25 · Timber Workshop: Stair
4	12.08.25 · Part 3 / Table Review · Introduction to Part 4: Inside Out	15.08.25 · Timber Workshop: Timber
5	19.08.25 · Part 4 / Development	22.08.25 · Timber Workshop: Timber
6	26.08.25 · Mid Semester Review	29.08.25 · Introduction to Part 5: Sharing Space
mid-semester break		
7	16.09.25 · Part 5: Sharing Space / Pin up and Discussion	19.09.25 · Timber Workshop: Stool
8	23.09.25 · Part 5 / Development	26.09.25 · Section
9	30.09.25 · Part 5 / Table Review · Introduction to Part 6: Beyond the Domestic	03.10.25 · Part 6 / Development
10	07.10.25 · Part 6 / Development	10.10.25 · Part 6 / Development
11	14.10.25 · Part 6 / Final Presentation preparation	17.10.25 · Part 6 / Final Presentation preparation
12	21.10.25 · Final Review	

STRUCTURE

Part 1: Constructing Site / *Familiarise ourselves with and represent an existing site.*

- (Collectively) 1x digital point cloud model from photogrammetry
- (Collectively) 3x 1:50 plans of existing building
- (Collectively) 2x 1:50 sections of existing building
- (Individually) 1x 'Field journal' of photographs and/or sketches from site

Part 2: Learning from the Everyday / *Observe and represent a personal everyday routine.*

1x photographic collage
1x 1:50 'partial' plan

Part 3: Inhabiting Site / *Insert into the existing building the spaces required for your everyday routine from Part 2.* Total approx. 25-30m². 1-2 Floors.

All work from previous parts +
1-2x 1:50 plan/s
1x key perspective: collage / isometric drawing

Part 4: Inside Out / *Expand your partial inhabitation of the site to fulfil all of the foundational needs of domestic space, and make a first attempt at bridging the gap between private/public or indoor/outdoor space.* Total approx. 70-80m². 1-2 Floors.

All work from previous parts +
1-2x 1:50 plan/s
1x 1:50 section
1x 1:20 model of key space / intersection
1x key perspective: collage / isometric drawing

Part 5: Sharing Space / *Extend and alter the space of the individual to accommodate a collective and develop the private/public or indoor/outdoor connection.* Total approx. 130-140m². 2-3 Floors.

All work from previous parts +
2-3x 1:50 plan/s
1-2x 1:50 section/s
2x key perspectives: collage / isometric drawing

Part 6: Beyond the Domestic / *Alter and extend your domestic intervention to fulfil an additional function beyond the domestic: for work, business or community. Consider how the domestic and (semi) public relate.* Total approx. 200-250m². 2-3 floors.

All work from previous parts +
2-3x 1:50 plan/s
2x 1:50 section/s
3x key perspectives: collage / isometric drawing
1x 1:20 model of key space

RECOMMENDED READING

Brand, Stewart. *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.

Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Johnson-Schlee, Sam. "Room of one's own." *Architectural Review*, no. 1497 (2022): 6-13.

Malterre-Barthes, Charlotte. *A Moratorium on New Construction*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2025.

Material Cultures. *Material Reform*. London: MACK, 2022.

Mattern, Shannon. "Maintenance and Care." *Places Journal*. Accessed May 5, 2023.
<https://placesjournal.org/article/maintenance-and-care/#0>

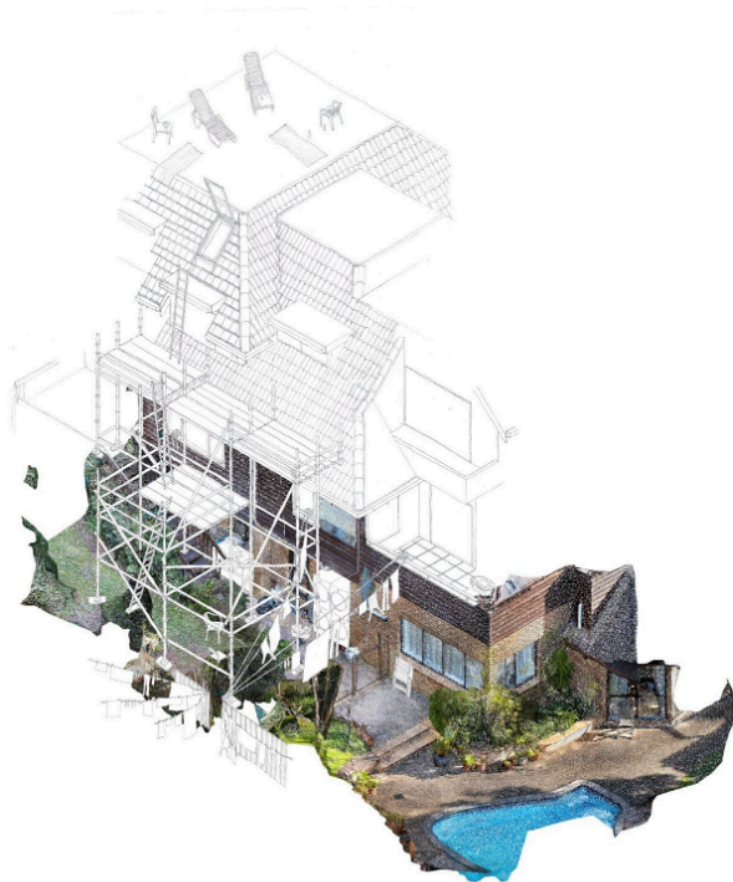
Scott, Fred. *On Altering Architecture*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Siza, Alvaro. "Living in a House." In *Alvaro Siza: Complete Works*, edited by Kenneth Frampton, 252. London: Phaidon, 2000.

Till, Jeremy. "Thick Time." In *Intersections*, edited by Iain Borden and Jane Rendell, 156-183. London: Routledge, 2000.

Treadwell, Sarah. "From the Margins of Architecture: An Account of Domesticity." In *New Dreamland: Writing New Zealand Architecture*, edited by Douglas Lloyd Jenkins, 284-297. Auckland: Godwit, 2005.

Wigglesworth, Sarah and Jeremy Till. "The Everyday and Architecture." *Architectural Design* 68, no. 2 (1998): 6-9.



We repair the roof, watch the sunrise by Oliver Ray-Chaudhuri, 2023