YONSEI STUDIO-X (Architectural Design Studio 3&5)

Unit 2 by Joon Ma

Seoul Raising



Aldo Van Eyck, playgrounds

Unit Master:

마준혁은 one-aftr의 공동 설립자이자 건축가, 교육자이다. Davidson College에서 인류학 학사학위를, Princeton University에서 건축학 석사학위를 받았으며, 석사 논문으로 Suzanne Kolarik Underwood Prize를 수상했다. OMA/AMO에서 실무 경험을 쌓았고, 2018년 두바이 엑스포 한국관 국제공모 파이널리스트, 오스트리아 비엔나 마스터플랜 국제공모 준우승 등 다양한 수상 이력을 보유하고 있다. 그의 글은 *Rumor* (Princeton), *Paprika!* (Yale), *POOL* (UCLA) 등 건축 저널에 게재되었다. 현재 연세대학교 Studio-X 겸임교수로 재직 중이며, 이전에는 Syracuse University와 서울대학교에서 TSK Teaching Fellow로 강의했다.

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Overview:

“Collective Form” once belonged to an age of optimism. In the mid-twentieth century, Fumihiko Maki described it as the reconciliation of individual buildings into a civic whole, while Aldo van Eyck pursued it through Amsterdam’s playgrounds, stitching childhood into the fabric of the postwar city. Their visions were shaped by expansion—new housing, infrastructures, civic ensembles. Architecture was asked to build more, to give shape to growth.

Our horizon is different. Today, collective form emerges not from expansion but from erosion: the thinning of commons under pressures of density, climate, and demographic change. Outdoor spaces overheat. Childcare retreats indoors. Apartment towers promise security yet isolate daily life. The city’s youngest residents are often left with residual spaces—parking lots, leftover courtyards, air-conditioned interiors. Collective life is no longer organized through the permanence of plazas, but through fragile improvisations: shade cast by a wall, a cooled underpass, a



widened corridor where a stroller can pause.

This studio reframes collective form through the lens of children and care. Under the title Seoul Raising, we will investigate how the contemporary Korean city supports—or fails to support—the act of raising a child. Rather than proposing monumental public works, students will identify overlooked sites—apartment interstices, overheated schoolyards, infrastructural voids, ground-floor thresholds—and imagine how they might become spaces of gathering, play, and shared responsibility.

If collective form today is improvised in the gaps left by what has been worn away, then children make those gaps visible. To design for them is not to add a playground as an object, but to recalibrate the city’s micro-climates, thresholds, and rhythms of care. The studio asks: Can collective form be rebuilt through small, precise interventions? Can architecture transform the ordinary spaces of Seoul into environments where raising a child becomes a shared civic act?



CONTEXT:

Seoul today offers a landscape defined less by growth than by erosion. The city is dense to the point of suffocation, its outdoor commons overheated or surrendered to privatization. Playgrounds sit empty in summer heat, childcare disperses indoors, and residual fragments of markets, motels, and underused streets reveal the fragility of civic space. These conditions are not unique to Seoul, but they are acutely legible here, where pressures of climate, economy, and demographic decline intersect.

Rather than treat erosion as decline, this studio approaches it as a field of design. Students will read collective form not as the monumental ensemble of Maki's optimism, but as the fragile and provisional architectures of care that emerge in absence—shade structures improvised between buildings, furniture that doubles as gathering space, streets reclaimed through temporary occupation. By working with what remains, the studio asks how architects can transform conditions of erosion into sites of collective resilience.

DOMAINS OF INVESTIGATION:

In designing, we will explore our projects through thermal, structural, material, and programmatic articulations.

Thermal
Erosion often appears as an environmental condition: overheated playgrounds, shaded alleys, courtyards that cool only at night. We will treat thermal qualities not as technical afterthoughts but as drivers of collective form. How can shade, airflow, or microclimates sustain care in the absence of larger infrastructures? Students will design with thermal zones as primary architectural tools.

Programmatic
In eroded commons, program is rarely fixed. A vacant market may become a playground, a stair a gathering space, a street a site of improvised care. We will approach program as provisional and adaptive, asking how architecture can support activities that emerge from necessity rather than prescription.

Structural
Structure will be studied not only for permanence but for fragility and adaptability. How might a beam, frame, or joint enable provisional occupation, support collective use, or bend with erosion rather than resist it? Structural decisions will be explored as both constraints and opportunities for soft, resilient forms.

Material
Material choice will be examined for its capacity to carry traces of erosion, to be reused, and to support provisional infrastructures. We will investigate both functional and expressive properties — from lightness and adaptability to weathering and repair — to imagine architectures that hold together collective life without abundance.



Learning From Las Vegas - Denise Scott Brown


Cineroleum - Assemble


Apollo School - Herman Hertzberger

METHODOLOGY

The studio is structured around three recurring modes of inquiry—Survey, Prototype, Application—which together frame design as both research and invention. Over the course of a year, these phases are distributed across two semesters, moving from intimate material scales to the civic horizon.

1. Survey

In the Survey phase, we will read, observe, and analyze to understand both the historical and contemporary contexts in which we will operate.

Seoul, Unclaimed
During the first weeks, we will conduct fieldwork across Seoul to identify and document unclaimed or vacant spaces, with particular attention to children's patterns of occupation in the city. Students will develop methods of observation and documentation—drawing, mapping, thermal readings, behavioral tracing, photographic surveys. The objective is to identify latent sites that can be transformed into childspace.

Survey of Care
We will examine both traditional and contemporary forms of childcare. Where do children spend most of their time? How is their environment regulated—thermally, atmospherically, socially? Students will document how children's bodies are protected and mediated through mechanical systems (HVAC, insulation), architectural devices (screens, thresholds, shading), and even sartorial systems (clothing, layering). This survey frames care not only as a social practice but as a spatial and climatic system.

Architecture Survey
We will engage climate-responsive architecture historically and critically—from traditional glasshouses and ondol systems to contemporary adaptive envelopes. Students will examine why climatization has often been relegated to engineering rather than architecture, consider its political and economic implications when governed by market forces, and identify architectural opportunities for re-integrating atmospheric control into spatial design. Findings from all survey tracks will be compiled into a collective research booklet.

Deliverable: Collective Research Booklet

2. Prototype

Following the Survey phase, students will develop a Prototype synthesizing insights from both vernacular and contemporary strategies.

The goal is not to replicate traditional systems, but to reinterpret and enhance them using current materials, fabrication methods, and technologies.

Students will investigate building materials, passive systems, HVAC infrastructure, and emerging environmental technologies to propose refined climate-adaptation mechanisms. Representational techniques developed during the Survey phase will be used to visualize atmospheric performance—heat, humidity, airflow, occupation.

Deliverable: Full-scale model + Technical Report

3. Application

In the final Application phase, students will deploy their Prototype within an Unclaimed Seoul site identified during the Survey. This phase examines how climate-responsive strategies operate within real urban conditions—negotiating program, regulation, daily life, and environmental variability. Students will test how architecture can function not only as enclosure or form, but as an active mediator between bodies, climate, and care. The Application phase challenges students to reconsider architecture as an indispensable atmospheric infrastructure within the city.

Deliverable: Architectural Proposal


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Course Structure

The studio work will be done in pairs.

Evaluation

Attendance/Participation/Design production for studio meetings: 10%
Survey : 20%
Prototype: 20%
Final Review: 50%

Attendance

Students must be present and work in studio during studio hours. Students are also expected to be present during all the reviews and pin-ups. Email the instructor as soon as possible if you cannot attend due to illness or excused absences. Absences from studio meetings and reviews will affect the final grade, and three or more unexcused absences will result in course failure.

Participation

Apart from the final outcome of the reviews and assignments, student's effort, participation and evolution during the semester will be taken into account for the final grade.

Design Production

Students are expected to revise their work for each session in response to earlier feedback from the instructors. Consult with the instructor if you need additional assistance in progressing the work. Failure to make revisions will affect the final grade.

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Unit 지원자들에게 알림

저와 함께 2026년, 우리 사회가 필요로 하는 건축적 지식은 무엇인지, 그리고 어떤 관점에서 건축적 기회를 발견하고 확장해 나갈 수 있을지 고민해보고 싶은 학생들을 환영합니다. 저의 어젠다를 전달하기보다는, 각자의 질문을 함께 발전시키고 생각을 함께 만들어가는 스튜디오입니다.

멋진 결과물을 만드는 것 또한 중요하지만, 그보다 더 중요한 것은 동시대에 의미를 갖는 작업을 만드는 일이라 믿습니다. 스스로에게 질문을 던지고, 그 질문을 끝까지 밀어붙여보고 싶은 학생이라면 이 스튜디오가 좋은 출발점이 될 것입니다.

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