It is true that architecture depends on facts, but its real field of activity is in the realm of significance.

— Mies van der Rohe, “Architecture and Technology” (1950)
STUDENTS:  
(ED4): Genevieve Joyal, Yurichorong Seo, Steven Gairns  
(M1): Candice Lui, Henry Tufts; (M2): Rhayne Vermette, Yi Zhou

Lisa Landrum

Probing significant depths.  
Musing with significant breadth.  
Figuring forth situations of significance.

This studio began with students materially and spatially probing the real and illusory depths of compositionally complex paintings, including Henri Matisse’s *The Window* (1916), Edouard Vuillard’s *Interior* (1902) and Raoul Dufy’s *The Artist’s Studio* (1935).  Through multi-scalar models and inhabitable constructions, students interpreted the significant depths and qualities of these suggestive spaces, especially exploring the apparent contradictions that nevertheless become complementary—as when walls merge into floors, when ethereal light becomes as palatable as furnishings, and as when distant phenomena serve to define something near.

The students traveled to New York City as part of field trip where they were encouraged to find material, spatial and qualitative contradictions akin to those they discovered in the paintings and their work.  While in New York we visited select museums, architectural sites and civic institutions, thus beginning to develop interests that would lead to specific program proposals.  Finally, the students chose building sites around the Bowery—an area of lower Manhattan possessing its own peculiar variety of complementary contradictions.  Upon returning to Winnipeg, students initiated designs growing out of their own interests, ongoing interpretive research, and specific urban experiences.

The studio theme of “complementary contradictions”—which is as ethical as it is aesthetic—is intended to put the presumed autonomy of architecture into question, in part, by admitting that contradictions ought to be understood and mediated not overcome or avoided; and, in part, by accepting that architecture gains meaning and influence through its engagement with diverse conditions extending well beyond it.  This theme arose from reflections upon the writings of select architects, architectural theorists and historians; from my experience working as an architect in New York City; and from my own inquiry into the implicit drama of architecture and architectural work.

It seems to me just as difficult to paint the spaces between as the things themselves.  The space between seems to me to be as essential an element as what they call the object.  The subject matter consists precisely of the relationship between these objects and between the object and the intervening spaces.  How can I say what the picture is of when relationships are always things that change?  What counts is this transformation.

— Georges Braque
Henry Tufts, SITUATED READINGS: SITTING IN THE CITY IN THE STUDIO. Reconstructing Matisse’s Window by deconstructing and reconfiguring a chair, this project explored complementary contradictions between working in studio, sitting in light and becoming situated in the world.
Working through multiple study models, the project studied corporeal sitting positions and urban-architectural juxtapositions for an tight L-shaped site in lower Manhattan.
Henry Tufts, A PLACE FOR SLEEPING & READING: BOWERY HOSTEL AND TRAVELLER'S LIBRARY. All phases of design development were informed by multi-scalar modeling and complementary connections between contradictory spaces, such as individual reading spaces and busy public gathering spaces; intimate sleeping nooks and urban courtyards, sleeping and studying, becoming lost and oriented.
Steven Gairns. Beginning with studies of interpenetrating conditions of light and material, nature and artifice, expansive exteriors and intimate interiors (as in Vuillard’s 1902 Interior), this project created a miniature theatre for staging such subtly dramatic interactions.
Extending explorations to New York City (and studies of Starn’s ‘Big Bamboo’), the design focused on blurring boundaries of natural and built conditions.
Steven Gairns, URBAN GARDEN. Sited at the intersection of Houston Street and Second Avenue in lower Manhattan, the proposed building design continued to seek unexpected connections: between the below-grade subway lines (and a proposed sunken garden) and dense residential blocks (and proposed vertical climbing walls).
An indoor-outdoor yoga studio and other amenities for healthy urban living fill the site, while extending and inventing interconnected green pathways through the neighborhood.