

Between History and Modernity

Architecture Touching Base with Humanity

Tutors:

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Participants:

5 Exchange Students + 5 Tongji University Students

Studio Period:

March 2 – March 27, 2026
and May 11 – June 12, 2026

Schedule:

Tuesday 9:00–12:00 & Thursday 13:30–16:50

Studio Location:

To be determined

First Meeting:

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

Introduction

In recent years, China has articulated a vision for its global affairs summarized by the phrase:

“Building a community with a shared future for mankind.”

This phrase expresses the role the country seeks to play in the international community, framing a long-term understanding of collective human destiny.

Parallel to this geopolitical vision, China has embraced **artificial intelligence** as a key driver of modernity. In 2023, it introduced legislation regulating generative AI, signaling that algorithms are not neutral tools but **societal forces shaping governance, labor, knowledge, and perception**. Alongside energy transition, ecological civilization, digital infrastructure, smart manufacturing, and urbanization as system design, AI has become central in **structuring contemporary modernity**.

This studio explores the role of architecture positioned **between historical vision and technological modernity**—a modernity that is rapidly redefining society, human agency, and purpose, while challenging the very frameworks through which we inhabit and interpret space.



Architecture as Finding Measure

Over centuries, architecture has earned the status of embodying **balance and order**, becoming a metaphor for world order itself. No other human activity:

- integrates as many parameters of life,
- allows as many human and natural dimensions to coexist,
- synthesizes them into a single decisive act: the creation and framing of situations in which life unfolds,
- organizes life in space and time with proportion and measure.

Architecture reconciles, combines, and synthesizes virtually everything that exists. Most importantly, it **translates intention into reality**. Since time immemorial, architecture has been a key vehicle of human agency.

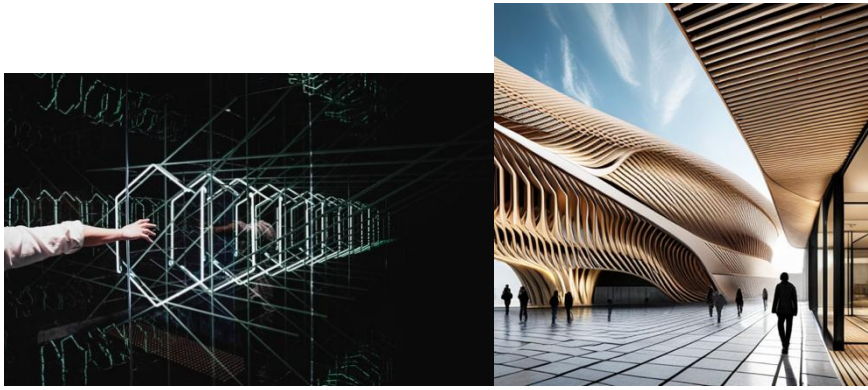
Architecture is not merely a professional service—it is **the medium through which humanity touches base with itself**. Its enduring relevance explains why architecture has been crucial for so long, and continues to matter in the age of AI and beyond.

The Stake of Architecture

Architecture has always acted as a mediator between **purpose and progress**, between **meaning and technology**. It has repeatedly proven capable of shaping a balance between long-term intention and short-term innovation.

Where technologies and algorithms tend to **optimize, accelerate, and abstract**, architecture **situates, materializes, and humanizes**. It translates abstract systems into **lived experience**. Architecture gives meaning.

The question this studio raises is: **how can architecture continue to fulfill this mediating role in the age of AI**, preserving human-centered measure while engaging with algorithmic logics?



Foundations of Architecture and Humanity

To explore architecture's role in defining humanity today, we must return to its foundational dimensions, ranging from primal experiences in human infancy to the most sophisticated theoretical constructs:

1. **House** — the sense of home
2. **Language** — the structure of our communication
3. **Streets** — the fabric of our social connections
4. **City** — the urban identity to which we belong
5. **Journey** — the appreciation of difference
6. **Making Habitat** — the nature of our building resources and methodologies
7. **Mastery** — the highest standards of making
8. **Discourse** — the concepts through which architecture is communicated

Each of these foundations is now **profoundly reshaped by AI and algorithmic modernity**. Algorithms influence communication, design, construction, spatial perception, and even the temporality of human experience. Understanding these transformations is essential for any architectural practice aiming to **retain human-centered measure and meaning**.

Pedagogical Structure

Part I — Eight Lessons: Reading the Present

The studio begins with **eight analytical lessons** assessing the contemporary condition through the eight foundations above.

These lessons examine how architecture, as the foundation of civilization, is affected by the AI revolution and how it continues to **produce meaning, order, and legibility in space and time**.

Part II — Eight Lessons: Designing Architectural Bi-Cycle Journeys

Building on this analytical foundation, the studio proceeds with **eight design lessons** focused on developing **three architectural cycling experiences (cycles architecturales)** in the new era:

- **Campus Scale** — exploring movement, learning, and social experience through designed sequences
- **Shanghai Scale** — the metropolis as an algorithmic and architectural ecosystem
- **National Scale** — spatial narratives linking identity, landscape, and spirituality

These trips are conceived as **spatial narratives connecting architecture, cognition, movement, technology, and collective identity across scales.**

Key Words

Architecture and humanity · Measure and balance · AI and algorithms · Modernity · Space and time · Narrative · Scale · Design as mediation