

Perceptual Space

(English version)

Spring 2026 “Thematic Design Studio IV”

Li Dehua-Luo Xiaowei Design Chair, Department of Architecture, Tongji University

Invited Design Firm: Snøhetta

Design Theme: Perceptual Space

Co-Teaching Team:

Robert Greenwood, Partner and Asia-Pacific Director, Snøhetta

Martin Gran, Managing Director, Snøhetta Foundation

Gong Cheng, China Director, Snøhetta

Tan Zheng, Associate Professor, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University

Jacopo Benedetti, Assistant Professor, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University

Jiang Jiawei, Assistant Professor, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University

Language: English

Time: 13:30-17:00, Thursdays

Introduction

Under the title “Sensing Space,” the studio seeks to cultivate embodied spatial literacy while linking architectural education to issues of educational equity, access, and cultural continuity. This semester-long course approaches space as something we sense and negotiate with our bodies—not merely something we draw. Integrating the Sensing Space educational program with Snøhetta’s design methodology, the studio challenges students to work on a single site and develop a three-part program. The overarching goal is to explore how architecture can strengthen learning, culture, and community. The site for this semester is a Shanghai riverfront location anchored by a reclaimed artifact lifted from the riverbed—an object that bridges past, present, and future. Students will investigate how this artifact can inspire new forms of learning, storytelling, and public experience, transforming the river’s edge into a place of memory and renewal.

This studio reflects the co-teaching team’s commitment to shaping environments that foster identity, memory, and community—while inspiring the next generation of architects to think beyond form and function

About Snøhetta

Snøhetta is a transdisciplinary, dialogue-driven practice including architecture, landscape architecture, interior architecture, product design and art, often integrating a combination of interests across projects. From its inception in Norway in 1989, Snøhetta's approach has been framed by environmental and cultural sensitivity, inspired by the Brundtland Commission's UN report on sustainability, released in 1987. Representing different cultures, Snøhetta has more than 320 employees from 40 nations across seven regional studios spanning from Oslo to New York to Innsbruck, Paris, Melbourne, Hong Kong, and Shenzhen.

Snøhetta has realized many internationally acclaimed works around the globe since 1989, including Bibliotheca Alexandrina (Alexandria, 1989-2001), Norwegian National Opera and Ballet (Oslo, 2000-2008), Viewpoint Snøhetta (Hjerkinn, 2009-2011), The National September 11 Memorial Museum Pavilion (New York City, 2004-2014), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (San Francisco, 2010-2016), Lascaux IV (Montignac-Lascaux, 2012-2016), Times Square (New York City, 2010-2017), Under (Lindesnes, 2016-2019), Shanghai Nanjing Road East Extension (2019-2020), Trælvikosen (Brønnøysund, 2018-2022), Beijing Library (Beijing, 2018-2023), Vertikal Nydalen (Oslo, 2015-2024), Čoarvemáttá (Kautokeino/Guovdageaidnu, 2020-2024), Cloud 11 (Bangkok, 2020-2026), Shanghai Grand Opera House (Shanghai, 2017-2026), Shibuya Upper West Project (Tokyo, 2022-2029), Hangzhou Qiantang Bay Art Museum (2025-) and among others.



About Li Dehua and Luo Xiaowei Design Chair

Li Dehua and Luo Xiaowei are founding figures of the disciplines at the College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University. The “Li Dehua – Luo Xiaowei Design Chair” is a teaching position established by Tongji University in March 2017 through a donation from board member Hu Jinhua and Xiao Han via the Shanghai Huajie Ren'ai Foundation. This chair, the first of its kind among domestic institutions, aims to invite leading designers in architecture, urban planning, and landscape architecture from China and abroad to teach at Tongji. Each year, the chair appoints one distinguished design expert with significant achievements in these fields to lead a semester-long design studio for undergraduate or graduate students. This initiative creates a direct dialogue between students and top practitioners, enabling systematic access to cutting-edge design concepts and practical experience—an invaluable approach to cultivating innovative design talent. Since its inception, the chair has hosted numerous internationally renowned architects, including David Chipperfield, Jacob van Rijs, and Nikolaus Goetze, resulting in a wealth of academic and creative achievements.

CAUP | Tongji University Spring 2026
Guest Professorship Proposal

Sensing Space Studio

Ecologies of Learning, Culture and Community

Step into a studio that treats space as something you experience—before you draw it.

The Sensing Space Studio is a semester-long design course that brings together embodied spatial practice, concept development, and architectural responsibility. You will work with one site and a three-part program — museum, school, and a self-defined *Third Space* — to explore how architecture can strengthen learning, culture, and community.

The studio is built on the Sensing Space program, where concept methodology, embodied movement, observation, prepositions, and collective idea work form one coherent approach. You will design by sensing, thinking, and testing ideas together — not only by drawing — and you will learn to treat architecture as a social and educational force rather than a purely formal discipline.

This semester, the site is a Shanghai riverfront location shaped around a reclaimed artifact lifted from the riverbed — an object that connects past, present, and future. The spatial and conceptual work of the studio will revolve around how this artifact can anchor new forms of learning, storytelling, and public experience, transforming the river's edge into a place of memory and renewal.

Across four phases — Sensing Space, Concept Methodology, Architecture as the Art of Prepositions, and Exhibition — you will build a project grounded in real spatial conditions and real users. The teaching team includes Robert Greenwood, Cheng Gong, and Martin Gran.

If you want a studio that challenges how you think, draw, move, collaborate, and design — and if you want your work to speak to questions of access, equity, and cultural continuity — then this is the semester to take.

Enrol and join a studio where architecture is learned through the body, shaped through dialogue, and driven by ideas with societal relevance.

Sensing Space Studio

Ecologies of Learning, Culture and Community

The **Sensing Space Studio** is a semester-long architecture studio that treats space as something we sense and negotiate with our bodies, not only something we draw. It integrates the educational program Sensing Space with our design methodology and asks students to work on one site with a three-part program:

- Museum – culture, memory, and public storytelling
- School – structured learning and everyday use
- *The third space* – a student-defined program that addresses a concrete condition of access, meaning, or inequality

The studio aims to:

- build embodied spatial literacy; and
- tie architectural education directly to educational equity, access, and cultural continuity.

It is taught together with guest professors Robert Greenwood, Cheng Gong, and Martin Gran.



Key Pedagogical Ideas

Space as an educational medium

Space is treated as infrastructure for learning: thresholds, light, sound, visibility, and accessibility shape who can participate and how. Students read the site as a social situation, not just a plot.

Sensing Space

Exercises start from the body: walking, pausing, ducking, leaning, passing others, listening, feeling temperature and light. Students document these experiences and use them as a basis for design decisions.

Prepositions as design tools

Prepositions such as in, on, under, between, through, around become a design language for relationships: who is between whom, what is under what, what is visible from where. This helps them discuss hierarchy, safety, openness, and intimacy in precise, accessible terms.

Museum-School-X as ecology

Museum, school, and *third space* are treated as an ecology of learning, culture, and community, not as three isolated buildings. *The third space* is required to respond to a specific barrier (time, cost, language, age, gender, ability, stigma), forcing students to confront who is usually left out. Realised and emerging multipurpose public structures are used as references, not templates.



Semester Structure

Phase 1 – Introduction and Sensing Space (Workshop 1)

Students are introduced to the Sensing Space program. They map experiences of in, on, under, between, through, around on and around the site and produce a short “Sensing the Site” booklet. This material must be traceable in later design choices.

Phase 2 – Concept Methodology (Workshop 2)

Concept work follows three drivers from Snøhetta’s idea work:

Prepping – building a shared understanding of contextual conditions (social, cultural, climatic, institutional).

Zooming out – finding a simplifying core concept that can hold complexity.

Getting physical – quick physical prototypes as vehicles for meaning, not finished design.

Students formulate one guiding question for museum, school, and *The Third Space*, develop 2–3 concept families, and present a chosen concept at a midterm review.



Semester Structure

Phase 3 – Architecture as the Art of Prepositions (Workshop 3)

Students build a Preposition Matrix (prepositions × user groups) and design concrete “preposition moments” (e.g. children under the archive, visitors through the school to reach the museum). Sections, thresholds, and atmospheres are used to make 5–7 key situations legible. These become the backbone of the project.

Phase 4 – Presentation Technique and Exhibition (Workshop 4)

The last phase focuses on how to communicate the work to both architectural and non-professional audiences. Students:

- define a clear storyline and audience;
- edit drawings and diagrams for clarity;
- train spoken presentations in plain language;
- co-design a final exhibition where the studio itself becomes a temporary Sensing Space.



Assessment and Reflection

Evaluation looks at:

- conceptual clarity and coherence;
- embodied spatial intelligence (credible preposition moments);
- programmatic responsibility (a real museum–school–X ecology);
- social and ethical awareness (access, power, representation);
- communication and collaboration.

Short reflective texts during the semester make the learning process explicit.

Guest Professor Robert Greenwood

Educated in the UK, Robert Greenwood joined Snøhetta in 1993 and played a central role in the design and construction of the Alexandra Library in Egypt.

In 2006, Robert became Partner and Director, overseeing Snøhetta's international projects. Since 2017, Robert has been leading Snøhetta's design practice across Asia Pacific. He established Snøhetta Hong Kong studio in 2018.

Robert's selected projects at Snøhetta include the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria, The National September 11 Memorial Museum Pavilion in New York City, Shanghai Grand Opera House, Shanghai East Nanjing Road Extension, Beijing Library, AIRSIDE in Hong Kong, King Abdulaziz Centre for World Culture in Dhahran, Qasr Al Hokm Metro Station in Riyadh, Banque Libano Francaise HQ in Beirut, Busan Opera House, Shibuya Upper West Project in Tokyo, and among others.

Alongside his design practice, Robert has been deeply committed to architectural education and research. He has lectured at numerous educational institutions and design festivals around the globe, such as Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Bergen School of Architecture, IE University in Madrid, Tongji University in Shanghai, YACademy in Bologna, Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism 2023 and so forth.



Guest Professor

Martin Gran

Martin Gran is Managing Director of the Snøhetta Foundation and a partner in Snøhetta, with a background in social sciences, management, and interdisciplinary design. He has been central to developing Snøhetta's approach to ideation, where architecture, design, and strategy are treated as a single integrated practice. Gran serves as a guest professor at the Universität der Künste (UdK) in Berlin, leads master classes and lectures at universities and cultural institutions globally, and is a member of the board of The Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO). In the Sensing Space Studio, he anchors the pedagogical link to the Foundation's mission, contributing expertise in concept methodology, educational program design, and the strategic framing of architecture as a tool for learning, dialogue, and social sustainability.



Guest Professor Cheng Gong

Cheng Gong is the Studio Director China at Snøhetta, and one of the earliest members of Snøhetta Studio Hong Kong. In 2022, he led and established Snøhetta Studio Shenzhen.

Cheng oversees Snøhetta's projects and business development in China. His selected projects at Snøhetta include Shanghai Grand Opera House, Shanghai Nanjing Road East Extension, Beijing Library, Hangzhou Concert Hall, Jaeger-LeCoultre Shanghai Flagship Store, CRLand Mixed use commercial complex in Hangzhou Future Sci-tech City, and among others.

Cheng has worked in the US, the Netherlands, and Austria. In addition to design practice, he is also actively involved in architectural education. Cheng was guest critic at Syracuse University in 2020 and the University of Hong Kong in 2018. He has lectured at various educational institutions including Tongji University, Fudan University and Jiaotong University in Shanghai.

Cheng graduated from Southern California Institute of Architecture in Los Angeles. He is a member of National Association of Norwegian Architects.



Sensing Space Studio Spring 2026

Proposed Timetable (Studio time: 13:30-17:05)

March						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	W	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	W	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	W	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	W*	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

- Public holiday (CN)
- SNO offline; **W**=Workshop
- Rob+Martin online; Cheng offline
- SNO online
- * Final exhibition with SNO Asia MD & others

Snøhetta 