

ArchDaily · Articles · The Architecture of Labor: Working Conditions and the New Normal

The Architecture of Labor: Working Conditions and the New Normal



Written by Eric Baldwin

Published on February 04, 2020

Labor gives rise to design. As the aggregate of physical and mental effort used in the creation of goods and services, labor is tied to both what we create and our process. In a field shaped by production, architecture and design depend on labor from a broad range of professionals. But as workers increasingly put in longer hours and traditional measures of security change, questions of labor practices have arisen amid broader conditions of contemporary work culture.



The Architecture Lobby is one organization founded to advocate for better labor practices. Launched in 2013 by architect and academic [Peggy Deamer](#), it is an organization of "architectural workers advocating for the value of architecture in the general public and for architecture work within the discipline." The Lobby begins by identifying designers as workers and their contributions as "work"—work that is "aesthetic, technical, social, organizational, environmental, administrative, fiduciary, but in all cases, work." Their manifesto targets a range of topics, from labor laws, fees and services to wage transparency, in an effort to address precarious work conditions.

This time last year, Pascale Joassart at KCET explored the idea of informal work and labor [in-depth](#), touching on labor outside of salaried or more formal positions and the rise of the "New Normal." She states how traditional employment, with security, benefits, and protections, is becoming less and less common, with terms like "gig, contingent, alternative, and precarious work" that emerged to describe work arrangements. In turn, these larger trends extend to design.

TOP #TAGS

Sustainability

Technology

Materials

Metaverse



At Columbia GSAPP, a symposium was held in late 2018 on [Renegotiating Precarity](#). As a provocation, the description outlined that, "wages are stagnating and rents are rising. Work is not only hard to find, but increasingly exploitative and insecure. People are forced to take on more jobs and loans just to get by. Privatization has turned entire cities into playgrounds for financial speculation, as social support systems have been withdrawn under the banner of austerity politics. In short, precarity has become a generalized condition." The symposium looked to possible alternatives and sites of resistance as the struggle of precarity needs to be continually renegotiated. Building off of questions posed by issues of labor and working conditions like those outlined at Columbia, the following articles explore labor through the lens of design over the last five years.

Is it Time for Architects to Unionize?



The [Guardian's architecture critic Oliver Wainwright](#) reported that the United Kingdom's first architecture union had been formed last year. The Section of Architecture Workers (UW-SAW) is a section of the United Voices of the World, a new model of grassroots trade union that supports the expansion of union ideals to professions and sectors which traditionally did not have such representation. The launch of the union, and the reasons behind it, serve as the latest episode in [long-running concern](#) over the working conditions faced by architects in the UK and across the world.

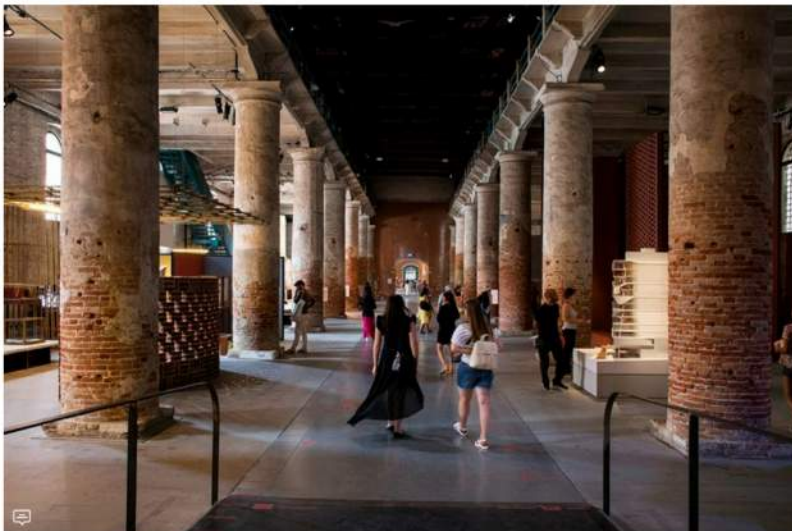
For and Against All-Nighter Culture: Readers Respond





The editors at ArchDaily reached out to our readers to help us investigate one of the most difficult challenges of architecture education: what do students and teachers think of the 24-hour studio culture that has come to pervade the architecture profession? From this discussion, two overriding themes emerged: firstly, many seemed to believe that architecture students have too much work in the first place; secondly, there was almost complete consensus that closing studios achieves nothing but moving the problem of all-nighters from the studio to students' homes.

Young Architects Taking Action at the Venice Biennale



The New York-based Architecture Lobby held a protest outside the Giardini on June 7th, 2014 during the Biennale's opening weekend. Through their protest, they aim to draw attention to declining working conditions in the profession, including low pay, long hours and insecure unemployment - particularly for young architects.

What's the Reality of Architectural Labor in the US?





The Architecture Lobby completed a seventy-question survey of architects that aimed to gather a broad range of data about architectural work--from firm standards and policies to worker satisfaction--to provide open-source information about the realities of architectural labor in the US. The final statistics were published from the survey after polling hundreds of architectural professionals.

About this author



Eric Baldwin

Author

FOLLOW

#Tags

News

Articles

The Architecture Lobby

Labor

Labor Conditions

Working Conditions

Cite: Eric Baldwin. "The Architecture of Labor: Working Conditions and the New Normal" 04 Feb 2020. ArchDaily. Accessed 21 Feb 2023. <<https://www.archdaily.com/933115/the-architecture-of-labor-working-conditions-and-the-new-normal>> ISSN 0719-8884

RELATED ARTICLES



The Architecture Lobby, the Drive to Unionize, and the Future of Work



Architects Are Workers

MORE ARTICLES



What Is Biophilic Design? Examples of Apartments Integrating These Principles in Mexico



Art and Architecture: A Selection of Galleries
Celebrating Mexico's Contemporary Art Scene



Circular Economy: Designing for Bioregions

[More Articles »](#)

TOP #TAGS

- [Sustainability](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Materials](#)
- [Metaverse](#)

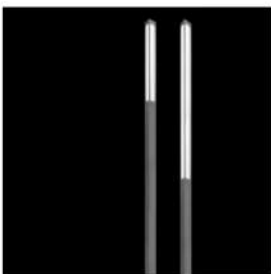
SELECTED PRODUCTS



Decorative LED - Redondo | Alcon Lighting®



Door Handle Mimolimit | M&T



Street Lighting Columns - Lumiquad | Luminis

BROWSE THE CATALOG



3M
Vinyl Finish - DI-
NOC™ Metal



Endicott
Face Brick



Cosentino
Silestone® Surfaces -
Platinum Series



Geberit
Urinal Systems



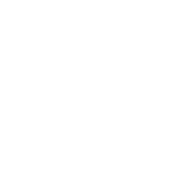
Fastmount®
Fire-Rated Panel
Fastener - Stratlock...



Orama Minimal Frames
Corner and Sliding
Window in...



PENT Fitness
Fitness Equipment -
BANKA™ Weight...



BANDALUX
Sliding Panels

Studco
Building Systems in
Australia 108 High...

Lapalma
Tables - FORK

novamix
Detergents &
Products for...

Bendheim
Privacy Glass in
Marketing Suite

[More products »](#)

Conversation

Commenting as **Guest**

[Log in](#) | [Sign up](#)

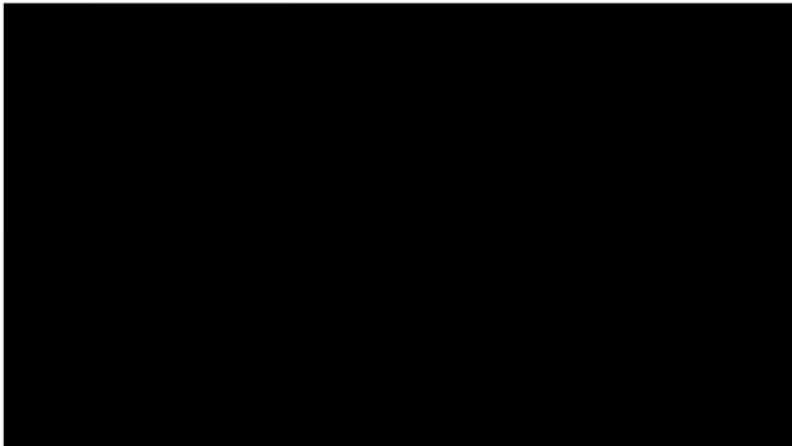


Be the first to comment...



Powered by OpenWeb

[Terms](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Feedback](#)



AdChoices

Sponsored

