

SCI-ARC

Media Inquiries:

Stephanie Atlan, news@sciarc.edu, 213-356-5395

SCI-Arc Launches Liberal Arts Curriculum for its Bachelor of Architecture Program

The Liberal Arts curriculum will complement students' design studio education



(L to R) Benjamin H. Bratton, Gia Gu, Michael Stock (top row), Kavior Moon, Adam Lawrence, Graham Harman (bottom row)

Los Angeles, CA (September 12, 2016) – SCI-Arc is pleased to announce the launch of a new Liberal Arts curriculum for the school's five-year Bachelor of Architecture professional degree program.

"We are excited by the dynamic curriculum that Tom Wiscombe, Chair of the B.Arch Program, has put together," said SCI-Arc Director Hernan Diaz Alonso. "Coupled with the school's design studio culture, these new courses will allow students the opportunity to have a complete education while expanding their engagement with the architectural discourse."

"The vocational model of architectural education is dead. Contemporary architects need to be intellectually savvy and able to articulate and defend positions to a broad array of audiences."

We need to be attentive to the fast-changing world where different forms of knowledge disrupt one another and create new ways of seeing, making, and thinking,” says Tom Wiscombe. “The goal of this new curriculum at SCI-Arc is no less than to create students who will become the architectural leaders of our time.”

Liberal Arts at SCI-Arc reimagines the training of young architects today, offering students breadth of knowledge and critical thinking skills to complement their design studio education. Non-architectural content serves the students in two ways: firstly, as an intensive series of courses within the core concentrations of art, philosophy, science, and history; and secondly, as a flexible series of elective seminars taught by leading thinkers, writers, theorists, and practitioners in a wide range of fields and subjects, from media theory to gender studies to new models of nature. By preparing students to think critically, engage other disciplines directly, and acquire knowledge through research, writing, and debate, students are positioned to understand the inherent complexity and expertise required in more specific fields during the later sequence of the B.Arch program.

“The ethos of risk taking shared by all of our humanities courses not only stokes curiosity, but nurtures self-confidence,” says Liberal Arts Coordinator Jake Matatyaou. “The curriculum is designed to prepare students to meet the high standards of B.Arch thesis work, as well as for specific engagement within their field and the profession of architecture.”

At a time when an increasing number of colleges and universities are defunding the humanities, SCI-Arc is investing in the Liberal Arts and providing its students with foundational knowledge and multiple perspectives in art, art history, literature, new models of understanding nature and society, culture and civilization, philosophy, rhetoric and debate, film, and computation. Included in the Liberal Arts curriculum is a Masterclass series taught by international figures in their respective areas of expertise, such as theorist Benjamin H. Bratton, Professor of Visual Arts and Director of the Center for Design and Geopolitics at the University of California, San Diego; ecological theorist and philosopher Timothy Morton, Rita Shea Guffey Chair in English at Rice University; and Sianne Ngai, Professor of English at Stanford University, who specializes in American literature, literary and cultural theory, and feminist studies. In 2015-2016, SCI-Arc’s Masterclass series featured two of [the fifty most influential living philosophers](#), Timothy Morton and Graham Harman.

Last spring, SCI-Arc announced the appointment of Graham Harman as Distinguished Professor of Philosophy. Harman, author of *The Quadruple Object*, *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy*, and most recently *Immaterialism: Objects and Social Theory*, is widely known as a key figure in the contemporary speculative realism movement in philosophy and for his development of object-oriented ontology. This fall Harman will be joined by the following new Liberal Arts Faculty: Adam Lawrence, Jia Gu, Kavior Moon, and Michael Stock.

Adam Lawrence

Adam Lawrence earned his PhD from UCLA's History of Science program in 2015. His dissertation, "A Member of the Food Chain: Quantifying Primary Productivity from Nazi Germany to the International Biological Program, 1933-1974" explores the history of scientific measurements of ecological productivity across different geopolitical environments. More broadly, his research and teaching focus on the relationship between technical expertise and political, economic, and military power. He was awarded a Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies fellowship in 2011-12, during which time he was also a visiting fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. He has also been awarded a University of Utrecht Visiting Fellowship, the Winkler Memorial History Scholarship, and the Carlos Schwantes Award for Outstanding History Graduate Students, among other fellowships and awards.

Jia Gu

Jia Gu is an architectural designer, educator and curator with a special interest in critical and conceptual practices in art and architecture. She holds a B.A in Visual Arts with Honors from UCSD and a Master of Architecture with Honors from UCLA. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Architecture at UCLA and is the Executive Director of Materials and Applications.

Kavior Moon

Kavior Moon is an art historian who specializes in modern and contemporary art history, with a focus on experimental, post-studio art practices after 1960. Currently a Ph.D. candidate at UCLA, she will file her dissertation this fall on the later works of institutional critique artist Michael Asher and the expanded field of contemporary art institutions in the post–Cold War period. She holds a B.A. in Visual Arts from Columbia University and an M.A. in Art History from UCLA. She has worked in the curatorial and publications departments at The Drawing Center in New York and as a research assistant at the Hammer Museum, LACMA, and MOCA. As an art critic, she has publishing writings in *Artforum* and *Kaleidoscope*.

Michael Stock

Michael Stock is best known as the DJ of the critically acclaimed *Part Time Punks* radio show on KXLU 88.9FM and promoter/DJ of the club nite of the same name at The Echo in LA, both of which began over a decade ago. During daylight hours, he teaches courses on punk, film, writing and comic books, currently at SCI-Arc but previously at CalArts, Loyola Marymount University and UC-Irvine. He writes comics, too, and his first graphic novel, *Penny Dora and the Wishing Box*, was published by Image Comics the summer of 2015.

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About SCI-Arc

Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) is dedicated to educating architects who will imagine and shape the future. It is an independent, accredited degree-granting institution offering undergraduate and graduate programs in architecture. Located in a quarter-mile-long former freight depot in the Arts District in Downtown Los Angeles, the school is distinguished by its vibrant studio culture and emphasis on process. SCI-Arc's approximately 500 students and 80 faculty members, most of whom are practicing architects, work together to re-examine assumptions, create, explore and test the limits of architecture. SCI-Arc faculty and leadership have garnered more than 500 national and international design awards and recognitions, including Progressive Architecture awards, American Institute of Architects (AIA) awards, and the prestigious Jencks and Pritzker architecture prizes.