

# Parsons The New School for Design



The Sheila C Johnson Design Center at Parsons strives to generate an active dialogue on the role of innovative art and design in responding to our contemporary world.  
Photo Bob Handelman



The school's new state-of-the-art campus centre offers fully wired 'smart' classrooms, design studios, a student residence and an auditorium.  
Photo Martin Seck



Parsons  
The New School for Design  
School of Constructed  
Environments  
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United States

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## Introduction

**'Students learn the skills of design engagement, integrated thinking and urban practice in a collective effort to transform our cities'**

Andrew Bernheimer, Master of Architecture programme director

### **When was the school founded and how has it changed?**

Parsons was founded in 1896 by the artist William Merritt Chase as The Chase School, and was renamed after one of its most significant directors, Frank Alvah Parsons, in 1941. It has always been a pioneer in art and design education, and continually evolves to meet the needs of contemporary society. The school established some of the first programmes in the United States in interior design, fashion design, communication design and interactive design, to name just a few, and has been a leader in sustainable design since the 1960s. In 1970, Parsons became part of The New School, a progressive university that has enabled the school to strengthen its connections between academic knowledge, studio practice and social activism.

### **What is studying at this school all about?**

The School of Constructed Environments (SCE) at Parsons is the only integrated school of architecture, interior design, lighting design and product design in the United States. It challenges students to grapple with the forces shaping the world today: shifts in global and local ecological flows, changes in living patterns, growing economic disparities, excessive consumption, and increasing ethnic diversity. Students work with faculty and external partners to learn the skills of design engagement, integrated thinking and urban practice in a collective effort to transform our cities.

### **What kind of teaching method is applied?**

The school's 200 dedicated faculty believe socially aware innovation is created between and beyond disciplinary boundaries. Every SCE programme exposes students to the cultural, environmental, and technological forces that are transforming human habitats so that they can design a more intelligent, sustainable world.

### **What is the most important thing for students to learn during this course?**

Parsons' graduate architecture programme incorporates in-depth instruction in representational techniques and a grounding in history, theory, technology and methodology pertaining to sustainable built and natural systems. It prepares students to enter the professional architecture community and contribute to shaping the built environment and the field.



# Programme

The Master of Architecture programme offers a diverse, international student body a learning environment of critical architectural inquiry. The curriculum uses New York City as a context for exploring the natural and social ecologies of the contemporary city. Courses tap into Parsons' network of civic and institutional partners, local practitioners and commercial clients, providing students with internship, design competition and research funding opportunities.

A signature feature of the MArch programme at Parsons is the Design Workshop, which is widely recognised as one of the nation's premier design/build programmes. With faculty guidance,

students complete the design and construction, from schematics to punch list, of a medium-scale project for a non-profit client. Since its conception, the Design Workshop has embodied the progressive educational agenda for which Parsons and The New School are famous: extending education beyond the confines of the academy, developing practices that improve both the social and the physical environment, and bridging the gap between theoretical and embodied learning. Parsons also offers a dual MFA Lighting Design and Master of Architecture programme, which enables students to develop a keen technical and aesthetic awareness of the relationship between light and architecture.



Design studios are located in a loft space spread over two floors, supporting both traditional and digital design explorations from scaled models to full-size constructions.  
Photo Matthew Sussman/The New School



Master's degree students have access 24/7 to the school's workshops and labs.  
Photo Matthew Sussman/The New School



With a materials library and student facilities, the Angelo Donghia Materials Center hosts public lectures, symposia, exhibitions and other events.  
Photo Martin Seck

## Programme

Architecture

## Leads to

Master of Architecture

## Structure

The full-time course may be completed in 2 to 3 years, depending on an evaluation of the student's educational background. The standard course of study is 3 years and the curriculum integrates design, theory, technology and practice. The Design Studio, the core of the curriculum, uses New York City and its environs as a context for exploring the natural and social ecologies that make up the contemporary city.

## Head of programme

Andrew Bernheimer

## Mentors and lecturers

Paul Goldberger, David Leven, David Lewis, Alfred Zollinger, Astrid Lipka, Mark Rakatansky, Emily Abruzzo, Peter Wheelwright, Jing Liu and Bjarke Ingels.

## Notable alumni

Tom Ford, Dennis Freedman, Lulu De Kwiakowski, Jamie Drake, Thomas Grooms, Victoria Hagan, Alex Lee, Andrea Ruggiero and Aaron Lown.

# School Facts



Duration of study  
2–3 years

Full time  
Yes (20 to 30 hours a week)

Part time  
No



Female students  
58%

Male students  
42%

Local students  
74%

Students from abroad  
26%

Yearly enrolment  
25



Tuition fee  
USD 41,710 per year  
(approx. EUR 31,800)

Funding/scholarships  
Yes



Minimum requirements for entry  
Bachelor's degree (4 years)

Language  
English



Graduation rate  
High

Job placement rate  
High



Memberships/Affiliations  
National Architectural Accrediting Board and Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.

Collaborations with  
n/a

## Facilities for students

Each student receives access to support facilities such as the fabrication shop, computing laboratories, the Angelo Donghia Materials Center, the Light and Energy Lab, display galleries, the Glass Corner lecture hall, etc.

## Application procedure

The following documents must be submitted:

- a completed application form
- original transcripts from all colleges attended (with an official translation in English, when applicable)
- your portfolio
- a statement of interest and intentions
- your curriculum vitae
- your English TOEFL or IELTS proficiency test (if appropriate)
- your GRE scores (if English is your native language)
- two letters of recommendation from academic or professional references
- a receipt of payment of the non-refundable application fee of USD 50 (approx. EUR). Successful candidates will be informed by email.

## Application details

thinkparsonsgrad@newschool.edu

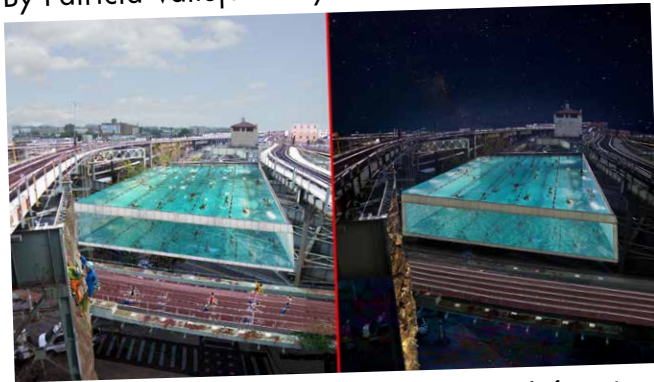
## Application date

By 1 March or 1 November



# Student Work

## Infrastructure Exposed (2012) By Patricia Vallejo Arroyo



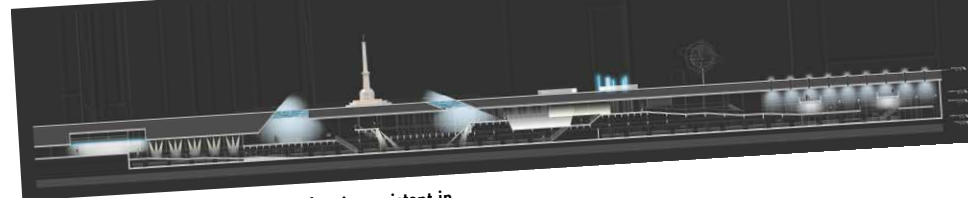
This thesis attempts to rethink the abundant layers and textures of infrastructure as components of a new urban intervention that can unify and serve the communities it now fractures. Focusing on the Broadway Junction subway station in Brooklyn, which features both elevated and underground subway systems and dense road and pedestrian traffic, the project saw the introduction of a fitness complex showcasing the infrastructure's tectonics as well as its inherent lighting qualities to create a richer experience of the city.

## Encounter (2012) By Michael Goetz



This thesis explores the concepts of architectural surveillance and how the visitors of Encounter, a nightlife building, have the ability to observe and be observed through the lens they create. Encounter features hotel rooms, a restaurant, a spa and salon, and a lounge, all sandwiched between two nightclubs. By intermixing public and private spaces throughout the building, it creates an entangled point of view allowing each occupant to observe a range of scenes.

## Revealed Adjacencies (2012) By Rebecca Bost



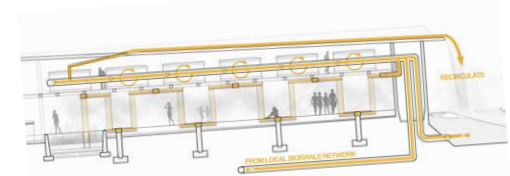
This thesis explores the spatial stratification existent in cities, specifically the disjunction between above and below ground, through an architectural and lighting design intervention within the Columbus Circle subway station in New York and its immediate environs. By peeling down the edge of Central Park and extending existing park paths into the subway station below, an entirely new relationship forms between the open space of respite and meandering of Central Park and the enclosed space of focused commuting of the station.

## Tectonic Traces (2012) By Gizem Sivri



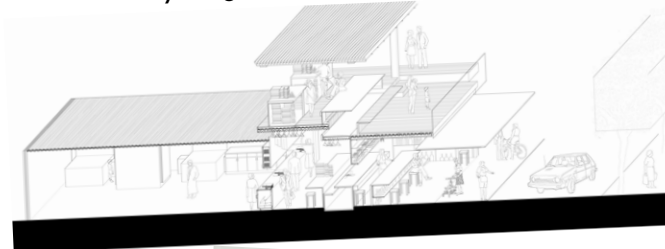
This project introduces the building site's history into the design process as an equally important factor among other conventional site constraints. It tries to reveal the layers of time on a new building programme through a design process that utilises ephemeral traces of a city's life cycles. As a starting point, traces of an existing building wall left after demolition provide the traces upon which the programme of a bookstore is designed, which then provides the new trace upon which the hostel is designed.

## Exorcise Pool (2012) By Rahul Shah



Located adjacent to Newtown Creek in East Williamsburg, Brooklyn, a polluted industrial zone that experiences significant flooding from storms, Exorcise Pool integrates a public pool with a water treatment facility, which would process storm-water runoff from a bioswale network integrated into the surrounding streetscape.

## Housing a Market (2012) By Olga Cervantes Anaya



While Mexico's plazas have historically held markets for the exchange of goods, services and news, the city of Ibarra's formal public plaza has found itself diminishing in importance. This redesign of the public market reinstates this plaza's statute as a shared public space, reactivating the liveliness of market culture while investigating how the market intersects with residential spaces.

**Name** Anthony Deen  
**Residence** New York, United States  
**Year of birth** 1961  
**Year of graduation** 1995  
**Current job** Creative director at LandorNY  
**Websites** landor.com



### Why did you choose this school?

There were three factors that really influenced my decision to attend Parsons. The first was the diversity of faculty, so as students we experienced diverse viewpoints. Second, the programme was very much focused on the urban environment, and studying and learning from the city. We explored the built environment by going to buildings and communities, talking to users and developing an intimate understanding of their successes and failures. The school also had a strong reputation for design and for making things at 1:1 scale. This helped us develop a solid understanding of fabrication and construction methodologies.

### What was the most important thing you learned here?

My thesis advisor was Brian McGrath, who has a great love for learning, and for learning from what you do in your work. That way of seeing the world is infectious and has informed the way I approach every project I do and every client I work with.

### What was the most interesting project you did?

My thesis, the research I did and the interests I developed on that project have continued to help my practice and my design work.

### What was your graduation project?

My thesis was an urban multi-modal commuter

rail station, and I've been working with transportation clients ever since. That project was the basis of numerous projects I've done with a variety of transportation clients.

### Do you have any fond memories about the city?

Yes, many. I've worked in London, Paris, Hong Kong and Los Angeles, and I'd put New York City in the top three cities worldwide. Much like Hong Kong, it's a learning laboratory for young architects.

### Are you still in contact with the school?

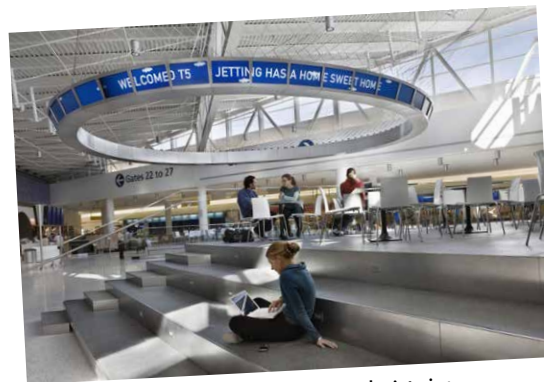
Yes, a few years after graduating I helped found the MFA Design and Technology programme where I still teach. I also offer workshops in conjunction with the architecture programme.

### Was the transformation from graduation to working life a smooth one?

I started interning after my second year and started working in industry immediately upon graduating. The key to a smooth transition is having something special to offer a potential employer – great design is one thing, tangible skills are another.

### Any words of advice for future students?

Think about what you want to do when you get out. While you're in school, position yourself for the career you want to have after graduation. Doing this will help you save time and advance more quickly in your professional practice.



A recent project that Deen worked on was the interior for the new state-of-the-art Terminal 5 at JFK Airport. Photo Rockwell Group



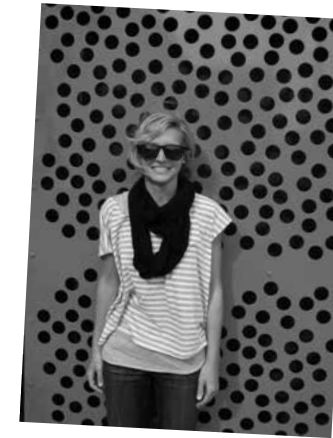
**'In the Design Studio, you get to design a small-scale project and then actually build it. You learn how to participate in an interdisciplinary group, how to deal with real clients, order materials, schedule, and so on. I think it was the most realistic experience I had in an academic setting.'**

Gizem Sivri



**'I preferred the hands-on electives, such as ceramics and metal shop – it gave me a chance to learn a skill set that I would not typically be able to acquire.'**

Mike Goetz



**'My advice to future students is to take advantage of this singular experience – you must commit yourself completely. By virtue of being located in New York, Parsons has an incredible amount of connections and opportunities for students.'**

Tara Mrowka



**'I wanted to study architecture in an urban context. Studying the built environment in the heart of Manhattan seemed to be the next logical step for me.'**

Rahul Shah



**'We have access to amazing studio sites around New York City so we can easily visit and get a feel for the place. Our studios are really specific to the place and we work closely with the communities.'**

Sam Weston



**'The subway system is the easiest way to get around New York. Biking is also a great way to get around the city, especially in Brooklyn where transportation routes are not as convenient as in Manhattan.'**

Tamara Yurovsky



# City Life

Life at Parsons is a fully-immersive learning experience in which the New York itself serves as an urban design laboratory. Students study the city's urban architecture and design, analyse its dazzling array of retail environments, and participate in showings at the important venues like the Venice Biennale, the International Contemporary Furniture Fair and Vitra.

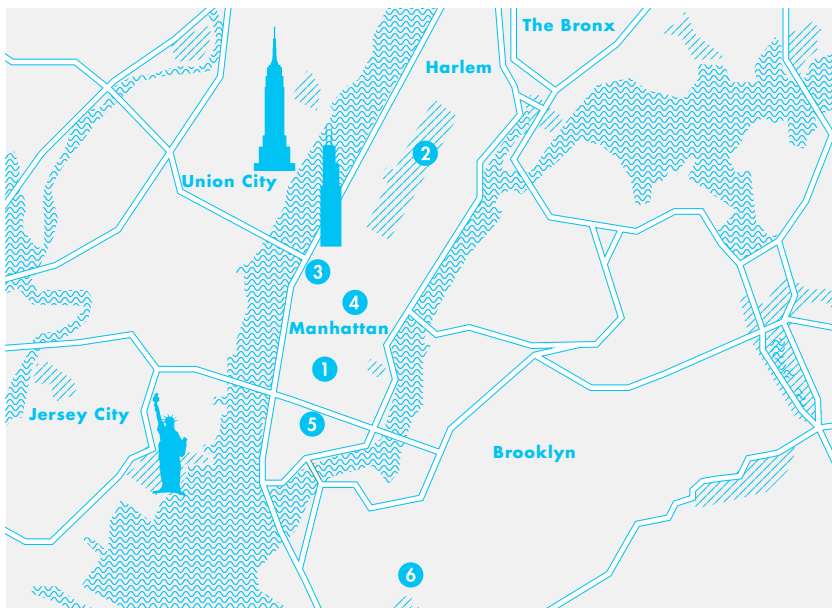
Students also participate in the New York's professional life, taking advantage of the many internship opportunities or participating in projects with community and industry partners. Parsons itself is a noted venue for exhibitions, performances, and lectures by celebrated artists and thinkers.

Learning and entertainment in New York go hand in hand, and a simple stroll in one of its avenues may prove a valuable lesson as much as a relaxing activity. No matter which side you decide to look, it's likely that an architectural icon will be in your field of vision, and that's why the school considers the city to be its most important classroom.



A view of the city skyline at dusk, featuring a work by the Parsons alumnus Robert Wong, chief creative officer of Google Creative Lab. Photo by Martin Seck

United States



## New York

- 1 Parsons
- 2 Guggenheim
- 3 ICF
- 4 Empire State Building
- 5 Chinatown
- 6 Brooklyn Museum

- Park
- Water
- Main road

# City Facts

See also more New York City Facts on p.165 and p.235



## Guggenheim 2

One of the most significant architectural icons of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – designed by Frank Lloyd Wright – this museum is at once a vital cultural centre, an educational institution and the heart of an international network of museums.  
guggenheim.org

## ICFF 3

The International Contemporary Furniture Fair maps the newest frontier of what's the best and what's the next in design. It takes place every year in May.  
icff.com

## Empire State Building 4

This 82-year-old Art Deco building is 102-storeys high and is considered an icon of American culture. At the intersection of Fifth Avenue and West 34<sup>th</sup> Street, the Empire State Building owes its name to New York's own nickname, the Empire State.

## Chinatown 5

Manhattan's Chinatown, which served as the backdrop for Martin Scorsese's *Gangs of New York*, is home to one of the densest populations of Chinese immigrants in the western hemisphere.

Its busy streets are bustling with history and culinary delights.

## Brooklyn Museum 6

Housed in a 52,000-m<sup>2</sup> Beaux-Arts building, Brooklyn Museum is one of the oldest and largest museums in the United States. Its world-renowned permanent collections range from ancient Egyptian masterpieces to contemporary art, and represent a wide range of cultures.  
brooklynmuseum.org

## Coney Island

Well known for its amusement parks and beaches, and especially popular in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Coney Island has recently been transformed from the dilapidated, scruffy neighbourhood it had become after Hurricane Sandy destroyed most of its attractions and businesses.

## Schwarzman Building

The Schwarzman opened in 1911 as the New York Public Library's main branch. On Fifth Avenue and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, this Beaux-Arts landmark houses research collections in the humanities and social sciences.  
nypl.org

## The Public

This famous theatre venue was founded by director Joseph Papp in 1954. It presents a variety of new and provocative plays and stages New Yorker's beloved summer event Shakespeare in the Park.  
publictheater.org

## The Flatiron

A triangular Renaissance palazzo, the Flatiron was one of New York's first skyscrapers and world's first steel-frame skyscraper at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This city landmark just south of Madison Square Park now shares its name with the surrounding neighbourhood.

## Times Square

The heart of Midtown Manhattan, or perhaps of the entire New York City, this eclectic, triangular square is home to several Broadway theatres and the site of the annual New Year's Eve Ball Drop.



## How to get around

Parsons is located in Manhattan's West Village and while the surrounding neighbourhoods can easily be traversed on foot, New York has an extensive and affordable public transportation system including the New York City Subway, buses, and the famous yellow cabs. New York's subway is the world's largest rapid transit system by length of routes and by number of stations. Of course, the city also has an extensive network of buses and cycling is popular too. The city's three major airports, LaGuardia, JFK International and Newark, can be reached by cheap

coach services. JFK and Newark serve long-haul and international flights, while LaGuardia caters to short-haul and domestic destinations.

Penn Station and Grand Central Station, both in Manhattan, are the two busiest train stations, not only of New York, but of the entire United States.



## Arranging housing

Average

## Housing support by school

Yes

## Cost of room in the city

Between USD 600 and 1500 per month (approx. EUR 450 to 1250)

## Cost of campus housing

From USD 14,500 per year (approx. EUR 10,860) and a mandatory meal plan of USD 300 per semester (approx. EUR 225)