

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

ANDREW GRESSETT

Andrew Gressett, a 5th year Architecture student from Cypress, will graduate in August 2016. Andrew was chosen by professors, Peter J. Zweig, Matt Johnson, and Jason Logan to participate in Vertical Studio; a studio that included a summer in Los Angeles. The students studying in Los Angeles worked out of spaces at Sci-Arc and presented their designs to studio consultant Thom Mayne at Morphosis.

What is Vertical Studio and how does it involve the city of Houston?

Vertical Studio is simply a studio that integrates students from multiple years, from 3rd year to graduate students. Our focus is the city of Houston as a whole. It incorporates the city in every aspect. We look at the major issues and each studio is focused on dealing with individual problems such as vacancy, no zoning, and energy.

How did your exploration of Los Angeles architecture change your perspective on future Houston development?

Looking at the direction Houston is heading and where Los Angeles is now; there were many topics that we were able to bring into the conversation. Living in Los Angeles for a month really allows you to embed yourself in the everyday struggles of a local. Using this experience, we can get ideas on how we want to shape our city for the future. Los Angeles simply serves as a precedent to our research.

Famed Architect Thom Mayne is consulting on this project, how did your interactions with him advance your design concepts?

The first meeting with him in February 2016 really shaped the way we structured the studio. He helped us understand the topics he was interested in developing around Houston's structure. We then took that information and molded our projects around these goals. His Houston visit for our jury in May, allowed us to check back in with a finalized design issue and several potential solutions. In June we met with his partner Yi, and our July review he gave a clear directions for our projects. Thom gave his final comments, all very positive, and we are now proceeding to the end of the development on each project.

What will you remember most of your summer in Los Angeles?

THE WEATHER in Los Angeles is FANTASTIC! We worked out of a space at Sci-Arc. The school was an incredible host, and I really enjoyed all the late nights in those studios, long boarding down the hall and even the guys that run Black Fig Café. The in-school café was the best thing for my stomach, but the worst for my bank account. I went there every single day and I loved it.

How did this experience complement your overall Architecture education?

I have to say this was the cherry on top of a great five years at the College of Architecture and Design. This was the best way to see my undergraduate experience end. It has led my interests into a new field of Landscape Urbanism. This summer drastically changed the goals for my future.