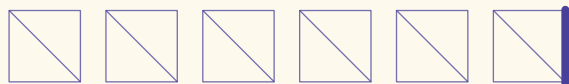


THE DIRE- CTOR

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FROM



Below/ Image of Daniel Butko
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»» TO CURRENT + FUTURE STUDENTS,

Once upon a time not long ago, many of us seeking the spelling or definition of a word would open a printed dictionary. We folded over the cover and flipped through the pages, scanning for a rough approximation as our fingers and eyes danced across the columns of text in eager anticipation. The tactile sensation of paper, the coordination between hand and eye, and the intellectual deduction – these were all part of activating the discovery process. Today, we have traded that journey for the convenience of instant digital searches and virtual assistants. The perched and ready technology now suggests answers before we even ask, often auto-correcting us along the way, sidestepping the thrill of discovery, problem - solving, and reasoning.

The English word architecture¹ is defined as "the art or practice of designing and building structures." This definition captures the interdependent relationships between the designer and builder through concept and construction, developing and producing, creating and making, and the scale of creation between representation and the physical construct. The artistic processes of sketching, drawing, and modeling are all born from ideas and data that eventually manifest into the physical spaces we inhabit. Architect Bruno Zevi once said, "Architecture is not art alone, it is not merely a reflection of conceptions of life or a portrait of systems of living. Architecture is environment, the stage on which our lives unfold."² The designer and the builder both travel this journey, informed by a shared vision toward an ultimate arrival.

In architecture, the word unfold carries a rich, metaphorical meaning connecting the process of design and the experience of space. To unfold is to reveal or disclose something that was once hidden or unknown. **The act of unfolding exposes the untold.** It can describe the way a building is revealed, experienced, or even constructed. Consider the difference between the words unfold and untold. While they sound similar, only a small variation – the curve of a letter – separates them. We unfold a wallet, a shirt, or a map, and in doing so, expose what was previously unseen.

In much the same way, the unfolding of your own story takes time and is shaped by your experiences. An article by author Gretchen L. Schmelzer analyzes Galway Kinnell's "St. Francis and the Sow"³ concludes with "The unfolding is what is beautiful."⁴ This idea of unfolding – of revealing what was hidden, of allowing time and touch to shape something into its fullest form – reminds us of the beauty in the journey, not just the destination. The future of architectural education and education in architecture is unfolding at a rapid pace. It is shaped by global-reaching factors and complex issues such as technological advances, evolving urbanization needs, societal agency, environmental stewardship, and new professional practices. The journey through architectural education offers future industry professionals the knowledge, skills, and perspectives needed to address such vital necessities. I encourage each of you to make the most of every opportunity that comes your

way here at OU. Leave no stone unturned, no guide left unopened. Embrace the richness of your education, both in terms of new knowledge and the further development of what you already know. Grow as a person, a collaborator, a thinker, and a traveler. Explore research opportunities, engage with the broader architectural community, and seek internships with firms whose work you admire. Build the connections that will shape your future.

The ultimate goal of your architectural education is not just to master the technical and creative aspects of design, but to become professionals who are equipped to tackle the complex challenges ahead. These challenges – whether environmental, social, or technological – demand a new breed of architect: one who is innovative, adaptable, and deeply committed to shaping a more sustainable, equitable, and thoughtful built environment.

Life, much like architecture, is a story that unfolds day by day. Sometimes, the most beautiful and profound moments emerge when we allow ourselves to unfold naturally – embracing the journey with curiosity, grace, and an open heart. While the connections among your learning experiences might not always be immediately apparent, I urge you to Anticipate and Activate architecture – and to personally define what that means to you. As you continue your journey in architecture, remember: **"the unfolding is what is beautiful."**

END NOTES:

- ¹ <https://11bquotes.com/bruno-zevi/quote/1br-4n2t>
- ² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/architecture>
- ³ <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42683/saint-francis-and-the-sow>
- ⁴ <http://gretchenschmelzer.com/blog-1/2024/3/17/the-unfolding-is-what-is-beautiful>