

EXHIBITIONS & REVIEWS TOWARDS BETTER PRACTICES

The exhibition & review days are the celebration of months of labour. They are collective moments for sharing with others and reflecting on what has been worked on.

These moments crystallise fundamental questions about architectural education. It is important to discuss their organisation and unfolding.

This document stems from observations made during the design studios' final reviews from the fall semester 2022 at EPFL Architecture and the ongoing research project Choose Your Own Crit.

It aims to be a starting point for reflecting & discussing on the ways in which we perform learning within the school.

reviews mapping

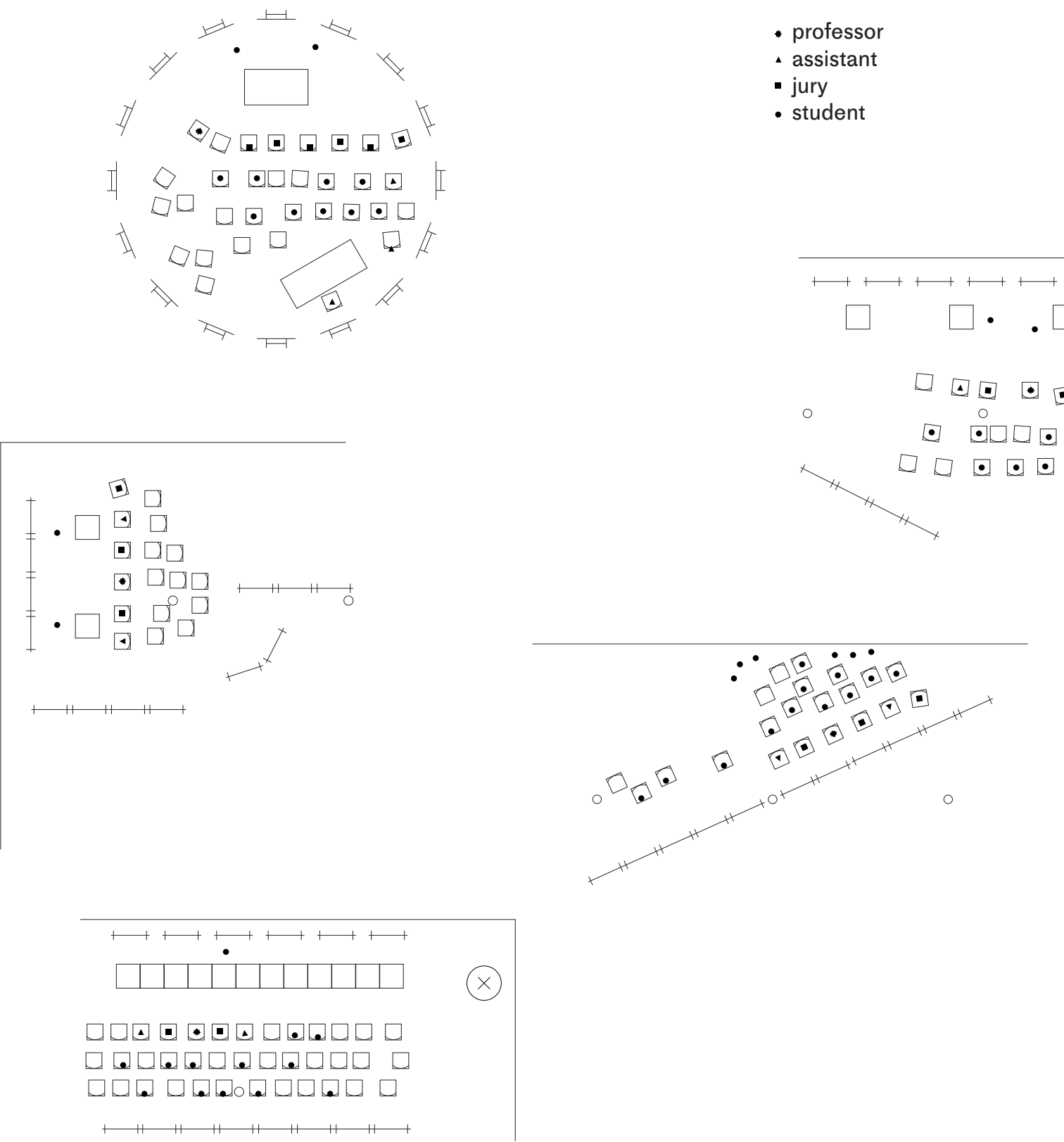
observations

proposals

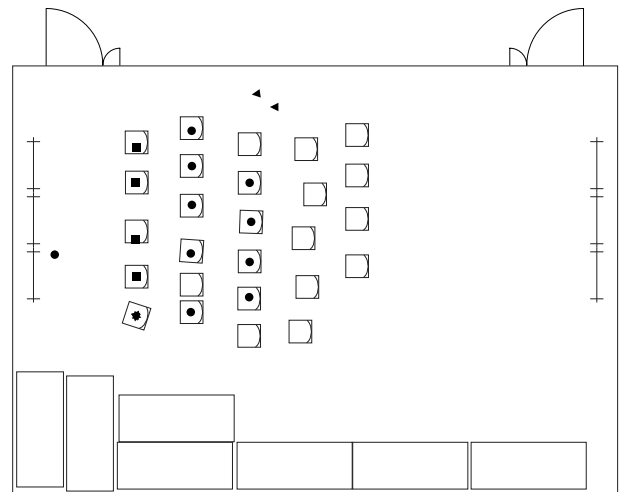
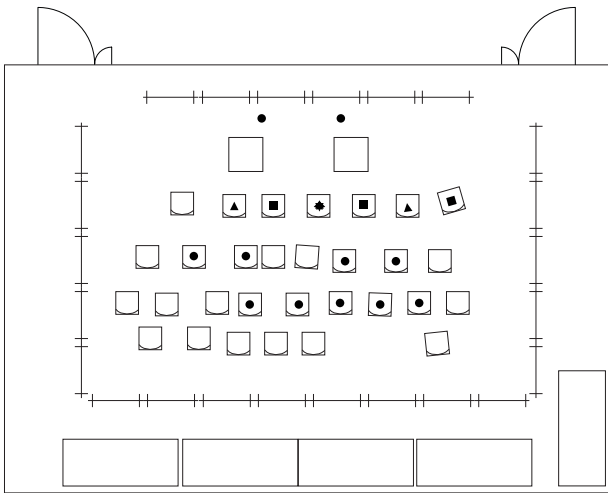
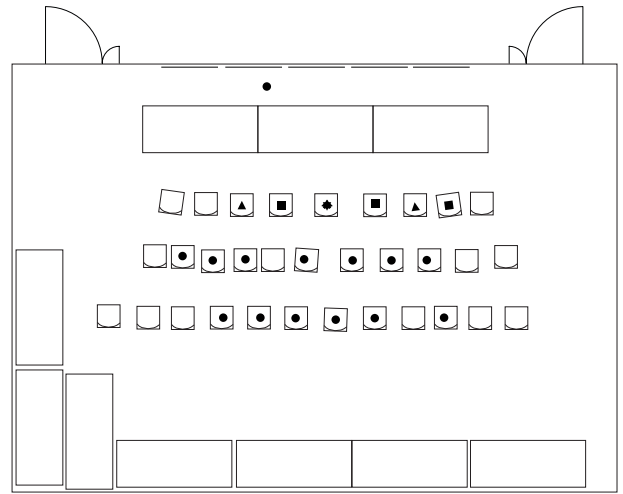
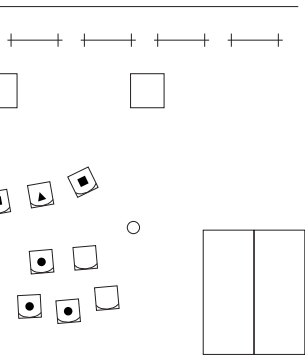
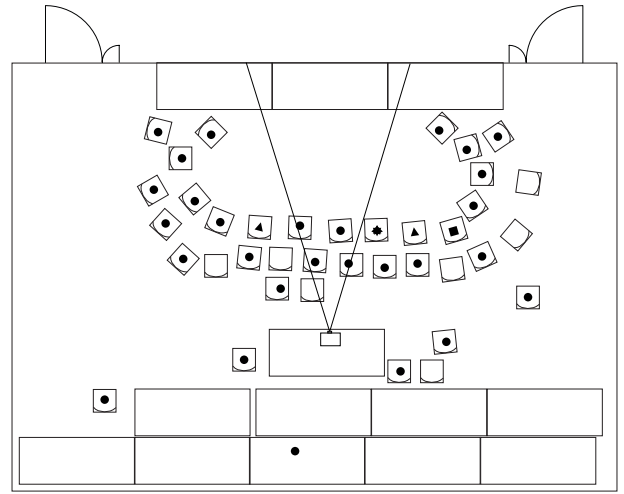
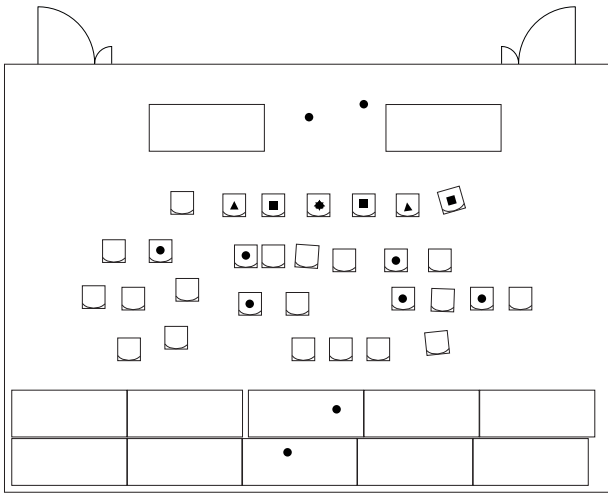
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REVIEWS MAPPING

These drawings are based on observations and photographs of the design studio's final reviews at EPFL Architecture between the 19th & 22th December 2022.



* inspired by the article [“The Review as a Project”](#) published in trans magazine #31 Kritik, 2017.



OBSERVATIONS

* guide

THEME OBSERVED

- (+) Things observed that seemed to positively affect the unfolding of reviews and/or exhibitions.
- (-) Things observed that seemed to negatively affect the reviews and/or exhibitions.

STUDENT FATIGUE & WORKLOAD

- (+) Set of a clear deadline for the submission of individual work two days before the reviews begin. The day before the reviews is dedicated to the preparation of the exhibition. Students has stopped working individually and join the collective preparation.
- (-) Absence of a clear deadline on when to stop working on the projects. Some students work until the last minute (just before their presentation). It results in half/empty review spaces and tired students in the morning of the first review day.

EXHIBITIONS / REVIEWS SETUP

- (+) Collective organisation of the exhibition and review space in dialogue with students. The atmosphere is relaxed. Students and teachers discuss informally about the days to come. The studio has planned a specific day in the calendar for that.
- (-) Non-integration of the organisation of those days in the planning of the studio. The charge of setting it up lands last minute on the back of students and/or assistants.

PUBLICNESS

- (+) Printed explanations on the studio's work showcasing the people involved and providing a clear schedule of the days including breaks. The reviews seem more accessible to external visitors.
- (-) Difficulty to join reviews because of closed doors and no additional information appearing outside (especially in AAC).

SCHEDULE HANDLING

- (+) Integration of moments of break.
- (-) Difficulty to follow the planned schedule of reviews due to various reasons.

These observations have been compiled thematically.
They are situated and non exhaustive.

DIVERSITY IN PANELS

- (+) Invitation of people from outside of the architectural world. It changes the dynamics of the reviews, opening up to a diversity of thoughts and inviting to different kinds of discussions.
- (-) Lack of diversity. The gender proportion of invited guests was : 66% men 33% women. Beyond the question of gender, the panels of guests invited are very largely coming from the architectural field with similar perspectives.

DISCUSSION FORMAT

- (+) Adoption of different formats of discussion, ex: collective presentation of the studio work at the beginning, presentation of projects thematically instead of project by project. The discussions are more open-ended.
- (±) Normalised format, ex: pinup - presentation by student(s) - questions of understanding by guests - comments by guests - conclusion by teacher.

SPACE & POWER DYNAMICS

- (+) Breaking of the “wall of elders”. Studios adopt spatial formats closer to assembly dispositions, encouraging students to sit on the front rows, asking them how they would rather present (standing or sitting).
- (-) Normalised dispositions of the review’s actors in space. While the location of the review and how the space is setup varies from studio to studio, it often ends up with the “wall of elders” standing in line frontally to the person presenting.

SPEECH & POWER DYNAMICS

- (+) First words given to students at the end of their peers’ presentation. Students are happy to engage and question others’ work.
- (-) Monopolisation of speech by charismatic figures. It is difficult for students to engage in discussions, even more to express doubts or ask questions.

PROPOSALS

STUDENT FATIGUE & WORKLOAD

The experiences of reviews are closely related to one's mental and physical state.

What amount of work should be asked of students in the week prior to the review days? How can these intense weeks of production and discussion be scheduled in a healthy way?

- * **Establish a clear semester's schedule and deadlines for students' work delivery.**
- * **Integrate time to rest, time to prepare discussions and time to set up review space.**
- * **Arrange regular breaks and/or alternation between active and passive participation.**

EXHIBITIONS / REVIEWS SETUP

Setting up reviews & exhibitions are opportunities to reflect on studios' pedagogy.

How to set up the conditions for assembling, communicating and discussing the work? How can these be collectively engaged and include students' thoughts and experiences? How can these also influence the way the students produce?

- * **Integrate exhibition & review days in the studio's pedagogical reflection and timeframe.**
- * **Arrange specific days for their organisation that bring together professors, assistants and students.**

PUBLICNESS

EPFL Architecture is aiming for more exchanges inside and outside.

How to make the reviews & exhibitions more accessible? How to make the studio's pedagogical approach visible?

- * **Pin up a public document visible at reviews & exhibitions. This could describe the studio work and methodology, name the persons having taken part in the semester, display the reviews schedule and briefly introduce the invited guests.**

SCHEDULE HANDLING

The review days are often very tight in terms of schedule, a lack of transparency, delays or rushes during the days are problematic points often raised.

How can we take care of how those days are scheduled? How can we integrate moments of informal collective discussions (buffer, collective feedback, etc.)? How could this be an opportunity to rethink how the reviews unfold ?

- * **Establish a clear and realistic schedule of the review days. Allow the programme to be questioned when it is announced, display it and then stick to it.**
- * **Include pauses, installation and dismantling, perhaps moments for collective feedback and moments of celebration.**
- * **Distribute roles that contribute to the day's progress (time keepers, logistic helpers, spokespersons, etc.). This can also lead to more direct involvement of students and a better distribution of responsibilities.**

DIVERSITY IN PANELS

The environment of the university is a bubble where discourse can sometimes feel disconnected from outside realities. How can we open it up? How can the work produced be enriched by other perspectives and expertises?

- * Invite people from various backgrounds and perspectives.
- * Don't invite too many people. This can considerably extend the duration of the reviews.

DISCUSSION FORMAT

The reviews often follow homogenised formats of discussion in time and space.

How to come up with more varied ways of exchanging about projects? Are there other scripts, rhythms, scales of discussions that could allow for more voices to be heard?

- * Establish clearly the objectives of the review discussions, their influence on the evaluation and the place of the invited critics in this grading process.
- * Depending on these objectives, determine the scope for collective and/or personal exploration in the format of the discussions.
- * Explore other scripts of pedagogical presentation and feedback.
- * At the beginning, explain to the assembly the studio learning objectives, its assignment, and the time frame in which work presented was produced.

SPACE & POWER DYNAMICS

The space of the review and how it is set up influence the unfolding discussions.

How can we avoid confrontational space dispositions? Should we sit or should we stand while presenting? In lines or in circles or even differently?

- * Raise consciousness of the fact that spatial arrangements can support and/or inhibit discussions.
- * Experiment other than arrangements in row. These can reinforce oppositions between students and tutors, especially when facing the "wall of elders".
- * Give the choice of sitting/standing and of the position in space to students presenting their work.

SPEECH & POWER DYNAMICS

An important part of problematic reviews' experiences are related to verbal communication.

How can we give more care to how we dialogue with one another? How can speech be better distributed?

- * Establish ground rules for addressing one another within the studio.
- * Moderate speech so that the discourse is not monopolised by a few charismatic figures.
- * Regularly and at different moments, invite students to engage in discussions, to express doubts or to ask questions.
- * Express disagreement when problematic statements are made. If this is not possible, discuss it in a group moment with the studio.

This semester we would like to start a workgroup involving students, *corps intermédiaire*, alumnis & teachers that could drive proposals and public discussions around these reflections.

Get in touch if interested !

→ first information session: **tuesday 28.03 12:15 Archizoom**

→ more information at <https://t.me/+14E9S-XVweVINDFk>

antoine.iweinsdeeckhoutte@epfl.ch
noemie.zurbriggen@epfl.ch