

UE X : EXPERIENCE DESIGN

THE EMBODIED CITY



This seminar introduces experience design as a method for investigating how technology, including generative AI, might be turned against the grain of disembodiment, to scaffold, protect, and deepen physical human encounters in the contemporary city.

Screens, algorithms, and generative systems increasingly promise to replace human effort, judgement, and encounters. Conversations collapse into chat windows, companionship into models, learning into prompts, grief into interfaces. Fuelled by ideals of frictionlessness and optimized convenience, each level of mediation further removes body from experience.

But a countercurrent is rising. Phone-free cafés and clubs, riverbank book clubs, silent reading parties, analog dating, run clubs, revived rituals of gathering, "dumb" phones and film cameras: what has been called «The Analog Turn», or the presence economy. These embodied, intimate, sensorial experiences are returning as a critical re-valuation of presence itself.

The Embodied City inverts the question of its predecessor, the Augmented City (2021) which asked how invisible data flows of the city could be made visible and experiential. This seminar asks the reverse in the age of gen-AI: can design maintain human, sensorial, physical experience, streamlining and augmenting it, rather than replacing it?

Through a sequence of experience design methodologies, we will explore who technology and especially GenAI, might facilitate encounters without becoming the encounter. Whether through matchmaking that assembles the right group of strangers for a dinner, or sensing that knows when a room is at the right density, to agents that handle logistics so that humans can be more present.

Investigation shall be organized around verbs of embodied urban life (to date, to read, to heal, to grieve, to wait, to repair) and each student group will tackle one as the frame for an experience that is spatial, sensorial, and resistant to full mediation. Lausanne will serve as our living lab.

Questions of the course shall be :
Which practices lose their meaning when they move to a screen? Where exactly should technology recede into the background? And what does design owe to experiences whose value lies precisely in resisting optimization? Since the evidence that disconnection reliably improves well-being is mixed, should we remove technology, or more critically examine how to design with it to enhance presence?

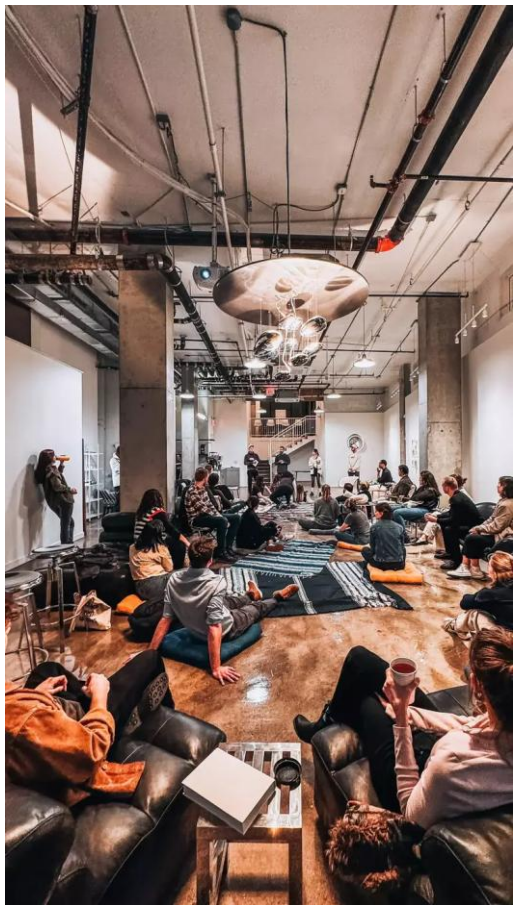
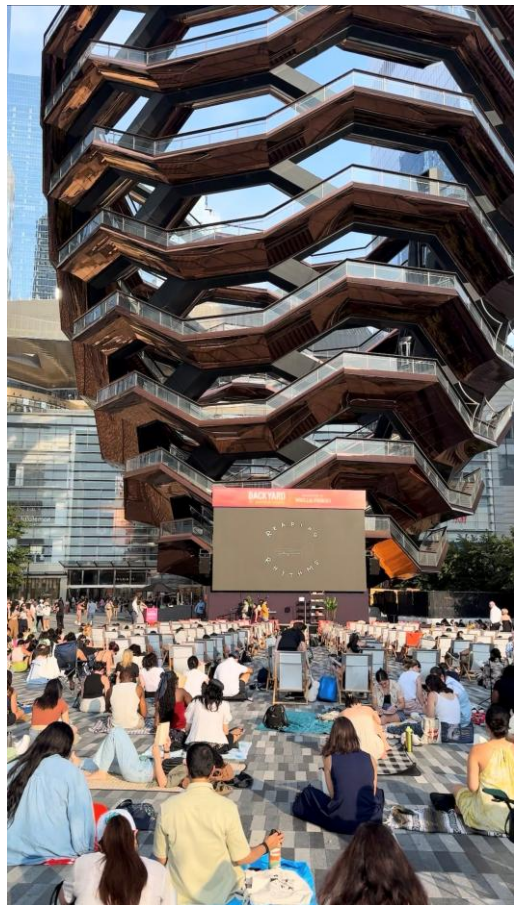
Projects develop through ethnographic fieldwork recorded by hand, personas grounded in observed people, and journey maps that flag touchpoints of experience. By the end of semester, groups shall converge on a proof of concept (app and/or an augmented physical space) packaged and pitched to an external panel through a prototype, a proposal, and a presentation.

This intense course contains a sequence of seminars and guest-speakers with weekly exercises, which will be followed by practical worksessions aimed at developing experience design projects over the course of the semester.

Worksessions will involve feedback in the form of desk critiques, culminating in a midterm and final presentation, or “pitch” before a panel of experts.

UE X is a joint seminar which brings together students from Computer Science and Architecture faculties. The semester-long project is developed as a group-work, encouraging transdisciplinarity.

No prior programming or software knowledge is required, however, there should be curiosity and strong motivation to learn.



Reading Rhythms
New York, 2023



Silent Book Club
Seoul Chapter





Hangang Outdoor Library
Seoul Outdoor Library

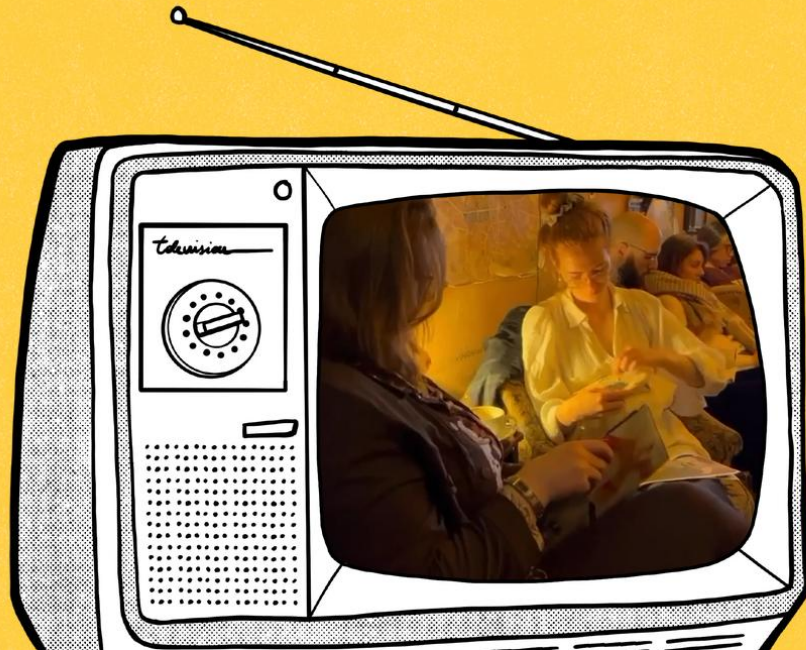


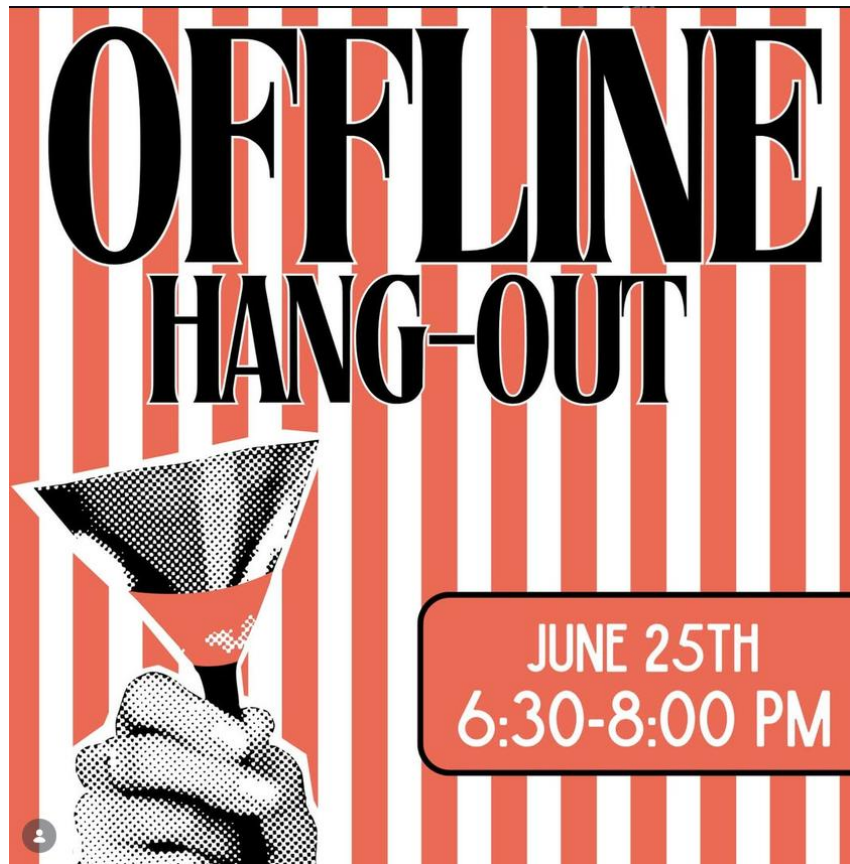
Fnac Reading Party
Bercy Village, Paris, 2026

Swap screen time for real time

Offline hangouts and events to unplug, relax and connect with like-minded people.

[Book your spot](#)





Indy Offline
Indianapolis, USA





Timeleft
Lisbon, 2023 – et al.

DINING OUT

Can AI Curate a Great Meal With Strangers?

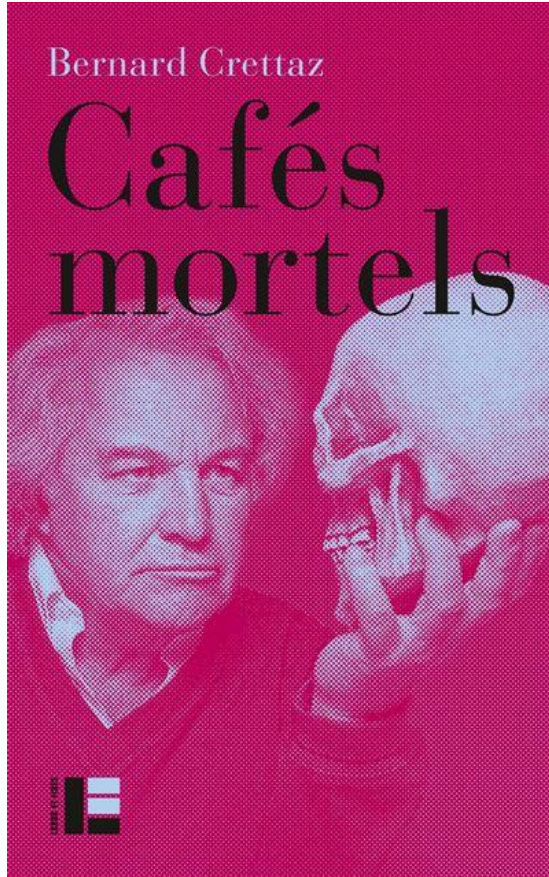
I tried the buzzy meetup platform 222, which proposes that AI can arrange a life-affirming meal with potential friends

by **Francky Knapp**

Feb 25, 2026, 10:21 PM GMT+1



222 App
New York, Los Angeles – via Eater.com



What on earth is a death cafe?

A chat about life's end over coffee and cake doesn't sound like everyone's cup of tea. But could it be a way to get people talking about a subject we can't escape and is often avoided?



People chatting about dying at the pop-up death cafe at Lovecrumbs in Edinburgh. Photograph: Murdo Macleod for the Guardian



Yondr, Phone-Free Pouches
Graham Dugoni, 2014



Fred Again, Concert Camera Stickers
USB002 Tour, 2025-26



Space-Out Competition
Woopsyang, Seoul, 2014



Midnight Runners
London, 2015



One More Hour – 1M Third-Place fund for Gen-Z
Hinge



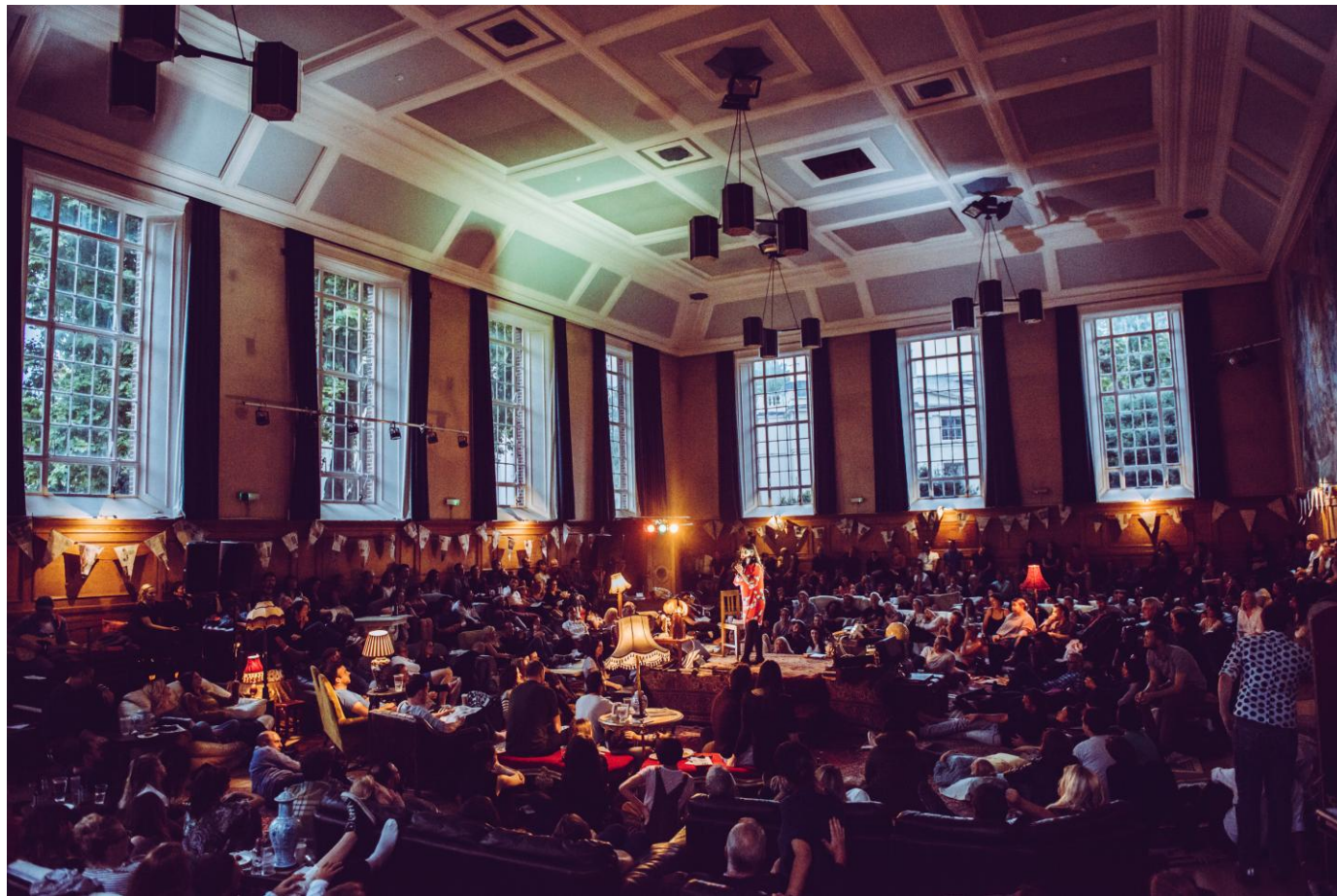
Boîtes d'échange entre voisins
Dan Acher / Happy City Lab, Geneva, 2012



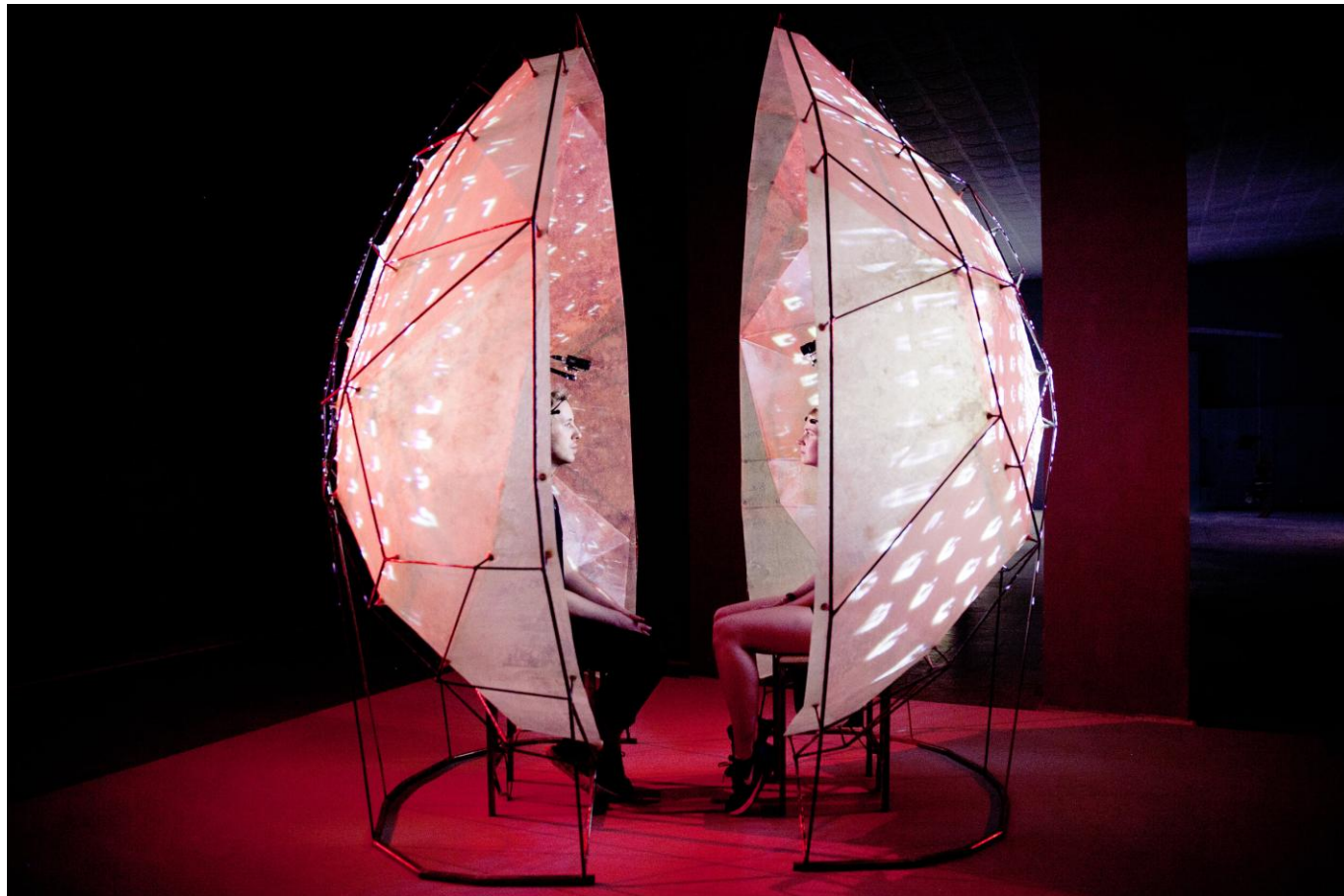
Street pianos
Association Tako, Geneva



Punkt MP02
Jasper Morrison



Sunday Papers Live
London



Mutual Wave Machine
Suzanne Dikker and Matthias Oostrik, 2013



iHeartMedia
"Guaranteed human" label

The Producers Wish to Thank
THE ALBUQUERQUE FILM OFFICE
and
MAYOR TIM KELLER

U.S. NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
NATIONAL RADIO ASTRONOMY OBSERVATORY
VERY LARGE ARRAY

BRIAN SVOBODA
ERIN McDONALD

ALBUQUERQUE INTERNATIONAL SUNPORT

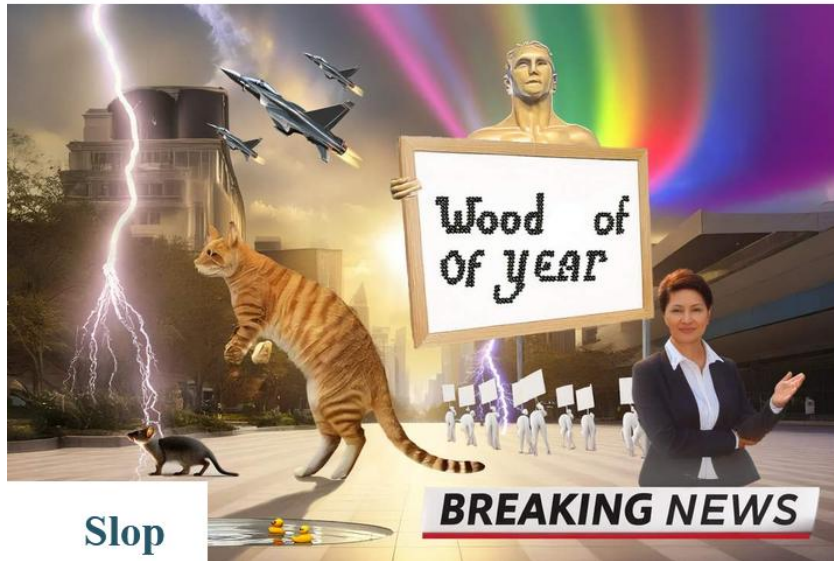
Minor League Baseball footage used with permission of
Minor League Baseball. All Rights Reserved.

Animal wranglers were on set to ensure animal safety.

This show was made by humans.

2025 Word of the Year: Slop

Plus 'gerrymander', 'touch grass', 'performative', and other words that defined the year





Urbanimals - Storyboard
Eliott Hounieu, Michel Morales, Nicolas Vial, 2021

Schedule Fall 2026

Dates are subject to change

Week 1 – *Emotioneering*

Week 2 – *Forensic Manual*

Week 3 – *Experience Mapping*

Week 4 – *Disruption*

Week 5 – *Design Analogies*

Week 6 – *Diagramming*

Week 7 – **MIDTERM REVIEW**

Week 8 – *Lo-fi Prototyping*

Week 9 – *Hi-fi Prototyping*

Week 10 – *Storyboarding*

Week 11 – *Production*

Week 12 – *Pitching*

Week 13 – **FINAL REVIEW**

Team

Media x Design Laboratory
Prof. Jeffrey Huang
Alexandre Sadeghi, Ga-In Sim,
Zihui Tian, Zebin Chen,
Luis Pedro de Macedo, Duarte
Barbosa Pereira, Alexandre Vong
Srivastava.