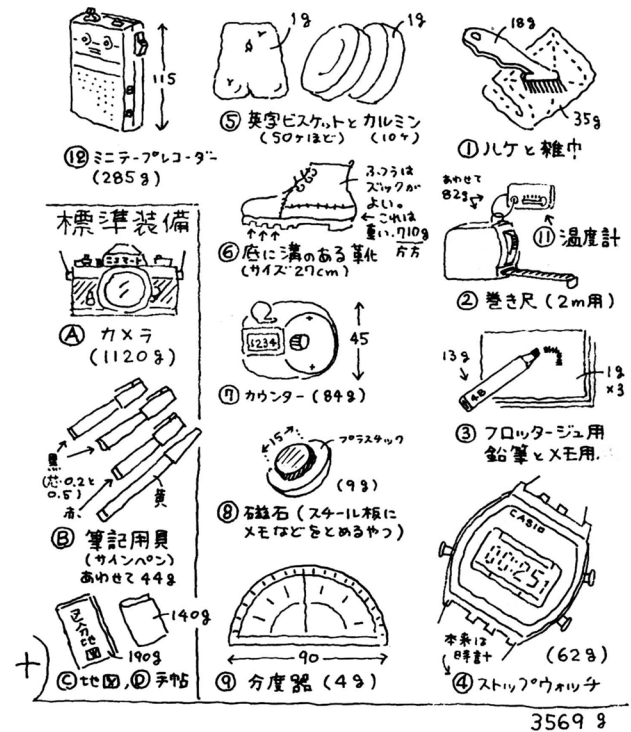


# Fieldwork in Architecture: methods, histories, sites



ABOVE: Reyner Banham and Bonnie F. Albert's students photographing a hole in the floor of a daylight factory in the Larkin Complex, Buffalo, New York, late 1970s. Source: UB University Archives. RIGHT: Street observation equipment. Source: Rojō kansatsugaku nyūmon [Street Observation Studies Primer] eds. Akasegawa, Fujimori, and Minami (Tokyo: Chikuma Shōbō, 1986).



**Instructor: Curt Gambetta, Visiting Critic**

Fieldwork has been instrumental to how architectural design, architectural history, and other disciplines produce knowledge about the built environment. But its methods and history remain curiously understudied, even as architects, historians, anthropologists, photographers, and others turn to fieldwork to raise questions about the built environment that are either unthinkable or impermissible within their respective fields of knowledge. Where and how does fieldwork happen, and how is it different from other forms of knowledge and cultural production? In what ways do fieldwork practitioners engage with the political and ethical implications of their work? By bringing examples of fieldwork in architecture and architectural history into conversation with research in anthropology, geography, and other field-based practices, the seminar will introduce students to methods, sites, and historical problems about reckoning with the past and making sense of ongoing processes in the built environment

through firsthand observation. After studying fieldwork methods and their histories in the first half of the semester, the seminar will then focus on different sites of contemporary fieldwork, such as infrastructure, housing, real estate, ruins, policing and surveillance, and interactions between built artifacts and more than human worlds.

Over the course of the semester, students will learn from a case study of fieldwork and undertake independent field research in one of several sites identified by the instructor. Structured assignments will challenge students to reflect on different aspects of their fieldwork practice, including, but not limited to, techniques of field documentation, the spatial and temporal extents of their fieldwork, how they gain access to their field site, and their interaction with research subjects. The final deliverable for the course will be the presentation of a “field report” that compiles and reflects on each student’s methods, findings, and the historical context of their research.