



*A Collage of Option Studio Student Work - Christopher Morse*

**Virtual Places – Virtual/Vertical Mixed Use  
Option Studio Fall 2020**

**Professor Henry Richardson and Visiting Lecturer Christopher Morse**

Hybrid (In-person/Remote); Tuesday/Thursday 8:00 am – 1:00 p.m. EST

With Industry Consultants: Alexander Pollock (FXCollaborative) and Lucien Wilson (KPF Architects)

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic promises to dramatically change our relationship with the built environment, and with urban spaces in particular. For many, the experience of the vast city has contracted to a single building or apartment while others have fled the city entirely. What will become of our concept of **urban** as we attempt to reconcile the threat of disease and the desire for density? At the same time, the acceleration of design professionals working from home has shown both the necessity for remote collaboration as well as the limitations of existing tools like video conferencing, especially with respect to the spatial implications of architectural reviews.

The **Virtual Places** option studio looks to explore the potential for the re-emerging urban condition through the momentary experiences of the inhabitants within it. Rather than focusing on large scale networks and complex ecosystems of infrastructure and society, we zoom into the individual moments that generate the uniqueness of **place**. The rise of real-time rendering and the ability to use software such as Unreal Engine to deploy custom applications presents an opportunity to engage directly with these challenges from both a design and workflow point of view. The studio is premised on the notion that cities are experienced from the bottom up, and places from the inside out, and we seek to adjust our design tools accordingly.

Our point of study will be a vertical mixed-use tower situated within New York City. We will design and develop **experiential vignettes** which help shape the urban condition for the inhabitants at the interfaces between the building and the city. The lens we will use to bring our design into focus will be a **virtual spatial environment** in which to meet and review both **together** and **remotely**. This environment will be developed collaboratively over the course of the semester, and the resulting virtual experiences will be simultaneously the topic of discussion as well as the environment in which the discussion takes place.

The Virtual Places option studio continues to build off of past studio work as well as introducing new material and new tools. We will be using a combination of **Virtual Reality** where possible in addition to custom interactive desktop environments. We will use these new tools for authoring geometry, analyzing and reviewing design, and communicating experiential implications of the spaces created. We will question what physical, spatial, ephemeral features of a building or a city block contribute to the understand of place. What representations are possible of those features within real-time dynamic environments? How do our understandings of these change as we experience them while simultaneously together and remote?