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***CFA Lab: Repair—Democracy and Urban Spaces to
Open at the Center for Architecture
May 7–September 2, 2026***

This exhibition brings together two CFA Lab projects that frame repair as a collective, spatial, and political act—across energy systems and the urban ground.

New York, NY, March 26, 2026 — The Center for Architecture is excited to present *CFA Lab: Repair—Democracy and Urban Spaces*, showcasing projects by the two teams selected for the 2026 cycle of the Center for Architecture Lab. A multi-month, multi-disciplinary residency program, CFA Lab offers new voices in architecture and design full authorship over dedicated areas of the Center for Architecture’s platforms, allowing them to develop and share compelling and provocative content meant to elevate underrepresented perspectives.

Designed by WeShouldDoItAll (WSDIA) and conceptualized alongside AIANY 2026 President Mark Gardner, AIA, NOMA’s presidential theme, *Repair: Democracy and Urban Spaces*, this year’s Lab invited architects, urban planners, designers, artists, cultural conservationists, and

community activists to examine how the concept of repair can serve as a lens to reimagine democratic, equitable spaces. “*Repair: Democracy and Urban Spaces* challenges us to see the city not as a finished artifact, but as an ongoing civic project—one that requires care, participation, and imagination,” said Gardner. “This CFA Lab exhibition brings together a great group of designers who understand that repairing our present urban fabric is inseparable from our regenerative future.”

Two resulting projects on view, ***DEPAVE: An Ecological Repair of the Ground*** and ***Energies of Repair: Visualizing Community Power in NYC***, address the urgent need to repair not only the physical infrastructure of our environments but also the political and social inequities embedded within them.

“When thinking about the exhibition’s identity, we kept returning to *sashiko*, a Japanese stitching technique where the repair isn’t hidden, it’s the whole point,” said Jonathan Jackson, Partner, WSDIA. “The labor becomes the pattern—that felt right for an exhibition holding two distinct projects under one roof. We considered multiplicity as a feature, not a problem, building a system where the typographic structure stays consistent, but the internal texture shifts: one pattern for the whole exhibition, one for *Energies*, and one for *DEPAVE*. You always know you’re in the same show, but you can sense which voice you’re engaging with.”

DEPAVE: An Ecological Repair of the Ground

Friends Making Work (Christine Giorgio, Amelyn Ng, Gabriel Vergara) will present *DEPAVE: An Ecological Repair of the Ground*. As cities face increasing heatwaves, storms, and floods intensified by climate change, the built environment urgently requires a focus on ecological repair. The ground is a site of deep ecological exchange—this exhibition will explore how depaving can be a form of social and ecological repair, while acknowledging the complexities of planning regulations, urban mobility, and concerns of gentrification.

Urban areas like New York City are covered with impervious surfaces—concrete, asphalt, and compacted soil—that trap heat and block water flow, exacerbating inequality and disinvestment in green infrastructure. This “carbon form” of urban design, built during the fossil-fuel era, hinders environmental change—a greener, more just future requires rethinking. This exhibition asks: *What would it take to depave a portion of sidewalk, a parking lot, a freeway, an entire city?* Through drawings, maps, archival photos, and deconstructed materials, this project takes on depaving in two interconnected parts: (1) as an act of research that *uncovers* the complexities and maintenance protocols of the urban ground in New York City, and (2) as an act of design that repairs the ground through *subtraction*.

The first section, *Uncovering: Above and Below the Paved Surface*, delves into three “episodes” of the NYC ground as it exists today: urban heat, flooding, and ecological maintenance.

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Drawings and archival images contextualize the urban ground through a broader history of New York City and its entanglements with heat, hydrology, city agencies, and green infrastructure. This section will also explore the cyanotype, a photochemical process of exposure historically used for architectural blueprints.

The second section, *Subtracting: Depaving as an Act of Design and Repair*, imagines a new type of patchworked urban infrastructure that would transition impermeable surfaces toward resilient ones. A series of drawings by Friends Making Work details a "depaving action," portrayed as cuts on a leftover expanse of asphalt. Informed by an incremental approach to green infrastructure adopted by broader grassroots depaving movements such as Depave Portland, the drawings address repair through removal and remediation.

The exhibition's centerpiece is a tactile table display: a physical platform for conversation and action about urban design policies of repair. Reminiscent of a "chunk of earth," the table's layered strata are intended to provoke questions about what is above and below the ground surface, inviting discussion about the repair of the ground we share.

DEPAVE will organize programs over the course of the summer that explore the themes and actors of depaving.

Energies of Repair: Visualizing Community Power in NYC

The second CFA Lab team, Andrea Johnson and Ashley Dawson, will present *Energies of Repair: Visualizing Community Power in NYC*, an exploration of energy's often invisible infrastructure. In a city like New York, the electric grid exists mainly underground, and electricity seems to materialize out of thin air at the flip of a switch. Yet energy infrastructure is ubiquitous, shaping our city's built environment. Too often, this life-enhancing energy infrastructure is concentrated in the city's working-class communities of color, generating noxious pollutants that cut people's lives short. The energy system was built, refashioned, and resisted along New York's industrial waterfronts, important battlegrounds where futures of repair are being imagined and brought to fruition. If the planet is to avoid climate collapse, we must not only transition off fossil fuels but also re-organize our institutions and infrastructures democratically to repair the energy systems that have produced environmental, social, and racial inequity.

This exhibition unfolds in three parts: the first section, *Geographies of Sacrifice*, maps the past, present, and future of energy infrastructure in New York City and its broader extra-regional territory. It also examines the network of actors that sustain an extractive energy regime designed to serve investors at the expense of environmental and social justice.

The second section, *Public Power and Community Energy*, highlights how a publicly owned and democratically governed energy system must serve as a backbone for physical repair. This

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transformation has become more possible with the landmark Build Public Renewables Act, passed in 2023, as well as the potential for progressive municipal leadership to build and own renewable technologies across vast swaths of publicly owned land and buildings. This section also highlights the emergence of solar cooperatives grounded in the needs of local communities.

The final section of the exhibition, *Reparative Justice for Sacrifice Zones*, gathers a series of case studies on community repair work across the city, in Sunset Park, Greenpoint, and Rikers Island. Presented through photographs, maps, recorded interviews, and walking tours, the studies demonstrate how visions of repair are moving from idea to practice—showing the tangible impacts of community organizing and the design opportunities they create.

Energies of Repair Tours

In advance of the exhibition, the *Energies of Repair* team has organized two walking tours across New York City sites to explore concepts of energy repair in real life. The first Energies of Repair Tour, [Sunset Park Toxicity with UPROSE](#), takes place on Sunday, March 29. Founded in 1966, UPROSE is Brooklyn's oldest Latino community-based organization, committed to promoting environmental justice and resilience in Brooklyn and beyond. On this walking tour of Sunset Park, the group will visit sites of historical toxic exposure along the industrial waterfront and discuss the community's plan for a green re-industrialization, the GRID 2.0, and the way we'll get there with a Special Purpose District.

The second tour, [Fossil Fuels on Newtown Creek](#), takes place on Saturday, April 11 and explores how fossil fuel infrastructure, utility decisions, and pollution affect neighborhoods on both sides of Newtown Creek, and how communities are building alternatives. As we walk along the North Brooklyn waterfront with Sane Energy Project and Newtown Creek Alliance, we'll also highlight how the creek impacts our neighbors across the water in Western Queens.

Exhibition Opening

Please join us on Thursday, May 7, from 6–8pm at the Center for Architecture, 536 LaGuardia Place, New York, NY for an [opening reception](#). From 5–6pm, members of the press are invited to a VIP tour with the curators (RSVP to lkim@aiany.org).

Join us at ICFF (International Contemporary Furniture Fair)

On Monday, May 18, meet us at the Javits Center for [Reclaiming Power and Ground: Two Projects in Urban Repair](#), a conversation with **Christine Giorgio** of Friends Making Work and **Andrea Johnson, AICP**, on their respective projects exploring urban repair. **Mark Gardner**,

AIA, NOMA, 2026 President, AIA New York, and Principal, Jaklitsch/Gardner Architects, will moderate the discussion.

About the Residents:

Friends Making Work (Amelyn Ng, Gabriel Vergara, Christine Giorgio) is a design collective and practice of material interests based in NYC. With cumulative backgrounds in architecture, illustration, urban design, and film, the group's material interventions span exhibitions, media, and transdisciplinary design. Past projects include *D.E.P.O.T. / Gross Domestic Practices* and *Planetary Home Improvement: From Just-in-time to Geological Time*, both concerned with systems of material extraction, waste, and re-use. Friends Making Work co-founders are Amelyn Ng, Gabriel Vergara, and Christine Giorgio.

Amelyn Ng is an architect, researcher, and Assistant Professor of Architecture at Columbia University GSAPP. Working at the intersection of architecture, media studies, and visual culture, her creative practice contends with relationships between digital representation and physical matter, seeking alternate narratives to the status quo of building. Ng has previously taught at Rice University, Melbourne University, and the Rhode Island School of Design. A registered architect in the State of Victoria, Australia, Ng holds a Bachelor of Environments and Master of Architecture from the University of Melbourne, and a Master of Science in Critical, Curatorial, and Conceptual Practices at Columbia GSAPP. She also draws cartoons.

Gabriel Vergara is an Architect, Urban Designer, and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at Columbia GSAPP. He has previously taught landscape and urban design studios at the Rhode Island School of Design and Universidad Andres Bello in Chile. Vergara has collaborated with organizations in the U.S. and Latin America, including the Center for Justice Innovation in New York, the Art Museum of Ciudad Juarez in Mexico, and AriztiaLAB in Santiago. He has contributed to architecture and urban design firms such as One Architecture & Urbanism in New York and 51-1 Arquitectos in Peru. Vergara was a cofounder of SUSUKA, an architecture studio based in Chile and the local branch of Supersudaca in Santiago. He holds a Bachelor of Architecture from Universidad de Talca, Chile and Master of Science in Architecture and Urban Design at Columbia GSAPP.

Before pivoting to architecture, **Christine Giorgio** was active in the NYC independent film scene as a director, producer, and editor working across documentary and fiction formats. Her films have been recognized by international film festivals and nominated for an Independent Spirit Award. Giorgio's design practice synthesizes narrative concepts with spatial design, employing experimental approaches to excavate material truths. She is an AIA Associate and also works with clients on commercial and residential projects. Recent projects include a hemp-lime thermal retrofit in NYC and a ground-up residential construction on Long Island. Giorgio

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earned her M.Arch from Columbia University, where she was the recipient of the Lowenfish Memorial Prize.

Andrea Johnson, AICP, is a designer, AICP-certified planner, researcher, and educator with teaching experience at the Rhode Island School of Design, Barnard College, The City College of New York, and Brooklyn College. She works at the intersection of climate adaptation and urban landscape infrastructure, with a commitment to collaborating with communities to address complex socio-environmental challenges. With the support of an Architectural League/New York State Council on the Arts Independent Project Grant, Johnson published the *Atlas of Public Power* (2025), a project that maps New York State's energy system. As a Regional Plan Association Kaplan Chair for Urban Design Fellow, she collaborated with the Renewable Rikers Coalition to envision the island free of jail use and repurposed as a renewable energy hub. This work led to her role coordinating the Renewable Rikers committee of the Independent Rikers Commission, which produced a policy framework for closing Rikers and transforming it into a green infrastructure site.

Ashley Dawson is a Distinguished Professor at the College of Staten Island and at the Graduate Center / City University of New York, where he specializes in postcolonial studies and environmental humanities. Books of Dawson's such as *People's Power: Reclaiming the Energy Commons* (O/R, 2020) and *Extreme Cities* (Verso, 2017) focus, respectively, on political struggles for publicly governed renewable energy and on fights for democratic and just climate adaptation in waterfront cities such as New York. Dawson has been an activist with the Public Power NY campaign since its inception in 2019, and in this capacity was involved in efforts to pass and implement the Build Public Renewables Act (2023), which many commentators see as the most consequential piece of Green New Deal legislation to pass in the US in recent years. In 2024-25, Dawson was the Climate Justice Fellow at the arts organization Culture Push. He is the founder of the Public Power Observatory.

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About the Center for Architecture

The Center for Architecture, founded in 2003 by its partner AIA New York, engages local and international audiences with the value, impact, and wonder of architecture. Located in the heart of Greenwich Village, the Center for Architecture is also the home of the American Institute of Architects New York (AIANY), which cultivates an open, adept, and future-forward architectural community. Together, we advance the value and practice of architecture to promote just and sustainable communities.

Through exhibitions, public programs, educational initiatives, and our Archtober festival and platform, the Center for Architecture brings together architects, designers, students, and the public to foster collaboration within the design community while creating accessible opportunities for the public to experience and learn about architecture. Whether you're an industry professional, a curious visitor, or a student exploring the field, the Center for Architecture offers a space for connection, creativity, and critical conversation—empowering everyone to engage with the transformative power of architecture. centerforarchitecture.org