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Dark Matter U: Justice, Pedagogy, Design
to Open at the Center for Architecture

October 1, 2026–March 27, 2027

The Center for Architecture presents the first major US exhibition of and by Dark Matter U (DMU), an interdisciplinary network working across the built environment to challenge design pedagogy and model a new liberatory framework.

New York, NY, July 23, 2026 — The Center for Architecture is pleased to present *Dark Matter U: Justice, Pedagogy, Design*, an exhibition curated and produced by a Dark Matter U (DMU) network team. Initiated in the wake of the 2020 movement for Black Lives, DMU emerged as one of the first BIPOC-led transdisciplinary networks in the built environment, working to enact systemic change in the way we gather, teach, and produce design. On view October 1, 2026, through March 27, 2027, the exhibition invites visitors into the DMU universe, centering not only the network's joint work but the shared purpose that comes from organizing collectively.

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Over the past five years, DMU has grown into an enduring voice in the built environment, modeling a counter-institutional framework through which design pedagogy, education, and generative creative output can be conceived and produced. The work on view prompts visitors to leave the exhibition feeling connected to DMU's sense of purpose, and with a greater understanding of how to enact justice through organizing collectively.

Organized by a DMU curatorial team co-led by Venesa Alicea-Chuqui, Jerome Haferd, and Sophie Weston Chien, with exhibition designers Green Antarctica, *Dark Matter U: Justice, Pedagogy, Design* charts where DMU began and where it's going. The exhibition unfolds in three parts: recording past DMU work, documenting the collective's most recent and current efforts, and a provocation for the network's future.

DMU Archive: A Constellation of Knowledge

The part one retrospective interweaves DMU projects with research and teaching from individual DMU voices. Updating a DMU archive first shown in the 2022 *Trienal de Lisboa*, the exhibition begins with a visual constellation of content co-generated by the network's many members. This constellation is both a showcase of DMU's work and methods and a manifestation of the group's multiple identities and narratives. The archive connects their work with the processes they have built for collective knowledge production, practice, and community. The elements within the constellation—which represent a wide range of practitioners, student work, co-written pedagogy, and co-authored texts, among other things—constitute an archive of the ever-evolving collective knowledge of DMU's network.

DMU Summer Institute: Challenging Dominant Narratives

The exhibition's second section focuses on two immersive educational programs documented through quotes, photography, student work, maps, video, and audio. The DMU Summer Institute is a multi-year grant-funded initiative that reimagines design education through immersive, justice-centered learning, organized by DMU in collaboration with Florida A&M University. Bringing together students, educators, and emerging practitioners in architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design from institutions across the United States and Canada, the program explores new models of interdisciplinary collaboration beyond the traditional classroom.

Grounded in principles of design justice, the Summer Institute examines how movement, place, and community shape knowledge and design practice. A central goal is to challenge dominant narratives centered on large Northeastern cities by highlighting the Deep South as a vital site of cultural history, spatial practice, and intellectual leadership, while emphasizing the essential role

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of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in design education and community engagement.

The initiative takes place in two complementary phases. The first, the **Freedom Ride** (2024), transformed a journey through Georgia, Florida, and Alabama into a mobile classroom, where participants explored sites significant to Indigenous, Black, and queer histories through workshops, discussions, and collective reflection. The second phase, **Design Voices** (2026–2027), shifted to a five-day place-based convening co-hosted with the Coles House Project in Buffalo, New York, where participants engaged deeply with local communities to examine how collective action and grassroots organizing have shaped the built environment.

Together, these two models of experiential learning—one rooted in movement, the other in sustained engagement with place—offer a comparative framework for understanding how design can advance equity, social justice, and community-centered practice. The initiative will culminate in a public exhibition and publication in Fall 2027, contributing to ongoing conversations about the future of immersive design education.

DMU Office Hours: A Participatory Installation

The final section will invite visitors to participate in DMU's practice and question: what are they themselves unlearning, relearning, or wishing they had been taught in architecture school or in practice? Modeled after DMU's Office Hours, an ongoing series of virtual gatherings that offer forums for discussion and avenues for learning across the network, this section's activations will bring together DMU's shared landscape of themes and elaborate its time-developed archive of conversations surrounding the network's five core tenets.

Participants will co-create with DMU, imagining shared futures of joy, liberation, and anti-racist design justice in the built environment, and what that could look like in practice and education. Inspired by DMU's culture of dialogue, mentorship, and collective inquiry, this evolving installation invites visitors to share the questions and topics they want to explore. Over the course of the exhibition, these contributions will help shape future programming and foster ongoing conversations within and beyond the network.

Across its three sections, *Dark Matter U: Justice, Pedagogy, Design* reflects the collective and evolving nature of DMU and represents a network of educators, practitioners, students, and collaborators. The exhibition highlights the relationships, exchanges, and shared commitments that continue to shape new possibilities for centering design justice in education and practice.

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Present throughout the exhibition, a graphic identity designed by **Green Antarctica** is built around a custom dot-grid typeface. Each letter is a cluster of particles, suggesting the eclectic network of collaborators that undergird the organization. The visual language reflects the understanding that Dark Matter U moves through the world invisibly yet consequentially, from inside and outside the systems it has always sought to change.

DMU Curatorial Team: Venesa Alicea-Chuqui, Sophie Chien, Kiki Cooper, Pedro Cruz Cruz, Deena Darby, George Epolito, Jerome Haferd, Victor Zagabe

Exhibition Opening

Please join us October 1, 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 msolisprada@aiany.org).

About Dark Matter U

Dark Matter U (DMU) is a national and international democratic network of architects, planners, landscape architects, interdisciplinary designers, and other disciplines related to the built environment. DMU is guided by the principle that we cannot survive and thrive without a change toward collective and anti-racist models of design education and practice. The organization was founded in the summer of 2020 to work inside and outside of existing systems to challenge, inform, and reshape our present world toward a better future. Since its founding, DMU's "five principles" seek to create new and alternative forms of knowledge, institutions, collectivity, community, and design.

About Green Antarctica

Green Antarctica is a design and development studio based in Brooklyn, led by Ji Park and Tiger Dingsun. They make websites (and other things) for cultural institutions, artists, brands, and other organizations.

About the Center for Architecture

The Center for Architecture, founded in 2003 as one of the American Institute of Architects (AIA)'s first cultural institutions, engages local and international audiences with the value, impact, and wonder of architecture. Located in the heart of Greenwich Village, the Center for

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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.