In the contemporary U.S. city, material goods are bought and consumed, but, in large part, no longer made. With very low-cost container shipping, manufacture has moved to places with low labor costs. But there are hopeful signs. The idea of the city as a place of production, not only consumption, is re-emerging as environmental imperatives combine with peoples’ desires to be closer to the making of everyday things and food.¹

This studio involves the design of an urban building that supports a new approach to urban industry and its relationship to the city. We will design prototypes for buildings that accommodate the small-scale crafts-person/manufacturer who is sharing capital-intensive facilities with other people working in similar ways.

Within the overall framework of the program, each student will investigate the production of a particular product (possibilities include bicycles, furniture, musical instruments, food...) to develop an understanding of the spaces required to house the production process.

¹ Howard Davis, Working Cities: Architecture, Place and Production. London: Routledge 2020

The building, between 30,000 and 40,000 square feet, will be based on a program that allows for student input in its details. It will include:

- workshops & small production facilities
- a large production space
- a public space that connects production to the community. This may be a gallery or showroom, a small auditorium or performance space, or a public “living room”.
- And depending on individual interest, there is the possibility (but not requirement) of dwellings for people who work in the facility and that may include or be connected to the workshops

There are two possible sites: 1) on Portland’s Inner East Side in a place suitable for light industrial uses; or 2) in New York’s East Village, a rapidly changing, historic neighborhood. We will visit the Portland site on the first Friday of the studio, and Howard will describe the New York site, a place he knows well, in detail. Each student will choose one of the two sites by the second week.

Design will begin in the first week. Site studies, research into the production process and architectural precedents will happen as the design proceeds, when they are most relevant to the design process. Decisions about the basic construction system will come early, so that the building’s design will be informed by an understanding of its basic construction approach and materials.

The design will emphasize a strong connection between the building and the surrounding neighborhood, and the programmatic, spatial and material development of a complex and energy-responsible urban building. We will have weekly pinups and the expectation of a professionally presented project. The project will demonstrate a new way of seeing urban industry, integrated with everyday urban social and economic life.