

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION

The University of Michigan

A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning

Robert J. Adams, assistant professor of architecture, A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of architecture, with tenure, A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning.

Academic Degrees:

M.Arch. 1994 Southern California Institute of Architecture, Los Angeles, CA
B.A. 1989 Saint John's University, Visual Arts, Collegeville, MN

Professional Record:

2003 – present Assistant Professor of Architecture, A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Michigan
1998 – 2000 Adjunct Assistant Professor, College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN
1998 – 2000 Intern Architect, Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle Architects, Ltd., Minneapolis, MN
1998 Intern Architect, A-Studio, Minneapolis, MN
1997 Instructor, Southern California Institute of Architecture, Los Angeles, CA
1997 Instructor, Department of Environmental Arts, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, CA
1997 Intern Architect, Studio Works, Los Angeles, CA
1996 – present Principal, Adams + Gilpin, Ann Arbor, MI
1996 Faculty Resident, Sud California Instituto d'Architettura, Vico Morcote, Switzerland
1994-1996 Vico Fellow, Sud California Instituto d'Architettura, Vico Morcote, Switzerland
1994 Intern Architect, Richard Meier and Partners, Los Angeles, CA

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Adams is a remarkable teacher who has had a lasting impact on his students and their thinking about architecture. His courses in construction engage the subject matter both in pragmatic technical terms as well as a form of cultural critique. In a similar way, his design studios tend to be framed in speculative terms while nevertheless depending upon clearly formulated ideas and techniques about construction methods and technology. Throughout all of his courses, there is a strong impetus to relate conceptual strategies to various types of graphic and formal notation (mapping, measuring, surveying) that result in various forms of constructed apparatuses that both exhibit work and embody the sensibilities of the things they display.

Professor Adams teaches graduate design studios, including the required thesis studio, and graduate construction course where he has acted as course coordinator on multiple occasions. Additionally, he has co-directed the architecture program's study abroad option in China. Since his arrival, Professor Adams has restructured both the second of the two construction courses in the undergraduate program as well as the required graduate course in construction. Throughout

his various teaching endeavors, Professor Adams has maintained a vital link between his teaching and research interests in and around the combined interests of alternative urbanisms, material culture and China, as well as recent courses in disability and design.

Research/Creative Practice: Professor Adams is a designer who makes things that seek to transform how we engage the physical world. His design work has primarily taken the form of installations and exhibits in which artifacts, building apparatuses and architectural spaces are used to reveal and interrogate the social, political and experiential aspects of the public realm. He has forged a diverse body of work with his unique ability to relate innovative conceptual approaches to methods of material fabrication. From the design and construction of small-scale artifacts to large-scale installations and architectural projects, his work demonstrates how a close analysis of the cultural context of design may provide the basis for a distinct method of critical inquiry. By recognizing how design may be emblematic of a wide range of cultural attitudes and sensibilities, Adams bridges commonly upheld divisions within the discipline that challenge many of the presuppositions that currently define it, such as the myth of “authorship” and the “master architect.” Regardless of type, scale or circumstance, his work is grounded and animated by a sustained intention to render intangible societal forces visible in material form.

Professor Adams has charted a unique course for his design work. His contributions start with issues of construction highlighting that things that are “made” tell stories and reveal connections among systems, events, and thinking. China has been a venue for those interests as he explored the effects of rapid urbanization and globalization and illuminated connections that are hidden even to architects themselves. In recent years, he has also built a powerful commentary on disability as a design consideration and is a leader in getting the field of architecture to think differently, to learn from difference, and to transcend from just implementing compliance-based, minimum standards to something much more creative and inclusive.

Professor Adams’ work in both of his focus areas has been recognized in the form of numerous grants, exhibitions, articles and design publications. In all of his research, Professor Adams has used critical concepts and innovative design approaches to examine social bias in the built environment.

Professional Work, Exhibits, and Awards:

- 2011 The Asclepius Machine, University of California – Berkeley, Berkeley, CA (Invited Solo Exhibition)
- 2010 Honorable Mention, Seoul International Design Competition 2010, Design for All: Future Technology and Daily Living
- 2010 “Non-Identical Twins and Spatial Splinters,” [2010] in Jianfei Zhu, ed., Chen Li, trans. *Time + Architecture. Western Scholars on China: Architecture and Urbanism in China as a Critical Problem in a Global Debate*, Vol. 4., [Shanghai]; 40-47.
- 2009 Extreme Urban Euphoria, Tianjin University, Tianjin, China and Shenzhen University, Shenzhen, China (Invited Exhibitions)
- 2008 Reyner Banham Loves Beijing, 3rd Architectural Biennial Beijing, Ecological City/Building, Beijing, China (Juried Group Exhibition)
- 2008 XXXL Mao Jacket, FEI Space Gallery, Beijing, China (Invited Group Exhibition)

Service: Both inside and outside of the college, Professor Adams has been an active participant in numerous university initiatives and endeavors related to his commitments to disability culture and China studies. He is a member of the college's recently formed Design and Health Working Group; plays a leadership role with the Services for Students with Disabilities Office; is a member of the Center for Wireless Integrated Microsystems in the College of Engineering; and an active contributor to the National Center for Institutional Diversity regarding design and disability concerns within university settings. Perhaps his single most significant contribution in the area of service was the role he took in the Accreditation Committee from 2003-2006. Professor Adams turned the endeavor into a creative design project that offered the school a compelling look at itself in the form of an internally curated and elegantly expressed exhibition displayed centrally in the school for all to engage.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: "His interests in material conditions and the speed of urban development have proven rich material for both teaching and creative practice...I find this body of work to be energetic and thought provoking... I find the interdisciplinary approaches to design research including photographic mapping, video, installation and performance, community engagement, and material exploration to be valuable methods for working in a country such as China."

Reviewer B: "...he is quite successful with his tireless effort, especially on the teaching front and with his Beijing studios."

Reviewer C: "I am very impressed by his teaching portfolio, which includes both basic architectural and representational knowledge, but is taught using innovative and creative assignments."

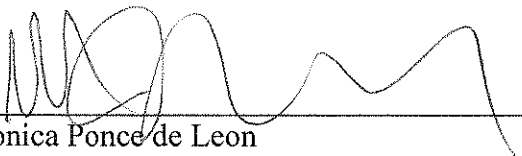
Reviewer D: "On what concerns Urban China research, the candidate has already demonstrated a very high contribution to the community and is recognized as one of the few foreign researchers on the topic by approaching urban research from a multidisciplinary angle."

Reviewer E: "Adams' Chinese research and projects are... intelligent and deeply reflective...Adams cuts across broad territories from labor to design revealing an artist/designer with an intent to reach a larger audience than an architectural one."

Reviewer F: "There is a small but serious and extraordinarily talented cohort of creative scholars in architecture institutions across America attempting to wrestle the high-pitched issue of diversity (in its various manifestations – in Robert's case disability-related and technologically-oriented)...Robert's scholarly practice is situated deftly among them...He is a unique voice in our field..."

Reviewer G: "I find that at all levels – architectural research and production, design education (both of students and of communities outside the University), and service activities that include the difficult administration of study abroad programs – Mr. Adams' work is original, rigorous, and socially relevant."

Summary of Recommendation: Professor Adams is an architectural designer who has charted a unique course for his design research. His work bridges the functional aspects of construction with politically charged questions about the role of architecture in upholding social stereotypes, at the same time that it demonstrates an unusual and consistent aesthetic sensibility. He is a gifted teacher whose instruction has a lasting impact on his students and their thinking about architecture. He has also been an exemplary colleague, actively serving on various initiatives both inside and outside of the college. It is with the support of the Taubman College Promotion and Tenure Committee and the Executive Committee that I recommend Robert J. Adams for promotion to associate professor of architecture, with tenure, A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning.



Monica Ponce de Leon
Dean, and Eliel Saarinen Collegiate Professor of Architecture and Urban Planning
A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning

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