SEMINAR— FESTIVAL URBANISM + SUPERGRAPHIC LANDSCAPES

Illinois School of Architecture
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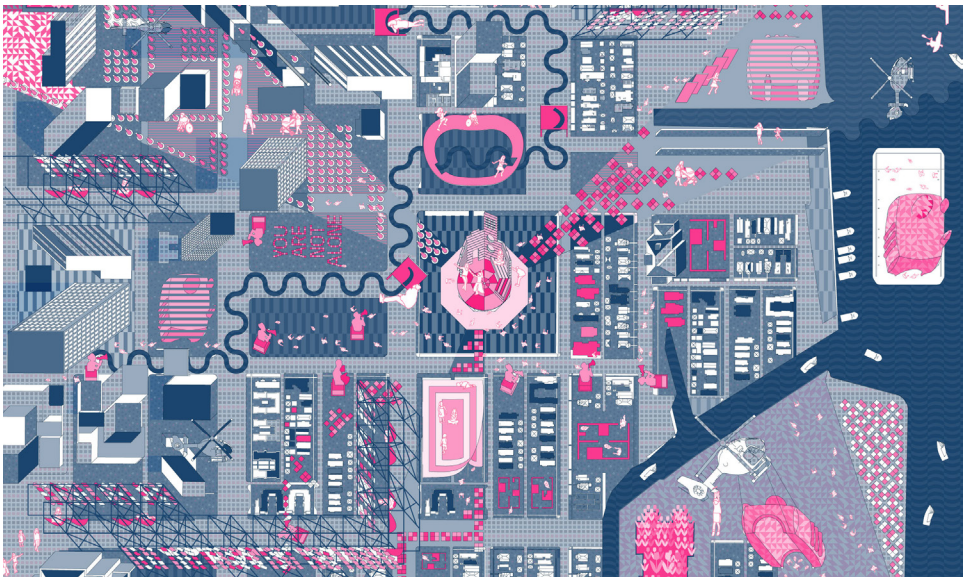
Spring 2027

ARCH 593: Special Problems in Detail and Fabrication | 3.000 Credits
Joseph Altshuler, Associate Professor
Thursdays 11:00–1:50 | 315 Temple Hoyne Buell Hall

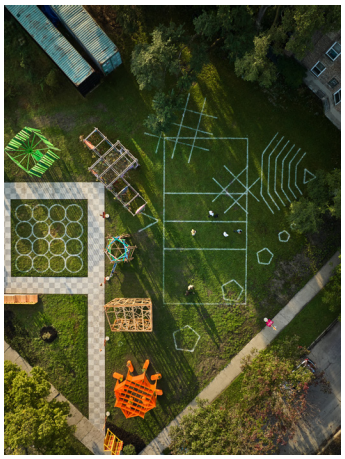


Right: Joseph Altshuler and Amir Zarei, *Speculative World III: A Drawing of Chicago's South Side* (2026). Part of Joseph Altshuler and Nekita Thomas' book *Supergraphic Landscapes: From Public Art to Urban Design* (Applied Research & Design, 2026).

Below: Could Be Design, Chicago Sukkah Design Festival (2022–2026).

Calling all 3rd— and 4th—year undergraduates and graduate students interested in public space, public art, and urban design! Let's design a civic festival!

Sitting at the crossroads of architecture, graphic design, landscape architecture, and urban design, *Festival Urbanism + Supergraphic Landscapes* investigates the future of public space—and how rethinking graphics, events, partnerships, and celebration in the built environment can spark new forms of civic participation. This course reframes festivals as not one-off special events, but as a durational civic force with the creative capacity to reshape the city and transform public spaces into places of connection, care, and collective memory. How do we collaboratively design a festival to impact city long after its public programming concludes? Throughout the semester, we'll speak with contemporary design practitioners, collaborate with community partners and civic agencies, and produce speculative drawings and models that imagine bold festival design strategies and social infrastructures that build bridges between the College of Fine and Applied Arts and the Urbana-Champaign community.



The course unfolds through three thematic lenses, each offering a distinct narrative entry point into the theory and practice of Supergraphic Landscapes: **Play-scapes**—saturated patterns that reorganize movement and invite role-playing, risk-taking, and cooperative games; **Care-scapes**—surface textures that soften infrastructures to support everyday life; **Action-scapes**—monumental gestures and superimposed layers that open new forms of commemoration. For each theme, a guest practitioner will join us virtually to share project experience, design strategies, and intellectual insight. The course culminates in a civic festival design proposal with campus and community partners.