Raoul Wallenberg, a 1935 graduate of the University, has been called one of the 20th century’s most outstanding heroes. He is credited with saving tens of thousands of Jews from extermination at the hands of the Nazis and Fascists in the waning days of World War II. Each year, students in their final studio of the BS in Architecture degree participate in the Wallenberg Studio, which honors the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg through an overall studio theme focused on a broad humanitarian concern, explored through propositions put forward by studio section faculty. Students are challenged to question architecture’s relationship to humanitarian issues. Trade Secrets: An Architectural Enclave focused on the intersection of architecture and ethics by exploring the architectural spaces and working conditions of one of America’s largest corporations, Amazon.com. This studio took the position that we need to look no further than our own backyard (or computer) to find spaces where architecture can have a meaningful impact on the humanitarian issues of today. Students in this studio explored themes ranging from workplace discrimination and income inequality to the transparency of corporate headquarters and workplace surveillance. Students uncovered the deep reach of Amazon.com, which includes data storage for the NSA, delivery drone programs, and growing consumer information banks. The studio included a field trip to a 1-million-square-foot Fulfillment Center so that the students could experience the vast, endlessness workplaces inhabited each day by thousands of Americans.

Mission Statement: This studio will explore the architecture of secrets.

Warning: Students who elect this studio should be prepared to explore an architecture of secrets, whispers, miscommunications, optics, and political strategies.

Background: Our lives are filled with enclaves. We move seamlessly from gated communities and shopping malls to office parks and airports. Architecture has often obsessed over the enclave. From Michel Foucault’s heterotopias to David Grahame Shane’s armatures and Keller Easterling’s zones, architects have interrogated the enclave as an architectural glitch in the spatial system.

This studio will explore one of the most fascinating mutations of the modern enclave: the corporate campus. Participants of this studio will delve into the inner workings of one of the largest, most well-known American companies, Amazon.com. As the company’s CEO, Jeff Bezos, recently stated, “Frugality drives innovation, just like other constraints do. One of the only ways to get out of a tight box is to invent your way out.”

Corporate campuses as enclaves are closed systems which create their own hierarchies, regulations and cultural practices that may or may not reflect the territories, states, or cities they reside within. Recent corporate clients have looked to famous architects to see the design of their headquarters not as a mere building design, but as a broader, ideological statement about the future of work-life balance, inclusive workplaces, information driven social hierarchies, and corporate public image. This studio will begin to challenge the status quo of contemporary corporate headquarters and create designs which consider issues such as privacy, fear, and social strata, as well utopian corporate identities.
Trade Secrets

An Architectural Enclave

University of Michigan, Taubman College
Arch 440 Wallenberg Studio, Instructor Ashley Bighane

Mission Statement:
This studio will explore the architecture of secrecy.

Introduction:
Ravilious, a 1913 graduate of the University of Michigan, has been called one of the greatest architects of the 20th century. His designs were characterized by an emphasis on the Studio context and the use of such techniques as the "locus" and "field." Ravilious' designs were often informed by his studies at the Harvard Studio, which honored the legacy of Ravilious and encouraged students to develop their own unique architectural language. Through the Studio context, students were challenged to question architecture's relationship to humanistic values. Trade Secrets: An Architectural Enclave focuses on the intersection of architecture and artistry by exploring the architectural spaces and working conditions of some of America's largest corporations. Amazon.com. This studio took this position as we work to understand the contemporary architectural landscape and the role of secrecy in shaping the built environment.

Background:
The sites are filled with echoes. We were numerous from our own community and shopping malls to suburban parks and airports. Architecture has been shaped by the secrecy of our own lives. From Michel Foucault's witness to David Graham's annunciation and Rollin Baxley's house, architects have interrogated the enclosed environment as an architectural ethic.

This studio will explore one of the most fascinating innovations of the modern enclave: the corporate campus. Participants in this studio will arrive at the new building of one of the largest, most well-known American companies, Amazon.com. As the company's CEO, Jeff Bezos, recently stated, "Amazon.com is the right company at the right time to make a meaningful impact on the humanistic issues of today. Students in this studio explore themes ranging from workplace differentiation and increased inequality to the transparency of corporate headquarter and workplace surveillance.

LordBoom Project:
This project is a radical rethinking of the worker's experience in the distribution context and creates a workspace that is both production and consumption within a live/work typology. Architectural precedents, religious typologies and sources of ritual were studied. Within these religious typologies, the worker becomes an integral part of the ritual process through their labor and dedication to a cause. Applying this need to Amazon, the worker could perform through the act of building, thus becoming a part of the ritual. This act creates a sense of ownership for the workers who now see Amazon's social rituals such as working and sharing products from shelves. Workers engage themselves in Amazon, living in houses that are built with the knowledge that they are constructing their own space. This transforms the relationship between the identity of the worker, the identity of the office, and the office where the two begin to interact. The project becomes the place for critique and productivity.

Amazon Headquarters
This project seeks to investigate the human resources and financial capital of Amazon.com in order to address the current Amazon office culture crisis. Amazon.com has historically been a division of the company called "Amazon Research" which competes with websites like EBay. A new call center workplace for Amazon Research is now combined with housing, religious spaces, and offices. In a combined humanistic effort and act of self-transportation Amazon seeks to create a worker's retreat away from the corporate world while maintaining their potential to thrive in a new, safe, environment. While this project is quite varied in its approach to space, order, secure, and comfortable browsing, these offices, is acknowledges possible effects of aerospace which might be used by a private, for-profit corporation renting on this social structure. This project aims to comment on the ability and limits of private companies to foster social change.

Structure & Office
The typical Amazon research center lacks human scale and basic amenities for employees. Employees will up to 15 miles a day with few breaks and suffer mental and physical exhaustion as a result of harsh working conditions. The office is designed to provide employees with a more comfortable and safe environment. Each cell consists of a private office or studio with an open, connected work area. Each studio is equipped with a small conference room, a small kitchenette, and a bathroom. The studio is designed to accommodate up to six employees. Each studio is connected to a central core that includes the reception area, the conference rooms, and the kitchen. The core provides a central location for all employees to interact and socialize. This design promotes collaboration and interaction among employees, which can lead to increased productivity and job satisfaction. The project aims to create a more human-centered workplace that fosters creativity and innovation.