

ACSA Candidate for Second Vice President (4-year term)

Marwan Ghandour, Louisiana State University

Candidate Statement

Architecture as an academic and professional field is based on four disciplinary fundamentals: Social responsibility, environmental stewardship, technical proficiency, and spatial choreography. Interrogating these fundamentals in the second quarter of the twenty-first century raises many questions that the global architecture academic community can address.

While intervention in the built environment is an opportunity to create safe, hopeful, and healthy spaces for humanity, such intervention is also a device for cultural erasure and spatial domination. New horizons of progress for humanity can be unlocked with projects such as downtown regeneration, postwar reconstruction, post-disaster recovery, highways, real estate development, and communal settlement projects. But as we well document, the opposite tends to occur. Projects like these are used repeatedly as tools for selective economic and physical confinement that can cause cultural annihilation, social marginalization and environmental calamities.



Architects and architectural thinkers were instrumental in bringing us here. It is time to readdress the timeless question: is architecture mainly a tool in the service of economic and political power? More importantly: *What is the unexploited potential of the agency of architects, architectural practice, and architectural thinking?* Where should we expand the institutional and professional platforms in which architectural agency can be more impactful?

The construction of buildings and urban spaces is also an act of disruption and replacement of existing physical, social and natural environments. In our hyper-networked world, architects' local actions may have global repercussions. Unpacking the global connectedness of architectural practice as a construction/disruption act provides a clear perspective to the consequences of what we do as architects and scholars. *How can we better cultivate our actions and spatial ambitions in the context of what we disrupt or replace?* Who are we inviting to our conversations to holistically understand the impact of our spatial and material actions?

Architecture is one of the few remaining interdisciplinary academic fields. Architects can be excellent interlocutors with social scientists, builders, artists, politicians, designers, and engineers. Are we using this unique trait for its full potential? Are we embracing the full spectrum of possible architectural practices in the contemporary world? *How much is interdisciplinarity valued in the way our curricula are structured, and our programs are being evaluated?*

Architectural design thinking embraces research methods that are based in multi-scalar vision and diverse material manifestations. While these methods, such as analytical mapping, visualization, and experimental modeling, are increasingly utilized in multidisciplinary projects, we are yet to normalize their application to expand and complement existing quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. *Should we broaden the definition of architectural practice to create new opportunities in which our research methodologies can be employed?* Do architectural institutions provide the appropriate infrastructure for such expanded research activity?

These open questions emerge from teaching, administration, practice, and research that I have conducted in the Middle East, American Midwest, Latin America, East Africa, and the American South. The multiple (and sometimes contradictory) faces of architectural practice are uncovered in refugee camps in Lebanon, urban renewal in Beirut, resilient construction in Kigali, industrial farming in Iowa, segregated urbanism in Louisiana, coastal fragility in San Juan, environmental territorialization in Panama City, and informal building in Lima. The consistency in which the constructive as well as the destructive role that architects had in these different locations highlight the need to re-articulate the discipline's priorities, values, and potential for the ensuing decades.

I began my teaching and practice in Beirut, where I am from, during a 15-year war. Within cycles of violence, spatial interventions presented moments of hope and reconciliation. I sustained my practice with a deep belief in the ability of design to make a difference in the places I lived in. I carried the themes and frameworks that were established in my time in Lebanon with me to Iowa and later Louisiana. In these places and other contexts I have engaged with across Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, my ambition has been to bring marginalized voices to the center of my practice. The need to face inequity and societal conflicts are what drives my passion for the craft and for continuing to be curious in what is possible. My administrative mission is to focus on transparency and the centrality of collaboration, equity for building an environment of opportunity and creativity, and the importance of innovation in addressing the social-environmental crisis that we are living.

We are currently reaping the consequences of the way our field was previously defined. This is the right time for us to check the fundamentals of our discipline and I am grateful to have all of you to share with. ACSA is the ideal community to do that through the debates that can be hosted, partners that can be invited, academic infrastructure that can be developed, and geographies that can be engaged.

Abbreviated Curriculum Vitae—Marwan Ghandour

EDUCATION

- 1988 Master of Science in Architecture & Building Design, Columbia University, New York
1986 Bachelor of Architecture, American University of Beirut

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2017-present Louisiana State University, School of Architecture, Director & Emogene Pliner Professor
2003-2017 Iowa State University, Department of Architecture, Professor, Director of Master of Urban Design (2013-2017), Director of Master of Design in Sustainable Environments (2013-2017), Associate Dean for Academic Programs for the College of Design (2010-2014), Director of Graduate Architecture Education (2007-2010)
1988-2003 American University of Beirut, Senior Lecturer

RECENT COURSES

- Fall 2023 ARCH 4003-M Arch beginning design. *Textures of Living: introduction architectural thinking and making*
Spring 2022 ARCH 4002-B Arch fourth year. *Dynamic Urbanism: envisioning strategies for climate change in San Juan, PR.*
Fall 2020 ARCH 5000- Advanced option studio. *Design Ugly: undo spaces of racial injustice in Baton Rouge.*
Fall 2019 ARCH 5000- Advanced option studio. *At the Border in Panama City: building, infrastructure and change.*

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- 2017 Marwan Ghandour, The Multiple Limas: urban design at the periphery. *LIMAPOLIS 2016* (PUCP-LIMA, 2017).
2016 Marwan Ghandour, "The Urban Infrastructure for Sustainability: learning from Kigali." 'SFC 2016 – Sustainable Futures conference: Architecture and Construction in the Global South' Conference Proceedings - United Nations Headquarters in Africa, Nairobi (Stellenbosch University, 2016).
2013 Marwan Ghandour, "Who is 'Ain el-Hilweh?'" *Jadaliyya*, September 2013. Online Publication, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/14379/who-is-%E2%80%98ain-el-hilweh>.
2012 Marwan Ghandour, "The Architect Citizen: the nature of civic engagement in postwar reconstruction projects in Lebanon" *2012 Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture International Conference; Change: architecture, education, practices, Barcelona, June 2012* (Washington, D.C.: ACSA, 2012).
2009 Mona Fawaz and Marwan Ghandour, "Spatial Erasure: reconstruction projects in Beirut," *ArteEast Quarterly*, December 2009. Online publication <http://www.arteeast.org/pages/artenews/extra-territoriality/254/>
2008 Marwan Ghandour and Peter Goche, "Guidelines for Spatial Regeneration in Iowa" (Washington DC: American Institute of Architects, 2008).
2007 Marwan Ghandour, "The Early Maps of Iowa and their Politics" in Mark Swenarton, Igea Troiani and Helena Webster, eds., *The Politics of Making* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007). Pp. 244-256.
2006 Marwan Ghandour, "On Cities and Designers: A Baalbeck Story," *Architecture Research Quarterly*, vol 10, issue 1, March 2006 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Pp 37-49.
2003 Marwan Ghandour, "Instituting Exclusiveness: Modern Lebanese Architects and their Society," *Proceedings of the 2002 Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture International Conference: Architecture, Culture, and the Challenges of Globalization, Havana June 21-24, 2002* (Washington: ACSA Press, 2003). Pp. 363-367.

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2011 *Zaatari Residence*, Saida, Lebanon; Moustapha and Nazek Zaatari. BUA=1000m².
2007 *Scientific Research Building*, AUB Campus-Beirut, Lebanon; American University of Beirut. BUA=4500m².
2008 *Hariri 2 Elementary School*, Beirut, Lebanon; Hariri Foundation. BUA=6200m².
2008 *AUB School of Nursing*, AUBMC-Beirut, Lebanon; American University of Beirut. Historic building rehabilitation.
2001 *Hariri 3 Elementary School*, Beirut Lebanon; for Hariri Foundation, Beirut. BUA=6500m².
1999 *Nahr el Bared Kindergarten*, North Lebanon; for Ghassan Kanafani Cultural Foundation, Beirut. BUA=900m².

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

Lebanese Order of Architects and Engineers (1988-2005)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Associate AIA, NOMA, ACSA, ARCC.