"The Occupant Turn: When Architecture Imagines Specific Bodies."
Panelist: Thom Donovan

Talk Abstract: The first semester curriculum for architecture at Pratt emphasizes “ontology” via the generation and analysis of a set of rules towards the emergence of an architectural “proto concept.” In the second semester, students continue to generate architectural drawings and models through the generation rule sets and their analysis, however are also asked for to consider a particular site context and to conceive of programs based upon occupants’ embodiments. In my talk I would like to consider the challenges of this turn in the curriculum from a disembodied (abstractly or normatively embodied) approach to architectural design under the rubric of “ontology” towards approaches to design which consider the relationships shared by specifically embodied subjects as a source for ontological investigations (of site conditions, building properties, program, etc.). Namely, I will discuss how teaching two courses side-by-side with the 1st year architectural studio—the first on poetics and “disability,” the second on poetics and “blackness”—have provided opportunities for radicalizing a process of architectural investigation informed by the sociopolitical dilemmas and antagonisms specific embodiments make urgent. How might these two seemingly disparate approaches to architectural design be successfully synthesized in the 1st year curriculum?

Limbs of Language Scale and architecture prepositions alone don’t have scale. Parts of speech limbs of language and scale. Excerpt from text in Lausane.

Thom Donovan is a poet, editor, teacher, and curator. He is the author of nine chapbooks of poetry and his first full-length book, The Hole, appeared with Displaced Press in 2012. His books Withdrawn, Withdrawn a Discourse, and Usufruct (a collaboration with Rob Halpern) are forthcoming in the following year.

Bronwyn Breitner is a founding partner of 590BC, an architecture firm based in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. She has over 10 years of experience teaching architectural design studios at Pratt and Parsons.