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GRACE LA: From Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, this is *Talking Practice*, a series asking renowned designers to provide an inside glimpse into what they do, why, and how they do it, exposing the ways in which their design imagination is articulated through practice. I'm Grace Lu, professor of architecture and chair of the Practice Platform. Thank you for listening.

Joining me today is architect Jeanne Gang, the founding principal of Studio Gang, an international architecture and urban design practice based in Chicago, New York, and San Francisco. Drawing insight from ecological systems, Jeanne is recognized for research-based design process that foregrounds the relationship between individuals, communities, and environments.

Jeanne has recently been appointed professor of practice at the GSD, where she has taught a variety of studios since 2011, exploring the multifaceted potential of materiality. This semester, she's teaching a studio on storm surge and resilience. Welcome, Jeanne. Thank you so much for being with us.

JEANNE GANG: Thanks, Grace. I'm glad to be here.

GRACE LA: We had a long relationship with you, obviously, because you are a graduate of the school, and you've come back to lecture for us on many occasions, as well as to teach with us. But this is a chance for us to really talk about your practice and maybe speak more intimately about some of the things that drive your practice.

One of the things I would like to ask you about, and maybe that other folks don't know as much about is, how did you come to start? And we actually even find the name of your practice, Studio Gang, quite interesting because it's both individual and plural. So maybe you could tell us a little bit about that.

JEANNE GANG: Yeah. For sure. I'm glad that you are doing this podcast because I really am passionate about designing practice, and I think of it as a design project. So it's nice to be able to just talk about that simply and directly with you today. The question, when did it start or how did it start, I think for me, I knew early on, I mean, before I even came to the GSD that I wanted to run my own show.

And it was just an independent streak that I have always had, and I wanted to explore ways that the practice could be different than what I had already seen. What I had seen was a model that was very traditional, where the main architect would start something on a sketch, hand it out to the studio, and then develop from there.

And so I wanted to more use architecture like a medium, like you would use any medium in the arts to explore how to comment on the world, how to make a mark on the world, how to impact the world and make change. So it was a different goal for starting it. I had a project. So I started out. So it was a really deep embedded goal of mine from the very beginning.

GRACE LA: So tell me about that because I think we are familiar with the traditional mode of practice. I think particularly when you and I actually graduated from the GSD, that really was the mode. There was a senior architect or the principal in charge of a project, and that really was the method.

They would come up with a kind of initial parti Even that word is quite old now. It's really not used anymore. But that parti would then be passed off to the group. So tell us how your studio differs. I'm very curious about the process orientation and how you work through your projects.

JEANNE GANG: Well, first of all is there's no eliminating any type and typology of project that comes in the door or even ones that we pursue. So it could be anything as small as an installation to a big tower, to a city plan, or a plan for helping an organization strategize about what they want to be.

So it gets into a lot of areas that I think design can be helpful for, but it's really triggered by an interest in the subject matter problematizing the project that might come through the door. Let's say, now that we're bigger, we literally sit down every week and go through a list of projects that have asked us to respond.

And it's the go, no-go meeting. And we really look at what the project entails. We try to understand what the potential of that project is, to move the needle on architecture, to create a new line of thinking, or maybe it's a lot, or maybe it's just a little move the needle on that subject. So we think of those projects as opportunities to explore bigger questions and at the same time, a real true exploration of the material, the form of architecture.

GRACE LA: Yeah. If we take, for example-- let's just say, I know your practice is working at many scales. So if we take, for example, the building project as just one modality, can you describe more specifically-- and let's just say the goal as you say, is to move the needle. So when you do that, how many are on that team?

What does it look like? What's the complexion of that? And who's leading it? And, again, because I think your firm name really actually reveals something about the collaborative process as well as you in terms of its leadership, I'll also mention that it's quite interesting that, again, most of the traditional practices are top-down.

So design occurs at the top, and then it's filtered down. Whereas I was very intrigued, years ago showed us a diagram in which you structure yourselves as a tree. So it's bottom-up. And the people in the firm are the leaves and the branches, and that grows from you and Mark and your leadership as the trunk. So anyway, I'd like to understand. So again, from the specific modality of a building, how are you structuring that collaborative process?

JEANNE GANG: Well, I could start by talking about how that is today. But it organically literally grew into what it is today. But the way that it would work today is starting with this organization that we have. We tested different kinds of organizations for our practice. And this one that I came up with, basically, after lots of interactions with different people and our whole entire staff thinking about it, this one kind of has some major branches of the tree.

The trunk, yes, that's me and the roots are the values of what we care about. So if you imagine a project coming in, the two major sides of the tree are design now and then design management. And you notice I say design management not management because people who are in design management are also designers.

And so it's all about design. But the team would be composed of me and the design side, Mark or William, another collaborator on the design management side, and then project architects, designers on both sides of these branches. And literally when people first come into the organization, they are not pigeonholed into design or design management.

You start out trying to explore everything, and you kind of migrate to the thing that you're good at and that you enjoy. So a team would be made up of both designers and design managers and just people doing both tasks really, led by a project architect and then a design principal who works directly with me and then on the operations of management side, someone leading on that side, too.

So it gets touched by really senior everyone all the way to me, to senior designers and experienced design managers, all the way to people who are maybe it's their first day on the job at Studio Gang. So it's a team composed of these different levels that will work with me to help flush out those questions that we talked about, like the issues of the project, starting with research, starting with understanding the whole landscape around this question and then digging down, proceeding on with the project from there.

Maybe said in another way, the organization of the practice today is like this tree, and the basic sides of it are design and design management. So the team gets composed of people from both sides of that trunk. What I like about the tree is literally it can grow another whole branch. So what we've done in the last five years is really started an urban design practice as well that has its design and its design management.

It's really able to respond organically to what's needed. The whole concept of it is to make it so that people with more experience are really supporting and mentoring people that are newer. So you can become a branch. There is no problem with that, and you don't have to stomp all over someone to get there.

You just have to support other people. And so you see how it totally changes the way we think about our relationship to our colleagues. If you can help support them and them doing the best they can do, that's the goal. And then the project benefits from it, I think.

I think it benefits much more from this approach than from the more, let's say, Darwinian model, where you're trying to win out over everyone else. When we started to grow, I felt like I needed some advice about how to grow the practice. And we brought some consultants in. This is when we were about 35 people.

And they recommended the structure, but we wanted to test it out from everybody's idea within the practice first. So we had these amazing, incredible diagrams made by everyone in the Office of how we should structure ourselves. And we had some incredible funny like cool diagrams-- some to do with biology, some to do with machines and so on.

But the result of that exercise was we were going to have these pairs of leaders for different practices within, let's say, everyone that is working with clients that are organized like developers, everyone that is working with clients that are organized like universities, because we recognize these different structures need different things.

So that was our first attempt. But then it didn't work out because after we did it for about a year, we realized that there was just not enough flexibility in it. And also it was clear that there were people who were just good leaders in the design capacity and in the design management capacity.

And everybody wants to work on slightly different projects too, not just the same projects. So we just trashed that model after we tried it out together, and we came up with the tree, which is more the design leaders in the design management. And the important thing about design management, it's not just checking off boxes like managing a flow of work and achieving the deliverables. It's really about seeing when those critical moments are to bring in like me or to look at something to bring in designers to do another study of design.

There's actual design decisions in that role, very important ones, because otherwise, if you are going along managing a project and you don't look for those warning signs or positive things--

GRACE LA: Opportunities.

JEANNE GANG: --opportunities, you're missing the chance to make the project rise up and be excellent. So it's about bringing it to this excellent level. So someone in the management role, which we call design management, has got to be a good designer and someone who's just like, OK, we need to have a meeting with these people involved because there's a design thing that needs to be solved. So that oftentimes comes from the design manager not just the design lead. So you see what I mean? There's a capacity there that's very important.

GRACE LA: So it's almost as if the design manager needs to be as sensitive as the actual designer, because this person needs to really know when to capitalize on a very particular moment.

JEANNE GANG: Exactly.

GRACE LA: And to potentially redirect the project, its path, its workflow towards a more innovative end even perhaps, which is quite different than somebody who is responsible for making the path go from A to B initiation to closure in a smooth way, which is actually most project managers are considered successful if they make the path very streamlined and very smooth in terms of non-deviant behaviors.

JEANNE GANG: I really wanted to design a practice that was actually fun and where I wanted to be and where I wanted to be with the other people and to learn about the other people and to see what their talents were. I think I had in mind to make it more of a fun culture where there's discovery, co-creation, discovery, like bringing out talents that people have and maybe they didn't even they had or they have in other fields.

Like for example, we do things together. Like a couple people started doing teaching, learning to be teachers in yoga. Eventually now they do our yoga classes every week. And other people are musicians. So we try to cultivate that kind of, I mean, maybe it sounds corny, but it's so much fun.

That's the point was to be able to have that trust that takes a while to build up, not trust to the point where someone is not performing. That hurts the whole team. So that needs to be addressed. But if you can help someone get better performance and better ideas and learn new skills, I think that's what I feel good about at the end of the day.

GRACE LA: Yeah. And so that actually was different than, let's say, perhaps your time in not necessarily even at Rem's office, but just in general in the past in more traditional firm practices?

JEANNE GANG: Right. As you can tell, I'm trying not to-- I don't want to criticize someone else's practice, but my model practice is develop based on, yes, things I didn't like in other practices.

GRACE LA: Sure, sure.

JEANNE GANG: Taking things that I did like to make it authentically comfortable for me as a leader of my practice. I want it to be this way. And so I also seek out other people that and collaborators that are like minded because it has to work. It's very close. We spend so many hours together. So it's nice to like the people you're working with.

GRACE LA: Right. So from the design side, Jeanne, that would be you. And then from the management side or the design management side specifically, that would be Mark Schendel.

JEANNE GANG: Exactly.

GRACE LA: It would be great if we could turn to another question that seems to be a strand in the work. And this is the question of the tectonic culture that you are imbuing your projects that really is born out of the process. But we see as a seminal interest from your early days, even with the hanging marble curtain, which was years and years ago, I think, if I'm not mistaken, I remember you talking about that project just as it came when I was faculty at the University of Wisconsin.

And you were describing the installation for that project and finding methods to suspend it from the ceiling and the backing on it. Tell us a little bit about your interest in the material culture?

JEANNE GANG: It's kind of the combination of technology, craft, and material that I find as an essential piece for me, for us, and my practice as an essential piece of, let's say, the satisfying architectural installation, building, object, whatever, because that's the scale of invention that is maybe not even noticeable in today's media environment, where you're really just looking at images of buildings online, but it's the reward that you get when you actually go there.

And so as someone who will hike or travel or get on planes, trains, and automobiles to go see a good building and be there in person, I want our designs to have that layer of thought applied. It's the fractal aspect of design. How do you take the big picture concept and bring it all the way down to the way two materials come together?

And this is not to say it's old school like tectonic. I know that a lot of people don't even think it's relevant, but for us, it is so relevant. It's so much about the joy of making something, which is one of the reasons why we continue to do installations, to really have that opportunity to put materials together on a scale that can be done in a quick more of a time frame of months instead of years.

GRACE LA: I'd like to turn attention to some of let's say, the categories of projects that Studio Gang has been doing. On the one hand, maybe we could categorize these in maybe four ways that there are developer-driven projects, for example, your acclaimed high rise Aqua Tower or even the Montparnasse kind of project that, again, you have a very heavy development component.

The second institutionally-driven projects, for example, your work with the American Museum of Natural History Science Center, and then, of course, the public projects. A third would be things that you're thinking about that have to do with ecological and urbanistic concerns. And then fourth might even be a category of installations and exhibitions that have to do with thought processes and maybe some of this root structure that you described earlier.

Can you talk about specific tactics that are different in these categories, or how are you imagining this body of work which, again, hopefully I characterize this correctly, but it seems there are these four areas of the practice?

JEANNE GANG: So for me, the thing that unites them is that we are trying to make projects that create better, let's say, relationships between people and people in their environment. So I put in that big basket, the tall buildings are very important because as we tried to densify our cities, we want people to not get isolated in ivory towers and living in towers.

And how do you make these towers connected to people socially and to make them aware of where they are living? So those fit into the same category as me as maybe a theater organization that's trying to spread theater to more people to be more civic player, to be more of a convener, and to help build these stronger community local ties.

So all of these things to me fit into the category. Now, they're each one of them requires a little bit different schedules, skills, methodologies. I would put taller buildings or whether they're developer. In fact, the Montparnasse competition, that was not developer-driven. So it was owner-driven.

So these tall buildings, though, are very specific in how they are conceived and worked out the speed at which they have to be studied. So they have a really unique process. And then more along the lines of the schedule and the things that you produce are a little bit different. But then most of the time we're thinking of we're helping the organizations. I'm really attracted to ones where the organization is trying to imagine its next step and its future.

GRACE LA: So are you finding that your consultant teams, I'm sure that they're expanding, and they're probably unusual. Again, we're very familiar with the typical kinds of consultants that one brings on to any particular project. When you reach outside that, can you provide us with some examples of whom you were collaborating that is maybe outside of traditional consultants.

JEANNE GANG: Sure. Because some of these problems, they might not even need a mechanical engineer, for example, or it might be something different. So more and more, we are looking to-- especially in the urban projects-- to the public themselves for some expertise. And just picking up on that one because I know that a lot of architects are allergic to engaging the public in any kind of design process.

But what we have found is that there's a lot of intelligence in the space of the public. And as architects, I think that we need to be able to readily tap into that. So one of the things we've done is we've actually increased our expertise. We've done workshops and had people come in and teach us what the best ways are to engage in these different levels of it.

So that piece, I think, is maybe the most unusual for a design practice like ours, because it has traditionally been thought of something that's you don't really want to do that at all. It's like taking cough medicine or something. But it's not at all. It's actually we enjoy it, and it's fun.

GRACE LA: So I actually would love to hear a little bit more about that because public process, public engagement, I think you're right that many architects are a bit allergic to that mode. But in your practice, it seems important for you to be able to figure out the moments of brilliance within public suggestions and discourse that have spatial potential or an outcome that is architectural.

JEANNE GANG: It's not just about suggestions, though. I think it's like, we think of it as a continuum of engagement. And to me, because a lot of our projects are in the public realm, the more engaged the public is, that you're preparing the public to receive this project, to author it, to co-author it with you. And whether if it's suggestions or not, whatever the participation is, it's kind of irrelevant.

It's a process of preparing everyone in the community to receive the building, the space, the park, the whatever it is, and it's bringing this group along with you to support it, to criticize it, to do all those different things. And it's a way to make your project successful. That's the way I look at it.

The way to make it successful, it'll be better from this process. There's going to be difficult things. It takes time too. So there's a part of practice that you need to be remunerated for this time that it takes, but it is so worth it for the projects we've all done this with.

And in fact, with the urban projects that we're doing, it's oftentimes it's a starting point, not really instead of making a master plan and then going and showing. It's really first thing is, who can we talk to that has got this fingers on the pulse of this community? And then on the other side, from the institutional side, at what level does this institution or organization want to engage?

Do they want just informational? Do they want to be collaborative? Do they want to empower? There's a continuum of ways that you can engage the public. I just think this is the future of practice at the GSD. We should be teaching how to do it better.

GRACE LA: So you've actually had folks come into your practice to teach you the skills and to run these public meetings and to figure out best ways of being able to gather the information. Maybe just tell us a little bit more about that specifically.

JEANNE GANG: Just that we realize we were interested in the space. We were doing a lot of things on our own, and we realized there's probably people that how to do this better. So we started educating ourselves more on it. And because you think about each designer, not just me or the leaders, but everyone, because we all need to be in that role at some point engaging the outside world.

And so it could be somebody who just started. It could be one of us that have been here for a long time. So it needed to be more skill. So I've been working on that. A lot to learn there, but I think it's really an important thing. So that was long story short, that was one of the outside unusual engagements, consultants that we use.

But also anything from people who are expert at vernacular architecture to ornithologists, to people who are doing urban wildlife, ecology, all kinds of different technologies that will find the right collaborator. Sometimes you don't know who that is in the very beginning of the project. So you're like, as the project design starts to become visible, you realize you need that person on the team. So it doesn't always happen in the beginning.

GRACE LA: Right. So you've described a very interesting process in which you're very involved in engaging the public. In that realm, who are the architects that Studio Gang has looked to for inspiration? And what are some precedents that come up in your studio? What do you refer to when you are talking shop?

JEANNE GANG: On the engagement side, really working with contemporary people who have started to do this process again. But if you look back at architects who did that first, it's probably practices in the '60s and '70s. One of them we discovered kind of by chance, which was Charles Moore's practice, because we started to work on the University of California, Santa Cruz Residence Hall.

And it's a Kresge college that he designed there. And he did it with this really interactive method with students and others in the College. And this actually started us thinking that there is a line of this kind of practice. And we should start to dig into that more and to learn from that, those first things.

Of course, we also learned that a lot of times people, whether they did it in the most advanced way that we can now with our tools that we have to use in our information technology that we can tap into data, as well as direct engagement. We can use data as well. It's different now, but it's interesting to see that there was a thread of this going on in the '60s and '70s.

And then I think there's also just architecture buildings that are very informative. Oftentimes, I think one of our touchstone projects is the SESC Pompeia building by Lina Bo Bardi. And for many reasons, it's an urban project as well as an architectural project. It's a project that is about creating relationships between people of different classes and occupations in a city that was very divided, let's say, skewed between classes.

And look at our time we're in now. We have similar challenges right now. So we've learned a lot from that project over the years. We've looked at it for different reasons over the years. It's a really interesting architect as well.

Many times I'm interested in looking at people who have done work which was pioneering with material, whether it's something by Saarinen, with concrete or masonry by Burnham and root in the Monadnock Building, for example, or something pioneering in wood or through the materials or just through how the building interacts with the city. So precedents are a big part of our research approach.

GRACE LA: So when you think forward and you think a little bit about what is the future of practice, whether it's you imagining your own practice 10 years from now or whether you are thinking about the discipline on the whole, where do you think it's going? What are some of the issues and/or in very broad brushstroke, what do you think will be the face of practice in 10 years?

JEANNE GANG: Well, I know that there are more and more people with design education and architecture education that are out there in the world, and they're not necessarily going to be doing traditional practice. I see the skills that we have is very valuable in many industries, in everything from game design to organizational design to planning facilities for major organizations, to working in tech.

The creative skills that we know how to do-- business schools have been looking at for a long time already, like how do they do that? And so I like to think that there are going to be more future savvy clients in the world that have more knowledge of design as a baseline, which will, I think, help us as architects that are designing buildings and spaces and landscapes to do better work.

GRACE LA: If one can say-- and maybe this is too strong a word-- but if there's a sort of diaspora of the profession or of the discipline of architecture, then what do we have left then? Let's just say that when we think about the discipline and the future of architecture, let's just say a good percentage of them decide to go to design consultancy and/or the IDOs of the world or the--

JEANNE GANG: It's good for all of us. There's always going to be the core of design and the fact that we have a certain history. We have precedents. We have our heroes and heroines, and we have the big evidence-- the buildings themselves that we're always learning from and working to improve and to go further and to use new tools and to do different processes to come up with these structures that ultimately shelter us and allow us to be human. That practice needs to still be there.

So what I'm seeing, my positive mind, I guess, thinking of what the benefit is is really that we have more higher level thinkers in design throughout in the people that we touch, whether they're collaborators, clients, cities. They all are gaining design intelligence in the way that they work, and they are seeing more value in what we do, the ones that have based our practices on, I guess I could say more bounded, even though I don't see our practice as super narrowly defined.

But it's still architecture and urban design, and that's what we do every day, day in and day out. So there's still a need, a need for that. And the people who like us are really into it are going to continue to be into it, because it's a fascinating world, and it's like, we love it. But I'm just saying that there's a lift that we will all get from our graduates of the GSD, say, and other graduates around the world going into tangential fields.

And I actually hope that happens a lot, because I think bringing the kind of architecture thinking to these fields, again, is going to help everyone. It's going to help our work, but it's going to help cities be better and everything be better. Even think of an architect designing what the next political system could be. I think that it's limitless what's possible for architecture education.

GRACE LA: Interesting. So right now in academic circles, there's always this question of interdisciplinarity. And everybody wants to make sure that our students, that the faculty, the researchers is transdisciplinary. Actually, I should say that it crosses boundaries, that it makes essentially new fields.

And I think that we all recognize that there are certain incredible benefits and innovation that come from that. But then the flip side to it is that there can be a kind of de-skilling of the discipline itself. While everybody's working so hard to make sure that thinking in cross-disciplinary ways, do you agree with that question of the core? What do you think about those issues?

JEANNE GANG: That's just being paranoid about the core. The core is there. The core is always going to be there. But all the inventions, if you look in every new discovery in science in art in every field is because we're breaking out of those silos and being able to touch something that's not exactly in our space, but we can see how it applies.

And so the people who are the most successful can do that touching, reaching out without eroding some core. I mean, come on.

GRACE LA: So what is the core? So then what is the core? In your mind, what would that core be?

JEANNE GANG: Well, if you imagine that the core is only like form-based, then OK, well, a key part of architecture is form. I'm not denying that. It's a very key piece, but we don't want architecture-- I'm speaking for you and me. I don't think we want architecture to just be like fashion, which is not to say there's something wrong with fashion, but fashion is really literally like it's changed so quickly that there's nothing to hang on to there.

And architecture, there's more discipline to it, disciplinarity. There is more to know. There's a lot to know. So I don't see how-- yes, we always have to continue to teach the discipline in practice after people leave school. What would be great is if in school they can also learn how to touch those other fields but still learning the core things that you need to know be an architect.

But the skill of gleaning, let's say, from other fields, or literally working together with someone from a different field and learning how to speak that language, that is a very valuable skill that I think we can help students start to learn. We can show them by how by how we work.

GRACE LA: Right. But that suggests, though, that there are a certain set of core techniques or core issues. What you're suggesting is that if there is a core and if there is strength within that core, then of course mixing with allied fields only serves to make a more robust and more interesting project and/or make more relevant set of endeavors.

Today, it seems that there's, at least from where I sit, there's a question about what defines that core even. When you and I were in school-- we'd like to say just yesterday, but unfortunately, it's a couple of many years ago-- there was a very specific idea or attitude about representation about the truth of the physical model, a set of abilities, both analytical as well as even physical, that would comprise the training of the architect.

In some ways, you did that so well at the GSD. And I know that because I stared at the back of your head. I think I mentioned that in a lecture intro one time of you years ago. So I'm just curious. So let's just say, for example, that if an architecture student today is, let's say, not getting that particular kind of training, what is the nexus of the training these days?

JEANNE GANG: Well, you've got to remember that this is always changing. I mean, it's not going to be the same now as it was then. And it was different before that. If you go back to what an architect was in, let's say, medieval times or something, there was a lot of skills present in one person that was knows how to do construction, knows how to run a job-site, knows how to draw, knows how to cut stone.

We change, and our profession is constantly changing. So the core is whatever we decide it is together. And that's why right now, for example, it is so much more important to understand lots of different software tools now that it's tool that's a different tool than it was before. So it's constantly being updated.

I think there will be people that migrate to the, let's say, more central skills sets like space, form, materials, constructability phenomenal qualities. But then there are circles around that maybe. You brought up teaching. And I think I mentioned earlier that we're not really learning how to engage maybe in architecture school. We're not learning how to also how to get our projects that we might self-initiate into the world.

So that's one of the things I want to try to impart with the students, since I am a professor in practice. I want to show how to practice. And so one of the things we're doing in my studio currently is thinking of ways that projects that we're doing in design studio, what kind of support they could get through different threads that could help make them even more real.

And so it's interesting when you start thinking about a project like that, you get lots of different ideas about what the design could actually be. It kind of opens up this tangential realm of research that can really inform the design but also help think about the next step of this design of how to make it a reality, even if it's a self-initiated project.

GRACE LA: I think that's a very important, really crucial way of thinking because I think, again, if we think about the early part of the conversation, the traditional modes, you can sit and wait for the phone to ring, or you can go out there and decide that there's an important issue that needs to be tackled, and that design could ameliorate a particular set of conditions. And--

JEANNE GANG: So amplify something.

GRACE LA: Amplify something. Improve something to empower our students to be more initiative-taking to see potential and really never let a stone go unturned, I think is quite interesting and important way of thinking about design education, because even that could be designed and which, again, would give our future practitioners a really new way of practicing of tackling projects that are very important that go beyond the scale of building but to more global issues.

So for all of these parameters, I think that that is a critical way in which the next generation needs to continue to think, and that practices like yours have paved the way for that kind of thinking.

JEANNE GANG: Think of what we might be creating too is somebody who is going to change the world in a different way. So getting them exposed to different disciplines is incredible.

GRACE LA: You raised so many issues with this, and we could talk a lot of time on the various strands of this, but just remarking on the last comment that you made. In a way, I think what you're suggesting, which I think is quite interesting, is the plurality and the many different ways in which architects can thrive and can operate in, I think, many different arenas, suggests that there's no more monotheism in a sense that there is a very diverse range.

It sounds to me like you would promote that that's what you would imagine to be a healthy organism that is actually operating at different levels, and that there isn't a single definition of design.

JEANNE GANG: We can still group ourselves into smaller, more narrow categories to test and to get the highest level of debate in there. Like those of us interested in new form of certain type, we can make a small group that really digs into that issue, or if we are interested in technology, there are those of us who can self-organize into a group.

GRACE LA: To focus on that.

JEANNE GANG: Yeah. That's totally needed as well. But I'm just saying that design education should be exposing people to these ways of working with others to many different relevant other fields right now that exist right here in Harvard. So it's like, yeah, why not tap into those things?

GRACE LA: It's a particular wealth of opportunity that we would have here, specifically because we have so much expertise in other areas. There's I think embedded in your practice is a desire to see, on the one hand, the efficiency of systems of materials of use, functional value, but then also its potential to be tactile, transformative, sensual.

And I think the fact that your work is the pendulum swings from edge to edge is, again, what makes it so distinctive and innovative. For us, I think we will benefit from having you at our school as part of our GSD community. We are so excited and thrilled that you'll be here on a regular basis and that our students will benefit from a particular way that you are seeing the world and that we might begin to practice. Thank you so much for being with us.

JEANNE GANG: Thanks, Grace.

[BRIGHT MUSIC]

GRACE LA: I'm Grace Lu, and you've been listening to *Talking Practice* from the practice platform of Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. Today's episode was produced by Ronee Saroff and edited by Maggie Janik. Research was provided by Alexander Porter.

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