The Architecture Lobby is an organization of architectural workers advocating for the value of architecture in the general public and for architectural work within the discipline.

In order to redirect the public’s perception of what architects do, we need to reconceptualize our value. We need to walk away from contracts that don’t allow us to share in the profit of a building’s success. We need to prove that we know that the building’s success is determined not by its publication photos but by its 40 year-long habitability. We need to redefine the way media showcases us.

In order to reprogram our own identity, those of us in the discipline of architecture need to admit that we are workers. We are part of a global labor force fighting for and deserving fair pay, legal benefits, regulated hours, and termination policies. We need to stop giving away free labor.

In order to retrain our graduates, we need to convince them of their value. Those of us who teach must stop being proud of our students’ all-nighters doing our pedagogical bidding. When they look for work, we need to direct them away from practices that are abusive (if not illegal) even if avant-garde.

Why should you join the Lobby?

Because the AIA’s scope is too limited
First, due to a pair of federal rulings (in 1972 and 1990) saying architect’s collective discussion of fees violates the Sherman Anti-trust Act, the AIA is unable to address how architects get paid. With the key issue of pay off the table, the AIA limits it attention to the pleasant aspects of the profession – awards and government projects. The Lobby wants to do more and we don’t need to be nice about. We want to challenge the Sherman Anti-trust act ruling for unfairly restricting architect’s discussion of fees while ignoring other professionals like lawyers.

Second, the AIA only represents registered architects, and of those only the 50% that are AIA members. The Lobby works for all architectural workers: registered/unregistered.

And third, we don’t cost anything! We don’t spend ... on national meetings that shuffle the deck chairs on the Titanic.

Because it’s time to get organized
The Lobby believes we can form a union (literal or social) shaped more by our common desire to be more affective vis-a-vis developers and contractors and less by our competition with one another.

Because the problem is both bottom-up and top-down
From the top, we need to change the mindset of practitioners who feel it is acceptable to charge less than their expertise and time deserves just to get a job. From the bottom, fresh labor entering the profession should refuse jobs that pay less than their expertise and education deserves.

No longer should architecture graduates accept their own low pay because the firm gets low pay. We need to stop the cycle at both ends!

If lawyers and tech companies go all out to attract and retain the best and the brightest (by good family policies, by clear paths to advancement, by financial incentives) why don’t we approach our fresh labor in the same way?

Because the problem is both economic and cultural
We need to make more money and we need to adjust, for ourselves and the public, our image. We need rebranding. We need to work on this ourselves and we need to work on the media to recognize and support that change.

Because we need a better support system
While we work toward solutions to the precarious nature of our profession, we need to develop a system of support that ameliorates it. What would an organization be that operates a work exchange offering positions to staff who are temporarily laid off when a project is delayed? That offers practitioners an alternative to firing staff they have trained, nurtured and come to rely on? That offers structures supporting maternity and paternity leave?

Because architects can change the world beyond design
We believe that until we identify as workers, cultural or otherwise, we won’t identify with other workers. And if we don’t identify with other workers, we don’t have a social mission.

Please contact us at info@architecture-lobby.org

Visit us at www.architecture-lobby.org
EXHIBITIONS

THE CALICOON WEIGH STATION EXHIBITION

Last summer, The Architecture Lobby teamed up with a group of designers to transform an abandoned coal-weighing station into a multimedia exhibition. Our goal was to present new research and test collaborative projects. In this effort we called upon San Francisco, the satirical patron saint of precarious labor, to comment on forms of architectural work that lack fair compensation and stability. To present these topics, within the context of a small town in upstate New York, we designed a new public gathering space for presentations, film screenings, performances, and conversation. The audience ranged from locals with little background in the subject to New York based artists and architects who live in or visit the area. From this perspective, the exhibition also worked to translate how the conditions of precarious labor take many forms in today's economy.

RONALD FELDMAN GALLERY

The Architecture Lobby's second public action took place July 17, 2014 in New York City's Ronald Feldman Gallery. The gallery was staging Labor Intensive, an exhibition that displayed art works devoted to issues of labor that expand the defined role it plays in our individual lives and society. The exhibit featured artists including Eleanor Antin, Colleen Atkinson, Joseph Bauta, Heather Cassils, Nancy Chunn, Christine Hill, Simon Jones, Kamal & Malamid, Wende Lederer, and Hannah Wilke. All the work in the show approached labor from different viewpoints, but highlighted its beauty and dignity and its potential to be a powerful force for change. Two members of the Lobby read its labor manifesto to a supportive audience of art lovers, passersby, and friends. By popular request the manifesto was read a second time to a cheering audience in front of a poster pant drawing that read "the art of living consists of reconciling ones nature with ones work."

PROTESTS

On June 7, 2014, Manuel Schwarzberg and Yolanda Daniels (above), members of the Architecture Lobby, read the Lobby manifesto at the entry to the Gardini in at the Venice Architecture Biennale. The action was meant to alert visitors to the international pavilions that architecture is not just formally, historically, or nationally determined, but rather, contextualized by the labor conditions under which it is produced, conditions that bind us as architectural workers internationally. The action was an echo of the 1968 protests that closed many of the art pavilions that year.

On June 27, 2014, Peggy Deemer and Quinn Klein (below), read the Lobby manifesto at the AIA National convention in Chicago. This action was to signal to the AIA that they need to address the issues of unfair fees, pay, benefits, and hours under which the profession operates. The officials at the AIA ushered them out.
WHAT DID YOU DO THIS WEEKEND?

In a recent architecture lobby survey taken by 236 architectural professionals

37% REPORT SUPPLEMENTING THEIR INCOME WITH OUTSIDE WORK.

Does your firm pay overtime?  Do you do some other work outside of the office to supplement your income?

- 1% N/A
- 11% YES
- 88% NO

43% YES  56% NO

51% REPORT WORKING ONE OR MORE WEEKENDS A MONTH IN UNPAID OVERTIME.

Does your firm pay overtime?  How often do you work on the weekend?

- 1% N/A
- 11% YES
- 88% NO

9% ALMOST ALWAYS  5% 3x PER MONTH  17% 2x PER MONTH

28% ONCE PER MONTH  40% RARELY

60% REPORT WORKING 45HRS A WEEK OR MORE A WEEK IN UNPAID OVERTIME.

Does your firm pay overtime?  How many hours do you work per week on average?

- 1% N/A
- 11% YES
- 88% NO

8% 70+ HOURS  11% 60-70 HOURS

50% 45-60 HOURS  27% 35-45 HOURS  1% 0-35 HOURS
— WE ARE PRECARIOUS WORKERS —
— THESE ARE OUR DEMANDS:

— 1. — Enforce labor laws that prohibit unpaid internships, unpaid overtime; refuse unpaid competitions. — 2. — Reject fees based on percentage of construction or hourly fees and instead calculate value based on the money we save our clients or gain them. — 3. — Stop peddling a product - buildings - and focus on the unique value architects help realize through spatial services. — 4. — Enforce wage transparency across the discipline. — 5. — Establish a union for architects, designers, academics and interns in architecture and design. — 6. — Demystify the architect as solo creative genius; no honors for architects who don’t acknowledge their staff. — 7. — Licensure upon completion of degree — 8. — Change professional architecture organizations to advocate for the living conditions of architects — 9. — Support research about labor rights in architecture — 10. — Implement democratic alternatives to the free market system of development.