

Cara Elizabeth Michell

Boston, MA | 301.502.5079 | c.michell@northeastern.edu

I am an artist, researcher, and urban planner. My research projects leverage artistic practice to redirect traditional “community engagement” strategies towards toolkits for more inclusive and equitable urban planning.

Education

Harvard University, Graduate School of Design, (2016) Master of Urban Planning

Princeton University, (2014) A.B. in Art & Archaeology (Studio Art track); Certificate in Urban Studies, *Magna cum laude*

Selected Honors & Awards

Artist in Residence, Cité Internationale des Arts 2-12 Program (2025)

NEW INC Collective Abundance Incubator Member, New Museum (2022-23)

CAMD Strategic Seed Grant (2022)

Forefront Fellow, Urban Design Forum, “Cooperative Works” (2020)

Ideas City, Detroit Fellow, New Museum (April 2016)

Doebele Fellow, Harvard University, Graduate School of Design (Summer 2015)

Excellence in Visual Arts Award, Princeton University Lewis Center for the Arts (June 2014)

Alex Adam '07 Award for Summer Research in the Arts, Princeton University (March 2013)

Peter B. Lewis Fund International Research Grant (Summer 2012)

National Urban League Featured Artist, Washington, DC Art Expo (2010)

Professional Experience

Northeastern University | Boston, MA (August 2021- Present)

Assistant Professor of Race & Social Justice in the Built Environment – Joint appointment with the School of Architecture (³/₄) and the School of Public Policy & Urban Affairs (¹/₄).

- Developed three new courses across two departments at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Contributed to the redevelopment of a Master of Public Policy Capstone seminar and an Introductory Design lecture. Taught approximately 280 students during my first three semesters as a professor;
- Served on two faculty search committees, two student admissions review committees, and two faculty conference committees;
- Successfully competed for two internal grants to fund interdisciplinary research in the arts. Led a mixed faculty and community non-profit team to develop youth participatory maps in Roxbury, Boston.

s l o w p r a c t i c e | Brooklyn, NY (July 2021- Present)

Founder – Public art, urban planning, and community design consulting.

- Partnered with MoMA PS1 to create the Long Island City (LIC) Participatory map sits within “Courtyard Coalition”, an interactive space at MoMA PS1 that relies on community participation to help shape the museum’s engagement with its neighbors. Exhibition on view from March – November 2022;
- Served as stakeholder engagement and urban planning sub-consultant to WXY Architecture + Urban Design for the Rogers, AK Cultural Plan, Greater Rockaway Community & Shoreline Enhancement Plan, and the Red Hook Brownfield Opportunity Area study;
- Led participatory mapping workshops at the New Museum and MoMA PS1

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WXY Studio | New York, NY (March 2018- June 2021)

Senior Urban Planner & Associate – Urban planning, design, and community engagement for policy, landscape, urban design, and architecture work in New York, Maryland, and Cleveland. Leadership included:

- Managed a team of urban designers in developing an award-winning project for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative in New Rochelle (2020 APA NYM Meritorious Achievement Award);
- Project managed the Red Hook Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Study. Successfully created a new, COVID-19-specific project plan which will be used as an example by New York State for other BOA recipients;
- Led stakeholder engagement and promoted stakeholder alignment across agencies and community groups for multiple urban design and education policy projects.

Earlier projects include the Cleveland Museum of Art Landscape Action Plan, The Downtown Brooklyn Downtown Revitalization Initiative, and the NYC D16 (Bed-Stuy) School Diversity Plan Process.

BrookMcIlroy | Toronto, ON (September 2016 - February 2018)

Planner – Planning and design for waterfront master plans, TOD policy research, planning rationale, and urban design briefs. Developing city-wide urban design guidelines and spearheading Indigenous placemaking initiatives in the Toronto region. Selected project work includes:

- Collaborated with the Senior Urban Design Associate to write and coordinate the adoption of the City of Vaughan's first City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines and Technical Manual. Revised and edited the guidelines with a focus on engaging and accessible language and visuals, which earned us the Canadian Institute of Planning 2020 Award for Planning Excellence.
- Conducted policy and best practice research and provided graphic design and writing services for the 2017 Metrolinx Mobility Hub Policy Review, North Bay Downtown Waterfront Master Plan, and Vaughan Zoning By-law Comprehensive Review.
- Facilitated workshops on Indigenous Placemaking for Canadian students, coordinated a cross-border tour of cultural placemaking case studies for the City Councilor's Indigenous Business Incubator initiative, and presented ideas for Indigenous Placemaking in Ottawa to the National Capitol Commission.

Harvard Black in Design Conference | Cambridge, MA (2015)

Founding Co-Chair - Led a small team of students to plan and execute the Harvard GSD African American Student Union's Black in Design Conference (the first conference at Harvard to recognize the contributions of African Americans in design professions and highlight the responsibility of designers to address structural inequality and institutionalized racism in their work).

- Crafted a social media campaign that brought 20 speakers and 500 scholars and practitioners to Harvard and garnered the attention of publications from The Atlantic City Lab to Metropolis Magazine.
- Designed a wireframe for a website and collaborated on the design for a print ad campaign.
- Curated a series of interactive workshops, performances, lectures, and receptions for conference attendees.
- Collaborated with core committee members to raise over \$45,000 for conference expenses.

Theaster Gates' PlaceLab (University of Chicago) + Rebuild Foundation | Chicago, IL (Summer 2015)

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Doebele Fellow – Selected by Director/Founder Theaster Gates to support culture-based programming for community and neighborhood revitalization in Gary, IN, and Chicago, IL. Quickly integrated myself into a demanding, project-based work environment and eventually took leadership roles on multiple projects.

- Applied site-planning, GIS, and research skills to the master planning effort for the Rebuild Foundation and Theaster Gates' Stony Island Arts Bank.
- Designed new outreach materials for the Rebuild Foundation, creating more opportunities for neighborhood residents to learn about and engage with the Rebuild Foundation's local programming.
- Facilitated community and stakeholder workshops in Chicago and Gary, IN.
- Analyzed internal case studies and recommended structural improvements to a report on the Rebuild Foundation's ethical redevelopment methods for the Knight Foundation.

Harvard Health and Places Initiative (HAPI) | Cambridge, MA (2014-2015)

Research Assistant

- Supported this research initiative, which created case studies and recommendations for the planning and governance of healthier cities by creating new content and improving the front-end website design.

Musée Franco-Américain du Château de Blérancourt | Blérancourt, France (Summer 2013)

Curatorial Intern

- Chose artwork for a new gallery in the museum.
- Assembled and translated an inventory of artifacts for the Veteran's association.
- Reorganized and digitized a collection of historical records from the American Committee for a devastated France.

National Museum of African Art | Washington, D.C. (Summer 2012)

Curatorial Intern

- Researched artists and artifacts for the upcoming Earth Matters exhibition catalogue.

Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) | Washington, D.C. (Summer 2011)

International Relations Intern

- Managed the UNESCO Virtual Science Museum pilot project.
- Researched online educational resources from ASTC's member museums and science centers.
- Drafted meeting minutes, dialogue, and blurbs for the UNESCO VSM pilot project.
- Corresponded with focus-group leaders in South Africa and participating museum executives.

Selected Exhibitions and Publications

"Cartography, Deconstructed: Ateliers Ouverts," (2025) Open Studio at the Cité Internationale des arts, Paris, France.

"Emergent Emergency Strategies: 11 Takes on Collective Abundance," in *Deem Journal*, October 11, 2023, edited by Isabel Flower and Alice Grandoit. Authors Lafayette Cruise, Cara Michell, et. al.
<https://www.deemjournal.com/stories/newinc>

"Emergen-C Archive," La Mama Galleria (2023) – This group exhibition, presented by NEW INC, sheds light on the policies and philosophies that affect both the built environment and the psychologies of those who inhabit it. The works exhibited, including Cara Michell's participatory mapping table, are rich in non-traditional approaches to archiving from and for marginalized perspectives and forefronts the voices, memories, and potentialities of the disempowered. "Emergen-C Archive" illuminates elements of the past, present, and even future that we deem,

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collectively, to be important and that are often excluded or expunged from traditional record-keeping. In this, we recognize the need for an emergent-emergency-strategy that, in keeping with the writings of adrienne maree brown, borrows from biomimicry to survive and embrace change with abundance.

"From Building Resilient Infrastructure to Facilitating Resilient Communities (2023)" in *Design for Resilient Communities*, edited by A. Rubbo et al. will be published this year in Springer Nature Switzerland this year. Authors: Adam Lubinsky, Abby Zan, Nathalie Kauz, and Cara Michell.

"Courtyard Collective," MoMA PS1 (2022) - I co-developed this anti-exhibition with PS1 Assistant Curator Elena Ketelsen-Gonzales and the Courtyard Coalition. The process-focused program highlights the MoMA's contemporary art museum Courtyard as a cultural and spatial asset for critical questions at the intersection of cultural institutions, civic space, and urban life. My mapping installation invites members of the Long Island City (LIC) to co-create their own image of the neighborhood. By inviting visitors to annotate the map with their memories, priorities, and dreams (past, present, and future), she asks: What aspects of Long Island City do we want to keep and remember from the past? What are the communities, spaces, and initiatives we want to recognize today? What are our hopes for the future, and how can the Courtyard be a meaningful piece of this constellation?

"Issue 42 Endpapers" The SITE Magazine, Volume 42 (2022) - Anti-Workbook in response to the re-traumatization of BIPOC designers during the global anti-racist awakening; coordinated and edited by Amrit Phull, collaboration with Srishti Bose and Amrit Phull.

"Cooperative Works: Equitable Business Development for Building Retrofits," Urban Design Forum (2021) – Co-written with Annie White, Polina Bakhteiartov et. Al. Edited by Katherine Sacco. Published by the Urban Design forum in New York.

"Performing Spatial Justice", The SITE Magazine, Volume 40 (2019) – Article inspired by Master's Thesis research on cultural misreading and violent injustices in public space. The interdisciplinary project combines personal interviews, urban planning & design strategy, performance art, and theoretical research to create interventions that can interrupt, illuminate, and even subvert spatialized racial profiling. thesitemagazine.com

Occupancies, Boston University Art Galleries (2017) – Exhibited artwork with "Black Body Survival Guide" authors Intelligent Mischievous as part of their installation for the Boston University 808 Gallery's group show. Occupancies selected artists from across the country to exhibit work that highlights the ability of collective and individual bodies to occupy space in resistance to systems of injustice.

Panama Canal, A Senior Thesis Exhibition, Princeton University (2014) – Multi-media exhibition exploring exclusivity and privatization in urban public spaces. Inspired by skateboarders' ability to democratize public spaces, the exhibition responds to two questions: How can the politics of public space be leveraged to address social inequalities? And how can the rest of us take back space to reap the benefits of an activity dominated by young men and boys? Exhibited at the Princeton University, Lewis Center for the Arts.

Selected Workshops and Speaking Engagements

CreativeTime CTHQ | New York, NY (2025)

Lead, "Sonic Gentrification," for Disorderly Noise: Kicking Off a Year of the Sonic Commons." . Curated by Anna Harsayani and Diya Vij.

GrowHouse Urban Design + Development | Brooklyn, NY (2024)

Lead, "Participatory Mapping at the Flatbush African Burial Ground." Four-week workshop series for NYC summer youth employed at the Brooklyn-based art and community land trust GrowHouse.

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CreativeTime CTHQ | Saint-Denis, Pairs / Brooklyn, NY (2023)

Lead, "Parallel Walk," with the Association Amicale Franco-Camerounaise and GrowHouseNYC

The New Museum of Contemporary Art | New York, NY (2023)

Speaker, "Black Psychogeographies," DEMO2023, Collective Abundance

History Graduate Students Association - Keynote | Boston, MA (2023)

Keynote Speaker, "Space Across the Humanities," Annual Conference, Northeastern University

826 Boston Youth Literary Advisory Board (YLAB) | Boston, MA (2022-3)

Lead, "YLAB Participatory Map Workshop Series," with funding from Northeastern University's College of Arts Media and Design Seed Grant program.

The New Museum of Contemporary Art | New York, NY (2022)

Lead, "Participatory Cartography: How Do You Map the Lower East Side?" Community Day Workshop

Leventhal Mapping Center, Boston Public Library (2022)

Artist Talk Moderator, "Soft City" exhibition opening

National Organization of Minority Architects | USA, National (2022)

Panelist, "Black in Architecture: New Pathways," NOMA Unplugged Conference, Nashville, TN, October 2022.

MoMA PS1 Contemporary Art | Queens, NY (2022)

Lead, "Participatory Mapping Workshop" was an interactive museum activation as part of Courtyard Coalition's activation in "Homeroom." I invited Long Island City (LIC) locals to contribute to a series of community maps of LIC's past, present, and future AND learn how participatory mapping can become a tool to shape public space. The collaborative map remained in "Homeroom" through November 2022 for future visitors to explore.

SCOUT | Boston, MA (2022)

Panelist, "Interventions: Amplify" is a 1-day conference showcasing design thinking as a driving force for social change organized by Scout, Northeastern University's student-led design organization. My panel, "Advocates in the Classroom" was a discussion about incorporating personal values and experiences in the classroom setting. Co-panelists Alpha Jacob Arsano, Sebastian Ebarb, Fisiha Likke, Kristina Lamour Sansone, and I were invited to hold a conversation about the question: What does the future of higher education look like?

Alternative Presence Workshop Series | New York, NY (2019) – Developed a syllabus, secured funding, and co-taught a creative learning workshop for high school juniors and seniors with three landscape architects and designers, in partnership with the Manhattan YWCA. Culminating in a public exhibition inspired by the work of Octavia Butler, students interpreted survival skills, such as building shelter, creating interactive communication systems, resource mapping, wild edible plant harvesting alternativepresence.com

"Making space for Voices of Color: The Legacy of the Black in Design Conference" | New York, NY (2019) –

Organized and moderated a panel on the legacy of the Black in Design Conference for Oslo and NYC-based architecture studio Snøhetta's inaugural "Sandbox Series" event. This PechaKucha, followed by discussions with a group of experts in the field, addressed: the benefits of creating space for a diverse design workforce, and how to facilitate meaningful conversations about race and discrimination in the fields of architecture and planning.

Designing Black Futures, Boston University Art Galleries | Boston, MA (2017) – Panelist with Harvard 2016 Nasir Jones Hip Hop Archives Fellow Jon Jennings and Design Studio for Social Intervention founder Kenneth Bailey on art and black futurity.

Invited Design Panels and Guest Lectures

NYU Paris | (2023)

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Guest Lecture, “21st Century Psychogeographies,” for Dr. Beth Epstein’s Anthropology Seminar

Leventhal Mapping Center, Boston Public Library | Boston, MA (2022)

Artist Talk Moderator, “Soft City” Exhibition Opening. Artists: Amanda Ugorgi and Sophie Weston Chien of Just Practice.

Yale University School of Architecture | New Haven, CT (2022)

Guest Critic for “Going Home, Again,” Advanced Architectural Design Studio midterm review. Led by Rachaporn Choochoey and Surry Slabs.

Guest Critic for “Oil, Land, People—The Challenges for Architecture,” Advanced Architectural Design Studio midterm review. Led by Claire Weisz, Marc de la Bruyere, and Andrei Harwell.

Cooper Union School of Architecture | New York, NY (2022)

Guest Lecturer and Workshop Leader, for “What Can a Body Do? Disability and Cultural Institutions.” Master Architecture Studio led by Dominic Leong.

Northeastern University | Boston, MA (2021 - 2024)

Panelist, “Participatory Arts-Based Activism,” (2024). Publicly Engaged Scholar in Residence (PESiR) Program, Northeastern University, Boston, MA. Moderated by Rebecca Moore. Honoree, Rob “ProBlak” Gibbs.

Additional panelists: Dzidzor Azaglo, José Menedez, and Aziza Robinson-Goodnight.

Panelist, “[Realizing Untapped Potential in Creative Careers](#),” (2024). *Community to Community (C2C) Policy Convening: Building a More Holistic Career Development System for Boston’s Youth*, Northeastern University, Boston, MA. Moderated by LaVonia Montouté. Additional panelists: Jada Cooper (BPS Student), Chris Hope (Loop Lab), Nakia Hill (City of Boston), and Anthony Beatrice (Executive Director of the Arts, BPS).

Design Critic, ARCH 5115 Architecture Option Studio final review. Led by Mary Hale (2022)

Design Critic, ARCH 2130 Architecture Sophomore Studio final review. Led by Ang Li (2022)

Guest Lecturer, PPUA Participatory Modeling. Graduate seminar led by Moira Zellner (2022)

Design Critic, ARCH 7140: “The Ecological Edge” Urban Design Studio final review. Led by Jay Cephas (2021)

MoMA PS1 | Queens, NY (2021 - 2022)

Panelist, “Courtyard Conversations: Space.” Led by Kate Fowle and Elena Ketelsen-Gonzales.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) | Cambridge, MA (2021)

Guest Critic, “Hawai’i Non-Linear” Architecture Master’s Studio midterm review. Led by Chris Leong, Dominic Leong and Sean Connelly.

Columbia University GSAAP | New York, NY (2020)

Guest Critic, “Hawai’i Non-Linear” Architecture Master’s Studio midterm review. Led by Chris Leong, Dominic Leong and Sean Connelly.

Parsons New School | New York, NY (2019-2020)

Guest Critic, [Class Number] [Class description] review. Led by Brian McGrath, Claire Weisz, and Graci Mills. (2019 and 2020)

“**Collaborative Studio**” **Lecture, Parsons Design + Technology, BFA | New York, NY (2018)** – Lecture on projects that bridge conceptual art and civic engagement for an interdisciplinary group of students with backgrounds in coding, video art, graphic design, and interaction design.

Social Justice + Design, Northeastern University | Boston, MA (2017) – Lecture titled “Performing Spatial Justice” for the Northeastern University School of Architecture Social Justice+ Design Lecture Series.

Academic Service and Community Organizations

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BlackSpace Urbanist Collective | Brooklyn, NY (2024 - Present)

Working Board Member.

Boston Society for Architecture | Boston, MA (2022 - Present)

Nominating Committee Member.

Women of Color in the Academy | Boston, MA (2021-2022)

Participant Engagement Committee Member, 2022 Conference: "Community as Rebellion"

Participant Engagement Committee Member, 2021 Conference: "Return to Love: Honoring the Legacy of Bell Hooks"

Northeastern University | Boston, MA (2021-2022)

Search Committee Member, Extraordinary HCI: Inclusive Design Faculty Search

Search Committee Member, 2022-23 Design Fellow in Architecture

Program Committee Member, "Reimagining the Capstone", Public Policy and Urban Affairs

Reviewer, M.Arch II student applications, and B.Arch student application portfolios (2022 Admissions)

Public-Private Real Estate Professionals | New York, NY (2021)

At-Large Board Member.

BlackSpace Urbanist Collective | New York, NY (2018-2019)

Contributing Member.

Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) African American Student Union | Cambridge, MA (2014-2016)

Media Chair.

Princeton University Lewis Center for the Arts Student Advisory Board | Princeton, NJ (2013-2014)

Member.

Princeton University Art Museum Student Advisory Board | Princeton, NJ (2012-2014)

Media Chair.

Modern Improvisational Music Association (MIMA) | Princeton, NJ (2011-2014)

Member, (2011-2012)

President, (2012-2014)