

PAPRIKA!

OCTOBER 2, 2015 / FOLD VIII
SUPPLEMENT



**DEAN
DEBORAH
BERKE**

At 12:05 pm, the simultaneous email pings rang out in 4th and 5th floors. The building lurched with a collective reaction. Cheers, groans, tirades and sighs all filled the double-height space in Rudolph Hall. Though the fourth floor was largely empty, students on the fifth floor shuffled around to gauge reactions, celebrate jointly and complain about the announcement of the new dean of the YSOA.

CHARLES KANE

I trust that the school made a good choice. She will maintain Bob’s pluralistic attitude.

She is a safe choice who will maintain the character of the school and serve as a good liaison between YSOA and the wider discipline.

It’s not a radical choice, and I’m glad. She will stay true to the school.

For Deborah, the true test will come in the doing. Her statement—“As dean, one is an ambassador and a fundraiser, but also an academic leader, a role model, a supporter of faculty and students, and a member of the larger university community”—is encouraging, yet still broad and sweeping. How will helpful and generative ties be fostered between faculty members and students? Ones that allow faculty members to truly guide students through what is currently a very opaque system dictated by stilted internal politics? Students will (soon) need to see clear initiatives outlining where and how this insular institution will begin to interact with other disciplines (will it simply be a matter of aligning internal course schedules to those of the greater

CAITLIN THISSEN

I love her hair.

If she proves receptive to the needs and demands of a more radical generation, we could have much to look forward to.

On Friday, September 25th, 2015, President Peter Salovey announced Deborah Berke as the next dean of the Yale School of Architecture. The first female dean in YSOA history, Berke leads her own New York-based firm and has taught at the School since 1987.

***Paprika!* collected initial reactions to Deborah Berke's deanship announcement the scientific way: at that evening's rooftop 6on7 party, the poster for which depicted Dean Stern with a party hat and piñata. Bob must be looking forward to some extra free time at the end of his tenure, but are students looking forward to Deborah's arrival?**

campus (a drop in the bucket)? Or will it act more inclusively, allowing other campus courses to bleed into the course listing; offering more courses to fulfill degree requirements among the art, drama, and sociology departments, as well as business school? But, considering Berke's high rapport with students and interns, as well as her fiscal stability and personal ability to manage a 60-person firm, I have full faith that she will dominate and shine. With clear and resolute directions, her position has the potential to inspire faith and courage in other women, in the hopes that they can see themselves as valuable contributors and participants to the profession. Performance = empowerment.

The *New York Times* did a great job of highlighting her credentials—she runs her own firm, is an amazing educator, and employs women and minorities in amounts unprecedented in similarly sized firms. I'm extremely frustrated at Dean Berke's reception among a particular set of the student body (read: privileged white men, of which there are many at Yale). Just look at the way the *Yale Daily News* covered her appointment. Dissenting opinions, just like all the conversations raging on social media, are frankly chock full of bullshit coded language and thinly veiled sexism.

CAT GARCIA-MENOCAL

Deborah represents a strong tie to New York, but many students have interests elsewhere.

Does this mean everyone will work at Deborah Berke instead of RAMSA now?

I wish I could believe that disgruntled students and alumni are genuinely interested in the issues they outline (that she “hasn't written as many books” as our current Dean, that she “only builds for the wealthy” and that her work is not “progressive”) but I can't help noticing that the outcry is almost exclusively from men of incredible privilege.

As a Hispanic female architecture student, I am ecstatic to attend one of most influential institutions in the world under the Deanship of a woman who has excelled in a male-dominated field—double standards be damned.

What of the selections committee? The opacity that surrounds the selection process is detrimental to an honest discussion about Deborah’s deanship.

I came to Yale for the faculty with built work; she’s emblematic of the idea that architects should build.

Like Mies said, we should be concerned with making good buildings, and that’s what Deborah represents. Not every building is Lady Gaga.

Her appointment reinforces the status quo at Yale being about money. She builds pretty much exclusively for the wealthy. To a student like me, she is on a completely different planet in terms of how we look at the world.

I'd have to say I don't think her ideas, work, or politics merit that of her appointment to the exemplary school of architecture in the US, and in my opinion she is not the symbol that any school should be assuming in the 21st century. Regardless of her ability to fundraise or be an administrator—two things I'm in no position to comment on—I'm unsure if she is the best choice. I hope she proves me wrong.

WESLEY HIATT

INTERVIEW WITH DEBORAH BERKE

The editors of this issue, **AMRA SARIC YC '17** and **EDWARD WANG YC '16**, spoke with Deborah Berke about her appointment as next Dean of the YSOA.

EW Congratulations! What was your initial reaction to the news? Did you find out in the same abrupt way that we did?

DB There is a search process for the dean, and I went through the process, though I don't know who else the Committee and the President considered, it is all done with the highest discretion, which I think is correct. I did learn a few days before it was announced to the University community.

AS In your opinion, what do you see the dean's mission being? How do you envision the relationship with the student body, the faculty, Yale College, other graduate schools and within the wider profession?

DB Yikes, that's a big question. I think it is the dean's responsibility to both teach and connect students across the university and within the School of Architecture. The dean should also provide support to faculty along with the shared vision of what architectural education should be, both as a discipline and as a profession.

EW How do you see the YSOA in comparison with its peer institutions? What do you think the strengths of the YSOA are, and perhaps more importantly, what do you think is lacking?

DB Yale is a part of a group of what I would describe as equal institutions—Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Penn, and other institutions around the country, that all have different strengths, different sizes, different curricula and offerings. This is not major league football—the goal is to attract the

best students who seek what we offer. As for the second part of that question—I've been an adjunct faculty member teaching part-time at Yale for a number of years. I teach only one semester out of every four, so I will immerse myself deeper into that world and landscape as I get closer to starting the job.

AS Students are mostly interested in the trajectory of the YSOA in the future, and many of the professorships have been kept empty in anticipation of the new dean. As you make new hires, what principles will be guiding your decisions?

DB I am going to look for gifted teachers and accomplished architects from as broad a variety of backgrounds as I can find. Diversity is a word that is thrown around so constantly now that in some ways it has lost its meaning, but I would like there to be as large a variety as possible of socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. As important, if not more so, is a strong architectural philosophy, and ideally, a gift for teaching.

EW It's interesting you mentioned socioeconomic as part of diversity. One of the major challenges facing the students today is the unaffordable tuition at places like Yale. How do you see the YSOA being more accessible to people of different economic backgrounds? Is that something you're willing to take specific measures about?

DB It is my goal, even though raising money specifically for scholarships is not something that can be accomplished overnight. It is, of course, one of the big issues in architecture when students get out of school in debt, because the field is not remunerative enough for them to then pay

it off. It's not like when you get into debt in business school, where you know you're going to get a high-paying job when you get out. Architecture is a little different, and it is my objective for education to be accessible. Students should be able to get out of school with less debt, or no debt. Though I can't achieve that overnight, it is a goal and a strong belief of mine.

EW In what ways can the YSOA foster interaction with other professional schools? Do you see our current insularity as an issue, and what can be done to break that down?

DB How to break it down—I don't know yet. It's going to be another one of the goals I have when I start the position. I think it's not just the question of a joint degree, that's a few people doing a small thing. I think it's much more about dialogue, conversation, taking courses, engaging faculty and students across the disciplines that are present at Yale because that's what university is meant to be. It's a worthy goal that I will be figuring out how to achieve as I get to know the job better.

AS The announcement of your deanship garnered both positive and critical reactions from students. In particular, we heard mentions of your work as catering primarily to a wealthy clientele. We spoke about diversity and you being committed to making the YSOA accessible to all different backgrounds, but how do you see the work that you do relating to, or perhaps conflicting, with your pedagogical aims as a dean?

DB I don't want to say it's an unfair criticism, but I think it's somewhat naive criticism. Not all of us can only do disaster relief housing and shelters for those in need. We do a lot of pro bono work in my

office, only it doesn't get the same kind of press as the other work—nor does it need to. We use some of the funds that we make from our more high-profile projects to subsidize other activities we think are important. In some ways, architecture is a profession where people come to us with a project, site or goal in mind. We don't say yes to everything, but we say yes to the work we find interesting. It can be interesting for social reasons, aesthetic reasons, for where it is, or for whom it is. That is the first part. The second part of my answer is that my beliefs as an educator are broad, whereas what I do at my office is about my office. I think Bob is a good example, actually. Although his firm does a very specific kind of work, he has brought a fairly wide range of opinions and practitioners to the school. I would like to build on that legacy with an even greater variety of perspectives.

EW Final question from us—the theme for this issue of Paprika is the relationship between video and architecture. We have been looking for interesting contributions that explore this theme, and wondering if you would be able to recommend a film that has most influenced you as an architect?

DB Wow, I don't think I have ever been asked that before... There really is not one film that has influenced me as an architect, but I am adamant about seeing films in theaters; in large black rooms where the space of the filmmaker's vision feels as though it surrounds me. When I feel that I am inside of it, and I can inhabit it like architecture, that is magic for me, and that is why I still adamantly go see films in theaters.



122 Community Center
New York, New York
Image credit: Deborah Berke Partners

Bard College Conservatory of Music
Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
Image credit: Chris Cooper



Cummins Indy Distribution Headquarters
Indianapolis, Indiana
Image credit: Deborah Berke Partners

