

FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH

Urban Intermedia at Harvard shines light on gaps in urban studies

By JONATHAN HILBURG (@JHILBURG) • September 11, 2018

Art East News Urbanism



Research from Berlin, Istanbul, Mumbai, and Boston is all on display in *Urban Intermedia: City, Archive, Narrative* at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. (Justin Knight)

From now until October 14, visitors to the Harvard University Graduate School of Design ([GSD](#)) can enjoy the fruits of [urban research](#) from four cities: Berlin, Istanbul, Mumbai, and [Boston](#). [Urban Intermedia: City, Archive, Narrative](#) is the product of four years of research, funded by the [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#), and compares and contrasts the history and growth of each city to find commonalities and differences.



A wall of ephemera and photographs documents Boston's history of placemaking. (Justin Knight)

That four-year project was spearheaded by the GSD's Eve Blau, who curated the show with Robert Pietrusko, and Julie Buckler as part of the Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative. The exhibition is a culmination of the team's research but is also intended to spur discussion and gather feedback on the future direction of the project.

[Höweler + Yoon Architecture](#) handled the installation design of *Urban Intermedia* in the school's Druker Design Gallery, centered around four concrete stations, one for each city, where narratives are projected. These narratives are a combination of spatial and historical information and present open-ended stories that are meant to encourage viewers to dig deeper.



Visitors lounging in a seating installation. (Justin Knight)

These narratives delve into the three key themes that guided the research in each city: the planned and unplanned, a look into formal and informal placemaking; migration and mobility, how the residents and others move through each city; and nature and technology, examinations of each city's infrastructure and urban ecology.

Urban Intermedia has previously been on display in Istanbul and Berlin this past year, and the GSD's Stephen Gray has added a Boston-centric supplement to the show's Harvard homecoming. The new section in the current exhibition adds archival materials that contextualize the role of race, space, and power in Boston's development and covers three eras of the city's growth. Gray solicited Boston-based collections for "race and space" materials and received contributions from institutions such as the *Boston Globe*, Boston Public Library, Northeastern University, and Norman B. Leventhal Map and Education Center.



Introductory text for the Boston-specific portal projected onto the table. (Justin Knight)

A 33-foot-long, wooden meeting table has also been installed as a place to exchange ideas. Lectures, classes, and discussions will be hosted at the table, which will serve as a site of “active

research” until the exhibition’s closing in October.

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