

## Dear Architecture: Letters on Love, Apologies and Gratuitous Selfies

04:00 - 10 December, 2015 | by [Finn MacLeod](#)



"Dear Architecture," writes Craig L. Wilkins, "I've been wondering why you don't speak to me. Is it because you don't see me? Are you ignoring me? Maybe it's because you really don't care for me; but whatever it is, you sure don't. Speak, that is. At least, not to me." In his winning entry to '[Dear Architecture](#)', a competition initiated by [Blank Space](#) (of [Fairytale](#) fame), Wilkins describes misgivings through the lens of a disenfranchised city dweller, illustrating a missed connection felt by one resident towards his surroundings.

Conceived as a tangent to Blank Space's series of whimsical architectural [Fairy Tales](#), 'Dear Architecture' has, above all, provided a welcome opportunity to those most intimately acquainted with the profession to vent frustrations and voice concerns. Reviewed by a 17-person panel including architects [Fernando Romero](#) and [Diana Balmori](#), and [ArchDaily's](#) co-founder [David Basulto](#) and executive editor [Becky Quintal](#), the selection represents a smattering of opinions from architecture's biggest names, emerging voices, and relative newcomers to the field.

With the goal to begin an all-encompassing dialogue on architecture, [Blank Space](#) founders Matthew Hoffman and Francesca Guiliani-Hoffman chose a medium conducive to meaningful reflection – the letter. "They [letters] encourage us to make demands of architecture; to keep it on its toes; to express wishes as to what its future should look like and what its concerns should be; to declare our love for it, our hate for it, our neutrality towards it," say Hoffman and Giuliani-Hoffman in the book's opening statement. "The letters congratulate architecture on its accomplishments, and criticize it for what it has become."



# *Dear Architecture,*

---

## **WINNERS OF THE DEAR ARCHITECTURE COMPETITION CHALLENGE THE PROFESSION WITH OPEN LETTERS**

---

Blank Space is thrilled to announce the winners of Dear Architecture, an ideas competition that challenged designers to explore one of the most important communication tools of all time – the letter. *“Letter-writing is an exercise in exactitude, and a potentially disruptive activity. Historically, well-worded open letters were responsible for revolutions and for the circulation of innovative, game changing ideas,”* say Blank Space Founders Matthew Hoffman and Francesca Giuliani.

**Participants from over 60 countries around the world answered the design brief**, and winners were chosen by a jury that included Fernando Romero, Beatrice Galilee, Diana Balmori and Hani Rashid, among others.

*“Harnessing the power of the open letter with vibrance and passion, **the winning entries of the Dear Architecture competition tackle some of the toughest issues affecting the architecture profession,**”* say Hoffman and Giuliani.

*“Winners penned compelling letters that tackle, among other things, social exclusion by way of poor urbanism, the underrepresentation of women within the profession, and architecture’s response (or lack thereof) to new environmental concerns such as fracking,”* the founders add.

**The jury selected three prize winners along with 12 honorable mentions.**

**First Place goes to Craig L. Wilkins, PhD, RA.** Wilkins, a professor at University of Michigan Taubman College, addressed architecture from the perspective of an individual lamenting that Architecture won’t speak to him. In this letter, architects are invited to see beyond the minutiae of their individual work to consider its greater social effects, both intended and unintentional. *“Almost 50 years after Whitney Young, the field remains deeply implicated in the Baltimores of the nation. **I wanted to remind practitioners, people beyond our immediate circle often think long and hard about what we do.** Even if they don’t call it architecture, they’re acutely aware of the things that make their lives better or worse.”*

– Craig L. Wilkins

Dear Architecture:

I've been wondering why you don't speak to me.

Is it because you don't see me? Are you ignoring me? Maybe it's because you really don't care for me; but whatever it is, you sure don't. Speak, that is. At least, not to me.

When I go downtown, I hear people saying you speak all the time. But I never hear it. I wonder what you say.

When I was little, I thought you spoke to my dad. He sure had a lot of nice things to say about you. Driving around our neighborhood with my mother, big brother, little sister and me, he'd often point and say things like, "I used to play there!" or "Bobby Ford lived there; we used to sit on his porch all hours of the day waiting for Betty Roberts to walk by just once." I don't know Betty Roberts. Maybe you do. Do you speak to her, maybe?

Anyway, he always seemed happy when he spoke about you. But not anymore. Now he tells me you hide things. People. Drugs. That I should watch out for you. Around you. I wonder what you did to make him not like you anymore. Did you stop speaking to him too?

My friend Jamie, she likes you. She used to live next door but her dad got a different job and now she lives somewhere else. I see her sometimes at cookouts or birthdays. Sometimes she comes to see her grandmother. She never used to but now she talks about you all the time. Is that why you stopped speaking to my dad? Because now you have Jamie?

My teacher Mr. Phillips asked us to draw you yesterday. I tried to remember what Jamie told me; to remember what my dad said about you when you were friends. I dressed you up real fine. You had a tall, pointy hat, big shiny eyes and a long porch wide enough for the entire block to sit on. I didn't want to draw the flat tops and shut eyes that say, "Post no bills" around here. I mean, what would be the point of that? I tried to draw something I thought would speak. But still, you wouldn't. Speak. Not to me.

Last week, my mom, dad, all their friends and a bunch of people I didn't know were walking down the street shouting and holding signs. Most of the signs were about the police but some of them were about you. Said you were cheap. Broken. Mean and always had been. They want something better. I don't think you speak to them either. If so, it's not in a way they can understand.

Mr. Phillips seemed to hear you though. He smiled a great big toothy smile and asked me if this is what I wanted; if this was my dream house. I told him I didn't know but I knew what I didn't want.

Architecture that won't speak to me.