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Good evening everyone. It's really a pleasure to be here and have a chance to speak with you all as you celebrate your MArch defenses.

I am here representing the new faculty at the school as a part of your toasts and speeches tonight. And would like to start very quickly by thanking our associate directors of the grad program, Ozayr Salojee and Zach Colbert, who have done such tremendous work for all of you and us, as well as Jill Stoner, who has navigated the school through such a surreal year. All your efforts were tremendous and felt by everyone. However, we also recognize the many hours of work that go on behind the scenes and appreciate the endless effort you put into making the graduate program so special.

I have been thinking a lot about what this last year has meant, as I am sure many others have. It's been weird. And I know I could spend a lot of time thinking about how COVID has changed everything as we know it, but I would like to try and not focus on the kind of never-ending-doom-scrolling-no friends-zooming forever darkness that it has presented. You all have gracefully triumphed in the face of the pandemic and built a strong community despite it all (one that has also included faculty and instructors).

But for a moment, I do want to talk about some of the things that I miss – vistas and landscapes, cities, views into unknown places, being in awe. I miss standing before amazing buildings and urban tapestries and being without words or thoughts. I think of how it felt the first time I saw the Pantheon in Rome and how its columns and porch literally made the earth sink around you. I think of hiking in Banff at the base of the Rocky Mountains with air that tastes crisp or sitting in front of the Pacific Ocean as the waves overtake the beach. I miss markets where people run into one another and move at alarming speeds. I think of standing, just weeks before the pandemic locked down Canada, in the middle of the Negev/Naqab with students from this class as a rare (and plan-ruining) rain came across the desert. The power of visiting the Western Wall and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, meandering down at night into the heart of Petra through the wet rock canyons.

Obviously, the list goes on. And don't get me wrong, I miss the sights, and I miss the cities and the culture and the FOOD (what I would give to eat something other than the local eats of Domino's Pizza), but what I miss most is feeling *small*. Architecture and cities and landscapes have that amazing gob-smacking power to take your breath away and to make you feel humbled. Scale does that. That is an amazing feeling, to be overwhelmed by something, to be in its presence, to be a tiny part of its existence. The pandemic has done a lot to strip that feeling away – sitting on a computer alone in a

quiet room day in and day out makes you feel much less a part of something and instead makes everything quite self-referential.

But yesterday and the day before, I had this amazing and wonderful experience that felt like the Pantheon or the mountains or the sea – I was humbled by all of you and your work. Certainly, it was transportable – I imagined being in Cairo, Thailand, or New York. I thought about different parts of Canada, speculative futures, places I had and had never been to. For two days, I got to be at all these sites. But more importantly, the work I saw, throughout the defenses and working as a supervisor, had power and grace, and it humbled me to see it. We, as your professors, are only a small part of the incredible work you do and will do into your futures, and it is one of the greatest feelings to feel small against the scale of work and investigation and thoughtfulness you have produced.

We like scale in architecture. And that's important to remember in your work – the value of the scale of space, the scale of time, and the scale of being. This is just a moment right now – there is so much ahead for all of you that will unfold in many marvelous ways. And I think you should remember the scale of what you have done can be extended. It can continue. It has a life after this just one moment. I suppose it is a bit of a cliché to say continue the work, but there is still so much work to do and so much you can do.

Within thesis work, students find agency, more so than you likely have been able to throughout your educational career. This has been a time of becoming, of taking a position (literally in your work, but also at the scale of the practice). You take a big step forward in becoming the architect you want to be, but also the person you want to be as an architect and designer. The things that have come to you in your thesis should not end with thesis. The power to amaze or to humble is within your hands. Be big, be bold. Continue to find your agency and advocate for what you have learned through the process. You have incredible voices and an incredible responsibility to the profession in the voice you pursue. One of the most quoted texts and used authors during this year's defenses (at least from those I attended) was Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble*. Taking a note from all of you and your work, I would encourage you all the "stay with the trouble" (in its broadest interpretation) as you continue onto the next chapter.

I realize I have hit my five minutes, but I want to end with a quick anecdote that includes a small bit of humour. I had the fortune this term to contrast supervising thesis work with teaching the first-year studio – a sort of beginning and an end.

In my last meeting with the first years, as we discussed casually what it means to take criticism and how to think through criticism and crits, one of the students asked me to tell them my worst crit experience. I don't doubt that I scared them, and they likely got more than they bargained for. My first story was from my first year when I never finished my drawings due to a model-making disaster, and in my two-minute limited presentation, I only explained frantically why I didn't have my work done. My professors

used me as an example to the whole year of what NOT to do when presenting your work. The second story was from my second year when I put up my work, and under her breath, I could hear my professor say, "oh my god," as my disastrous project was pinned up. Later, that professor, who is now a good friend, admitted that she cried at home that night because of my project. This was earth-shattering. IT WAS SO BAD it made her cry. But she told me since I was about to begin teaching that fall, I would cry a lot as a teacher and feel every emotion possible. Needless to say, this terrified me. But she clarified; she said you'll cry because students move you, they surprise you, and because you watch them grow (through bad pin-ups like mine, but also great triumphs). Don't worry, I'm not here to confess that I have been crying due to your work (or at least I won't admit to it), but I do wish to speak to this closeness we feel to you and your work, to how inspiring and determined you are, and that you have moved us in what you do. The growth we see is the most exceptional part of the job.

Thank you all for such a wonderful year, regardless of how weird it has been. Cheers and congratulations. There are a lot of great things ahead of you.