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Hello from Bordeaux. Joining you for the celebration of your achievements tonight brings me joy. I'm proud of you. You not only completed a university degree, but you completed a Bachelor of Architectural Studies, which is a demanding program because it stretches a person right down to their core. You had to learn to receive and digest criticism about your work; you developed patience and practiced critical reflection. Sometimes, when you thought you had a perfect solution and finished drawings, you accepted new questions, incorporated new considerations and perspectives, and allowed what, for a time, you believed to be the perfect design to be destabilized and reworked. As one of the people involved in your education, I know how hard this was. Architecture, urbanism, conservation – are rarely domains of perfect solutions but rather realms of thoughtful responses guided by a generous attitude towards humans as dwellers. Adjusting and composing with indeterminacy – that is what we do. In opening up to this truth, you grew.

In my career in teaching, I tend to feel an affection for my students, but I must admit that your cohort is special to me. Your BAS studies corresponded to most of my years as associate director of undergraduate studies. I first had you as my own students in the Introduction to Modern Architecture class. Our twice-weekly early morning classes in the Loeb building (designed by one of my teachers, James Strutt): brought us together, and I still see you sitting on the raked seats, eyes mostly wide open, like it was yesterday.

I got to know the design students in second-year studio when you played intelligently with clay and sticks, and in third year, when you creatively pushed the limits of courtyard house design, And DSA, gosh – that seems like a long time ago! Then, the abrupt interruption caused by COVID. Together we navigated a quick switch to online learning, including a brief foray through Big Blue Button on our way to what has become a familiar space, one that brings us together today: Zoom.

These courses and events provided opportunities to get to know you and, yes, get attached to you. You are a wonderful group of individuals. You help each other, advocate, and stand up for each other. You approach the world with optimism.

I shared my own graduation day with Yvan Cazabon, who also taught you, and we worked side by side in a small architectural office right after graduating, and he is retiring in a few days. It has been good to share a long connection with him, and I send him very warm wishes today.

Some may recall me saying to you that the most important drawing is the site plan. The site plan shows how a building is sewn into its context. It explains and reveals its site; it is about relationships. It wavers between ground and more distant territories, firmly planted while reaching. It elucidates and listens. Perhaps now and again, you can draw site plans for your lives. By that, I don't mean you should decide everything in advance

and fix them in stone. I mean that good things emerge out of spaces of listening. I'd like to leave you with this: Remain friends and draw lines between each other, especially in hard times. Whether you become a lead designer in a famous firm or whether you are a background member of a team, or whether your path takes you towards quiet research, or altogether elsewhere, I wish good things for each and every one of you, and that your site plans will ground and orient you on your paths in the deepest ways.

I always like meeting parents and close ones at graduation, so say hi to them for me.

It's nighttime here in Bordeaux, but I raised a glass to you all a little earlier this evening. Stay in touch, dear all. Congratulations, and enjoy your celebrations wherever you are.

Hugs and kisses

Your old teacher Janine