More architectural ideas are disseminated through images, specifically photography and digital drawings that are freely shared online and on social media, than through any other method of communication. Online platforms such as pinterest, instagram, flickr, and blogs – are emblematic of today’s global architectural culture. Whether viewed on laptop or mobile phone, contemporary architects regularly employ photography as a means to comment on design, promote their work, speculate on socio-economic conditions, as well as to instigate change within the built environment.

This seminar explores the entanglement between photography, cultural criticism, and the dissemination of architectural ideas. Content is divided into four scalar themes S, M, L, XL, which translates into the personal, the room, the building, and the metropolis. Readings are organized by scalar theme, going into depth on visual theory and culture, along with introducing specific photographic and compositional techniques. Assignments are based on John Dewey’s method of experimental pragmatism, also known as “learning by doing.” Each assignment will be realized through hands-on photography, in addition to writing an expository text. Over the course of the semester, students will reflect on the technological development of photography, first by constructing an early pin-hole camera, then moving quickly forward through a series of exercises, culminating in a monumental 3D laser scan in collaboration with Beckman Institute’s Imaging Technology Group. For the final project, each student will create and compose an individually curated book of photographs along with an accompanying textual description.

There will be two all-day photographic field trips. First to Columbus Indiana, and second, to the post-industrial landscape of Gary, Indiana; the Farnsworth House; Eero Saarinen’s John Deere Headquarters or other to be decided by the class.