



November 28, 2023

**External Review *for the*  
Kharkiv School of Architecture**

I am very pleased to write this external review for the Kharkiv School of Architecture, operating in Lviv since 2022. I write as Masse-Martin NEH Professor of Art History at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, where I am a tenured associate professor of Modern and Contemporary Architecture. In that capacity, I teach architectural and urban history as well as architectural design. I am the director of Emory's Architectural Studies curriculum and have extensive experience teaching architecture not only here, but also at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design and Northeastern University, both in Boston, Massachusetts, where I practiced as a licensed architect for a decade before returning to Harvard to gain my PhD. All this experience allows me to properly assess and compare the Kharkiv School of Architecture within an international academic context.

In this review I will explain my relationship with the Kharkiv School of Architecture, I will write to the overall structure of the Bachelor's program and the school's learning environment, I will discuss the Humanitarian Block in which I taught third year architecture Kharkiv School of Architecture students this fall, and lastly I will discuss the school's international reputation.

**Relationship with the Kharkiv School of Architecture**

I have been aware of the Kharkiv School of Architecture since its founding in 2015 through an American colleague who served as a visiting tutor. I began following the school's progress through its robust social media presence and through a growing list of Ukrainian and international colleagues who are involved in the school's curriculum. While on sabbatical (teaching leave) from my own university in Fall 2023, I taught the BA program's 3<sup>rd</sup> year students in their Introduction to Urbanism course, which I called "The Architect and the City." The class was remote for the first  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the semester, then I visited Lviv in November to meet and teach them in person. As part of that visit, I also gave two public lectures: one at the Center for Urban History in Lviv, and one at the Kharkiv School of Architecture. I have thus viewed the school's development from afar and up close as a visiting tutor and guest of the school at their Lviv location.

**Structure of the Bachelor's Program and the School's Environment**

The Kharkiv School of Architecture BA program provides students with robust breadth of experience appropriate to the complex fields of architecture and urban design. Broken into four primary modules—Studio, Technical, Skills, and Humanitarian Blocks—the curriculum foregrounds to the students/future design practitioners the importance of utilizing various types of expertise when approaching the built environment. As is the case in most highly regarded international schools of architecture, the design studios are primarily taught by practicing architects, who imbue the students with conceptual and practical skills and who also model professional excellence. During my visit to Lviv, I toured Drozdov & Partners, the professional architectural office of the school's founder, and met several talented young Ukrainian architects who are conducting research and design in anticipation of Ukraine's reconstruction in the office, and who also teach in the Kharkiv School of Architecture BA program as studio, technical, or skills tutors. The importance of linking practice and academia in the training of future architects cannot be understated. Students learn the vocabulary, concerns, and language of the field by osmosis when

they are taught by practitioners. The pressing issues of the day within design practice are brought into the academic environment in this way.

I felt the positive energy of the academic environment as soon as I stepped into the Kharkiv School of Architecture. The space in which the school resides in Lviv is simply fantastic for the kind of collaboration the students will undertake once working in architectural offices. The school is in an open space flooded with natural light and furnished with individual workstations, shelves, and large tables for students to gather and share ideas. The lofty informal space encourages students to work together, learn from each other across the four years, and to generate a robust sense of collegiality. Students get their work done, of course, but keeping in mind that architecture is always a team endeavor, they are also learning collaborative skills in such a space. Group projects are regularly assigned, which support the school's insistence on collective work.

### **The Humanitarian Block**

I am most familiar with the Kharkiv School of Architecture's Humanitarian Block since I was a visiting tutor in this part of the curriculum this semester. My course, "The Architect and the City" was a history of 20th and 21st century urbanization viewed through an architectural lens, and it relied on primary textual and material evidence produced by design protagonists. The entire course was conducted in English. Original texts written by architects establish theoretical bases for lectures on specific urban interventions, and both built and unbuilt projects were explored within the context of these claims. Each typical seminar was composed of one lecture (+/- 70 min) and one presentation/discussion session (+/- 40 min). A combination of weekly short writing assignments, presentations, discussion leading responsibilities, and one longer research project encouraged students to speak and write critically about the various scales of environmental design from the building to the city to the region. A multi-modal urban manifesto was the culminating project in this course. Students developed a strong set of principles to guide their work as architect-urban designers, and the final review was held online with two outside critics: one from the USA, one from Switzerland.

I provide this great level of detail about the course to underscore an important point: this was a very difficult class, conducted entirely in a second language. Yet, the Kharkiv School of Architecture leadership were confident that the students could rise to the challenge, and they did. The work the students completed for the class was analytical and extremely thoughtful, on par with the work my American students. If the Humanitarian Block is intended to "develop appreciation towards the architectural profession by combining independent creative expression with the social responsibility of an architect," these 3rd year students I have just taught are well prepared to make a significant difference in the field when the difficult work of postwar reconstruction in Ukraine begins.

### **Kharkiv School of Architecture's Stellar International Reputation**

Since its foundation, the Kharkiv School of Architecture leadership has reached out to international colleagues to collaborate. With institutional and individual design-world partners in many countries, the school brings its students into conversations about global concerns—climate change, migration, humanitarian design, technology, material experimentation, etc.—while also engaging the international partners to think about Ukraine's specific design challenges. The international collaborations are, in other words, multidirectional. Through its intelligent social media presence and amplification of the innovative curriculum, the Kharkiv School of Architecture

has elevated the status of Ukrainian design education to an international level, gaining support from within and outside of Ukraine.

In closing, I highly commend the Kharkiv School of Architecture for its visionary leadership, faculty, curriculum, and students. The profession of architecture will be crucial in the postwar years, and these students from the Kharkiv School of Architecture will be leading the charge. I could not be more confident in their abilities to rise to these challenges. Please feel free to contact me for any additional information or clarification. I am ready to assist.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CE Crawford', written over a light gray rectangular background.

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