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Four Projects Awarded the 2026 Arnold W. Brunner Grant for Architectural Research

AIANY and the Center for Architecture awarded a total of $75,000 to research projects by mid-career architects.

February 12, 2026, New York, NY – AIA New York and the Center for Architecture are proud to announce the recipients of the 2026 **Arnold W. Brunner Grant for Architectural Research**.

The Arnold W. Brunner Grant is awarded to mid-career architects for advanced study in any area of architectural investigation that contributes to the knowledge, teaching, or practice of the art and science of architecture. AIANY and the Center for Architecture's joint Scholarship Committee assesses projects based on their engagement with contemporary local and global architectural issues and the utility of the research project's end product.

AIANY and the Center for Architecture award scholarships and grants throughout the year for architectural students, architectural student journals, and practicing architects. Visit our website for more information on upcoming grants and scholarships deadlines.

2026 Recipients:

Principal Investigator: Jonas Hauptman
Co-Principal Investigators: Tom Hahn, AIA, Dan Hindman, Lucas Oshun
Collaborators: Myrian Larco Benítez, Kalkidan Fressa, Ray Villanueva
Project: "Amazon Edge: A MassBu Building for U.S.-Ecuadorian Architectural Exchange"
Award: $15,000

Amazon Edge proposes an architectural and technical investigation of MassBu, a lightly modified bamboo building system developed to support affordable housing while storing biogenic carbon in long-life structural components. The project examines how bamboo can

move beyond artisanal use toward a repeatable architectural system through targeted structural testing, fabrication-enabled tooling research, and design-based inquiry. Sited in Tena, Ecuador, at the edge of the Amazon, the work focuses on panel and beam behavior, connection logic, and assembly tolerances within real climatic and regulatory conditions. The project culminates in an executive architectural-engineering report and a traveling exhibition, contributing architectural knowledge for biogenic construction.

Jonas Hauptman is Associate Professor of Industrial Design at Virginia Tech and leads the research through the Virginia Tech BioDesign Research Group (BDRG). He is the originator of the MassBu (Mass Bamboo) system and has led multi-year research on lightly modified bamboo, composite action, fabrication-enabled design, and biogenic building systems through collaborations in Ecuador, the Philippines, and the United States.

Tom Hahn, AIA, brings architectural design leadership and a professional practice perspective to the team. He has experience translating experimental material systems into credible architectural applications and professional workflows.

Dan Hindman, Ph.D., P.E., is a structural testing lead, focusing on beam fabrication oversight and bending tests. He provides leadership on structural testing strategy, interpretation of results, and alignment with performance-based design frameworks.

Lucas Oshun, Director, Regeneration Field Institute (RFI), specializes in bamboo forestry, material sourcing, supply chain development, and Ecuadorian site coordination. He oversees bamboo sourcing, treatment, fabrication logistics, and coordination across Ecuador-based partners.

Myrian Larco Benítez, Ph.D., ARCU-CAE, Ikiam University, is the local academic leadership; educational integration and regional alignment. She anchors the project within the Amazonian academic context and supports alignment with local climate, culture, and institutional priorities.

Kalkidan Fressa, Virginia Tech, is a doctoral researcher working in architectural design coordination, documentation, and MassBu panel systems. She is a licensed architect from Ethiopia.

Ray Villanueva, Kawayan Collective, Philippines, is a U.S.-trained licensed architect. He is a professional advisor and external reference for bamboo construction practice.

Ali Höcek, FAIA
Project: “Containers and Tents: A Typology of Resident-Made Modifications in Türkiye’s Temporary Settlements (2023–2026)”
Award: $15,000

AIA New York

In February 2023, earthquakes across southeastern Türkiye damaged more than 200,000 buildings and displaced nearly three million people, reshaping large areas into provisional landscapes of tents and container settlements intended for short term use. This project examines how these emergency environments are transformed as residents adapt them for prolonged habitation. Through a comparative typological study of resident made spatial modifications, the research renders everyday interventions legible to designers and planners, identifying gaps in emergency shelter systems and informing more responsive approaches to displacement amid accelerating climate- and conflict-driven crises.

Ali C. Höcek, FAIA, is the founding principal of AC Höcek Architecture (ACHA), a New York City-based practice focused on socially engaged design, resilience, and community-centered work. A Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, he is an adjunct professor at the Spitzer School of Architecture at the City College of New York and a founding member of Collective Action for Readiness, Recovery, and Resilience (CARRRE), formed in response to the 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye.

Höcek's work integrates field research, design, and public engagement. With colleagues at ACHA and CARRRE, he has conducted repeated research visits to Türkiye's earthquake-affected regions, collaborating with municipalities, professionals, academics, NGOs, and local residents. He is also serving as co-curator and architect for a major exhibition opening in 2027 at the Center for Architecture examining collective responses to the earthquakes. His disaster-relief design work includes Deploy, a modular prefabricated system supporting post-disaster shelter and public space, currently patent-pending in the United States. Fieldwork in Granada, Nicaragua, undertaken with Northeast Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity (NeVOSH), informed the Tropiques Houses, a housing model addressing climate, economy, and community needs through prefabrication and local production. His socially engaged projects also include a community kitchen and teaching restaurant in Brooklyn and an educational pavilion focused on nutrition and urban agriculture.

Lindsey May, AIA; Brittany Williams, AIA; and Michael Ezban
Project: "Text-to-Image-to-Building"
Award: $15,000

This project seeks to define an approach to one of the most powerful visualization tools ever made available to architects: text-to-image generative artificial intelligence (genAI). Through the design and construction of an experimental Pavilion titled Text-to-Image-to-Building, we will interrogate the opportunities and limitations of text-to-image genAI in architecture. The project proposes a plant-based material palette and a process of iterative prototyping and testing to bridge the gap between genAI's shortcomings in representing unconventional materials and the irreplaceable depth of multisensorial awareness and experience that humans bring to design.

Lindsey May, Brittany Williams, and Michael Ezban are architects and academics that lead grant-funded research initiatives in AI and design. The team is interested in critical incorporation of artificial intelligence with practices and pedagogies of architecture; they pursue this agenda through funded research, curricular integration, and participation in high-profile conferences and symposia. May, Williams, and Ezban are all Associate Clinical Professors in the Architecture Program at the University of Maryland School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, where they also hold academic leadership positions.

Lindsey May, AIA, is the principal of Studio Mayd, an award-winning architecture practice based in Washington, DC that engages diverse projects. She holds a Master of Architecture from Princeton University and is a licensed architect in New York and Washington, DC. In 2021 she was awarded the Architectural League Prize.

Brittany Williams, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, is a partner at the award-winning practice Gardner Architects LLC in Bethesda, MD; the practice was recently recognized by Forbes as one America's Top 200 Residential Architecture firms. She holds a Master of Architecture from the University of Maryland, and is a licensed architect in Virginia.

Michael Ezban, RA, ASLA, LEED AP, explores multi-species environments through writing and speculative works; his first book on this topic received the 2020 JB Jackson Book Prize. He holds a Master of Architecture from University of Michigan and a Master in Landscape Architecture from Harvard University, and he is a licensed architect in Michigan.

Anaelechi Owunwanne
Project: “HYBRID EARTH: Climate-Responsive Domestic Architecture in Southeastern Nigeria”
Award: $15,000

In the summer of 2025, Analechi Onuwanne designed and built a single-family residence within his ancestral village compound in southeastern Nigeria, serving simultaneously as architect, builder, and on-site coordinator. Working outside U.S. regulatory and material systems, the completed house is framed as Phase One of a practice-based research project. Phase Two expands the work through the design and construction of small, guest house bungalows on the same site, using them as full-scale research prototypes to study sustainable, climate-responsive housing through a hybrid system of rammed earth exterior walls and insulated concrete form (ICF) interior construction.

Analechi Owunwanne is an American-born Nigerian architect raised in Kuwait with over 20 years of professional experience within the fields of architecture, design and construction. He has worked on several New York City projects ranging from high rise hotels, affordable residential projects, brownstone renovations, private homes, restaurants, and bars. Owunwanne is the founding partner at Freeform Deform LLC and has overseen its day-to-day design work

for the past 15 years.

2026 grants and scholarships were awarded by the 2026 Scholarship Committee:

Benjamin Gilmartin, AIA, DS+R
Peter Robinson, Parsons School of Constructed Environments; Cornell University
Jennifer Sage, FAIA, LEED AP, Sage and Coombe Architects
Dan Burdzy, AIA, Henning Larsen
Sara Caples, AIA, Caples Jefferson Architects PC
Latoya Kamdang, AIA, Ennead
Sydney Maubert, Illinois Institute of Technology
Zoe Small, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, Studio Gang
Karen-Marie Stonely, AIA, LEED AP, SPAN Architecture
Richard Yancey, FAIA, LEED AP, NCARB, Building Energy Exchange

About AIA New York

Established in 1857, AIA New York is the oldest and largest chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), serving as the collective voice of nearly 5,000 licensed architects, allied professionals, students, and design enthusiasts in New York City.

Inaugurated in 2003 as one of the AIA's first cultural institutions, the Center for Architecture engages local and international audiences with the value, impact, and wonder of architecture. Together, we advance the value and practice of architecture to promote just and sustainable communities.

Both AIA New York and the Center for Architecture advocate for the importance of design in enhancing urban life, offering programming that fosters engagement among architects, professionals, and the public. We prioritize values such as civic engagement, equity, environmental sustainability, resiliency, technological innovation, and inspiring design.