The lifeblood of any experiment in science or design is its potential to fail. Progress is all about being wrong. Searching for the horizon we must be ready to find the edge of collapse as a place of excitement. To try is to fail and to fail is to discover. This year, Unit 8 will explore the fringes of failure as a space of seduction and a vehicle of creative opportunity. We are interested in the subtle delights at the edges of failure. How can we inhabit and cultivate this nimble edge? Failure takes us beyond assumption into the world of the unexpected and hence is an essential part of any form of artistic production.

In architectural education most are scared of the very idea of failure. Why? Perhaps it could be considered the point where learning begins, a liberated escape from the shadow of rehearsal.

In his piece *When Robot's Rule: The Two Minute Airplane Factory*, Chris Burden filled the Tate Britain with a grandiose machine devised to mechanically fold paper airplanes faster than any human and project them in endless amounts into the galleries. The image in one's mind of such a construction seems nothing short of fantastic. But instead of this slightly absurd mechanical spectacle, for the entirety of the show, visitors were confronted only with technicians frantically trying to repair the machine. In the end it never projected a single plane. The appeal of Burden's work lies in its deviant humour and subtle poetry: the fearless and wildly dangerous ambitions of the protagonists of human aviation, to which the *Two Minute Airplane Factory* refers, addresses the all-too-human attraction to the possibility of danger and collapse. We are less interested in the slapstick potential of failure or its role in the grand narrative of technological progress, rather we are focused upon the difficult and ambiguous terrain that failure occupies.

**A Quiver: The Construction of the Almost**

In our first project, “A Quiver”, we will work through spatial invention to explore the productive and critical potential of the nimble edge. How can we inhabit the edges of perception, court the boundaries of structural and material performance, chase the seduction of the glitch? How could the blind spot, the slip or the joke reveal more than the controlled truth? Each student will be challenged to develop an attraction of the improbable, a “Quiver” of our own invention. We wish to invent sensitivities rather than find them.

To do so, we will need to operate with a sense of poetry and tenacity but also with utmost precision. As precision is a mindset but also a question of judgment and learned skill we will introduce tools from digital fabrication to intuitive modelling.
speculative writing to 3D scanning, from physical computing to photography, from digital and analogue drawing to rapid prototyping. The work is an inventive series of operations that continue to refine and hunt for the edge of delight while fostering a fearlessness of failure. We are intrigued by the delicate, the daring and the difficult.

**Misfits on the Danube**

Our field trip in January will take us from Vienna via Budapest to Belgrade and through the wild countryside in between. We will chase the experiments of a series of architectural and artistic misfits, outsiders venturing to the edges of failure, consciousness and supposed good taste: Coop Himmelb(l)au’s technical challenge of a religious adherence to an intoxicated sketch, the difficult material and conceptual junctions in the sculpture of Walter Pichler, Adolf Loos’ notoriously “un-fashionable” buildings, Egon Schiele’s perverse character of line within figure drawing, Fritz Wotruba’s controversial sculpture-turned-architecture, Imre Makovecz’ politically and structurally subversive architectural inventions, the obsoletely futuristic brutalist monuments of ex-Yugoslavia.

**Deviant Architectures**

The building project will continue our research into strategies of disturbance and failure by translating ideas into inventive architecture. We are interested in deviant ideas and buildings that inventively don’t work just as much as they do. Our projects will be situated along the Danube trajectory in difficult topographies and various cultural conditions to serve up a range of possibility and resistance to spatial ideas. Strong architectural propositions will invite friction within the building’s structure, programme, environmental strategy, materiality and contextual relationship to create an unusual field of sensual awareness and architectural delight.

UG8 holds a proud tradition of making sophisticated and rigorous building projects developed through a variety of critical architectural positions. Each project will be developed uniquely by the student’s choosing to continue to push forward ideas emerging within their own design work. This begins a larger journey to uncover one’s own range of architectural character through invention.

*’If I fail, I will fail so hard that I can never recover.”*  
Werner Herzog - before beginning his first feature film, *Herakles*