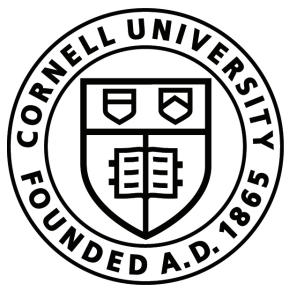


CORNELL AAP
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
OPTION STUDIOS

Fall 2018



AAP
Architecture
Art
Planning

Fall 18 Option Studio

John Zissovici

BUFFALO IMAGE SCAPES



Image by Debra Chan

The studio will investigate the vast **new 'nature' of image flows** emanating from networked communication devices, and the potential role of social media as a form of mass participation, to **propose new networks of recreational space**. We will also exploit innovations in visualization, like **augmented reality, to s[t]imulate new forms of mediated recreational experiences**, and test them in the popular imagination at their intersection with Olmsted's ideas of 'nature' and landscape.

Frederick Law Olmsted's 1868 comprehensive plan of a **distributed system of parks and connecting parkways** for a rapidly urbanizing Buffalo, was one of America's earliest and most comprehensive proposal for organizing recreational activity for a city's population. On offer in these dispersed reservations for 'nature', were Olmsted's **artificially constructed 'natural' landscapes** with their carefully orchestrated **scenic views**, later to be memorialized and used to promote the wonders of Buffalo through postcards. The plan's various components, which included adjacent natural landscapes containing an insane asylum and a cemetery, appeared distributed within a map of the greater city of Buffalo framed with rounded corners, **a complete picture of the new urban life**.

It also came at a time when photographic **images of America's natural wonders became a common sight**. The railroad that opened up the American west and made possible the transport of people and goods, also opened vast new parts of the continent to people's gaze, if not directly, then through the torrent of photographs of spectacular landscapes that flowed east to decorate people's homes.

On our visit to Buffalo* the studio will be advised by Dennis Maher, a Buffalo architect, artist, educator, and founder of Assembly House 150, a nonprofit art organization.

*Specific field trip date TBD but expected to occur between September 15-23rd.

Catskills Center for Environmental Interpretation

REGION, 'HERITAGE' & ATMOSPHERIC SPECTRALITY

Option Studio | Cornell Architecture | Fall 2018
Jeremy Foster

The Catskills is a region of the NE United States shaped by virtually every form of 'nature-culture' of the last 250 years, thanks to a series of landscape appropriations by the metropolis that lies 100 miles to the south, which have cast the region as, alternately, a scenographic, climatic, religious, geological, agricultural and hydrological 'resource'. This continues as concerns about climate change become overlaid on this already-multilayered environmental history. This is exacerbating tensions between the region as 'landscape' (ie. a space of aesthetic imagination and cultural memory) -- and the region as 'environment' (ie. an assemblage of biophysical actants linked through processual interactions). Rather than adjudicate between these two interpretations of the region, this studio seeks to project a future for it by working creatively with the underlying -- and historic -- links between them, through the design of a new Center for Environmental Interpretation.

For this project, we will use the lens of 'environmental atmosphere'. Sometimes reduced to a scenographic synthesis of architecture and people, 'atmosphere' is better described as an ambience, something 'between things', felt and sensed rather than identified and thought. It has also been described as an index of "all the forms of 'life' that go on within a locale", not that different, it turns out, from David Gissen's (re)definition of 'an environment' ie. the "biophysical totality of actants, *including humans*, in given locale and the performances and interactions that link them". This formulation reminds us that while it is tempting to see 'atmosphere' as an emanation of the setting, it is as much a consequence of bodily senses and socially-produced understandings as it is matter of material phenomena that seem to trigger them. Probably the most ubiquitous 'actant' in any locale is climate, which shapes the built/grown environment as much as it does human practices, and has historically been an important part of the Catskills' appeal. This mutuality not only unsettles perceptions of 'natural' and 'cultural' but also relations assumed to occur according to meta-narratives (ie progress). Enacting an 'a-historical' haunting that re-narrates the landscape's past, this mutuality can also change how we think about its future. Relevant here are experimental projects by Olaf Eliasson and Jorge Ortero-Pailos that use a similar 'atmospheric spectrality' to engage environmental histories that would otherwise remain 'below-the-radar'.

We will be designing an 'atmospheric relational environment' that integrates the embodied, sensorial, and material understandings triggered by climate in the Catskills region, and the cultural iconographies and narratives these have generated over time. We will follow contemporary museological practice, in which the museum becomes more than a purposive container of objects or representations, but rather an immersive environment that actively creates non-purposive understanding and emotion. As recent projects like the Louvre Lens, MuCEM, Caixa Forum, Dia Beacon, and MassMOCA demonstrate, by constructing a dialog between setting, interior and content, a museum's architecture can shape new perceptions of its environs' potentials. This multi-scalar -- and -temporal 'atmospheric relationality' will inform our research into the region's history, and investigations into siting, programming, plan/section and construction/materiality of the Center, and how 'exhibits', artefactual and mediated, are integrated in architectural/landscape space. We will use photoworks and video to develop museological scripts that explore notions of 'heritage' and the environmental e/effects of the passage of time, and mapping and plotting to identify potential emergent programs and sites. We will make a brief trip* to the Catskills and Hudson Valley to document these sites, and to visit other recent architectural/landscape projects of local environmental significance. *Specific field trip dates TBD but expected to occur between September 15-23rd.

CONDITIONS

Architectural Interventions in the Arctic: Kangerlussuaq, Greenland.

Visiting Professor Dorte Mandrup & Visiting Associate Professor Marianne Hansen
FALL 2018 OPTION STUDIO

The Greenlandic Ice Cap near Kangerlussuaq

Photo: Photo by Mads Pihl - Visit Greenland

The western coast of Greenland constitutes unique and varied landscapes with extreme and rapidly changing climatic conditions. With temperatures dropping far below 0 °C, masses of ice in transition, immense bodies of snow reshaping the landscape and hours of daylight rapidly changing, the fragile condition of being a human is made clear. All endeavors must thus be carefully and cleverly choreographed around these conditions.

The relationship between the delicate physicality of a building and the vastness of the landscape offers the potential of working within an immense range of scales. Spatially through architectural interventions linking the large scale of the natural elements to that of the body. Temporally, in conjunction with the climatic conditions shifting from moment to moment, season to season and at an evolutionary scale of anticipated increasing climate change.

SITE & PROGRAM

The town of Kangerlussuaq is positioned between the dynamic Greenlandic Ice Cap which is the last remaining chunk of ice from the Ice Ages and the fjord of Søndre Strømfjord connecting to the ocean in the west. The town is situated on the edge of a UNESCO World Heritage nominated area stretching between these major entities.

Kangerlussuaq has the largest international airport in Greenland and is a hub for migration to and from Greenland as well as being a destination in its own right. Increasing tourism is one of the aspects supporting economic growth and subsequent strengthening of Greenlandic independence.

The studio will engage in site-specific architecture responding to the challenging realities of the Arctic and seek to critically enhance architectural performance, exploring formal and spatial language that in a sustainable manner enrich the human exploration of the landscape in and around Kangerlussuaq and Greenland in general.

The architectural interventions will address three main user groups. The local inhabitants of Kangerlussuaq, some of whom migrate seasonally, as well as the increasing number of scientists and tourists, for all of whom there is a growing demand for new and improved facilities in the area.

The proposals should focus on year-round use, the relationship to the specific site and an informed approach to the complications of building in the arctic concerning both climate and the near complete absence of local building materials.

METHODOLOGY & PROCESS

Our belief is that extraordinary architecture is created from an understanding of the conditions relating to the specific context. It demands in-depth analysis and continuous refinement through an iterative design-process using prototyping in seeking a meticulous synthesis of concept, aesthetics and conditions.

We will begin the semester with analysis of the context in its broadest sense establishing a common bank of knowledge. We will study examples of contemporary and vernacular architecture from the region for the lessons they convey as well as the restrictions consequent to building in extreme climates.

A field trip** to Kangerlussuaq on the southwest coast of Greenland just north of the Arctic Circle* will take place. World renowned Danish and Greenlandic geologist Professor Minik Rosing might attend the field trip. On site we will further explore potentials and challenges of the area, refining our understanding of place and the scope of interventions to be developed through the semester.

The studio will focus on large scale models and hands-on project development.

*The Arctic Circle marks the northernmost latitude at which the noon sun is just visible on the winter (December) solstice and the southernmost point at which the midnight sun is just visible on the summer (June) solstice. The region north of this circle is geographically known as the Arctic. As of 12 May 2018, the Arctic Circle runs 66°33'47.1 north of the Equator.

Dorte Mandrup (Dorte Mandrup A/S) will be in Ithaca Wednesday 8/29 - Friday 8/31, Monday 10/15 - Wednesday 10/17, Wednesday 11/7 - Friday 11/9 and Monday 12/3 & for the Final Review 12/4. Dorte will fully participate in the September 17th - 23rd Copenhagen/Greenland Field trip. Marianne Hansen will teach the studio full time in Ithaca. Marianne is a senior architect at Dorte Mandrup A/S, where she has worked for the past 12 years. She is a graduate of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture and received a Bachelor of Science at the University of East London School of Architecture. She is an Associate Professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture and since 2014 she has taught at the master program entitled "Architecture and Extreme Environments".

****NB This studio will require, in addition to a \$500pp field trip contribution, an additional \$300pp contribution to cover food while in Greenland.**



Andreas Gursky: Library, 1999

Cornell University, AAP Department of Architecture

The Library of Illusions

Option Studio, Fall 2018

Rubén Alcolea

But what is reality?" asked the gnomelike man. He gestured at the tall banks of buildings that loomed around Central Park, with their countless windows glowing like the cave fires of a city of Cro-Magnon people. "All is dream, all is illusion; I am your vision as you are mine." (...) "Hah! But sensations are mental phenomena. They exist in our minds. How, then, do we know that the objects themselves do not exist only in our minds?" He waved again at the light-flecked buildings. "You do not see that wall of masonry; you perceive only a sensation, a feeling of sight. The rest you interpret." (Pygmalion's Spectacles, by Stanley G. Weinbaum, 1935)

One of the most and ancient examples of questioning reality, and subsequently paving the way to think about creating new imaginary worlds, comes from Plato. In his Allegory of the Cave, Plato explored the dialectics about the nature of reality and the limits of human perception. The Greek word αἰσθησις (aistheseis), was used by Plato to relate to the senses, feelings and perception, and has since evolved into the modern term Aesthetics, defined as the branch of philosophy involving indulging of senses to appreciate our environment.

The studio is an experimental exploration on the visual perception, used as a tool to define high speculative architecture spaces. The aim is to move beyond the only-physical condition of architecture or its specific time frame or site location, in order to examine an open field of discursive possibilities that emerge by engaging with mixed realities, fully abstract spaces and by incorporating more perceptive elements far beyond the vision. This is why, rather than focusing on a conventional site or program requirement, the projects will develop their materiality in direct relationship with the human scale and by more tactile and visual qualities, in order to engage directly to the more intimate perception of architecture spaces. For that purpose, students will develop a broad range of mixed media, including but not limited to drawings and physical models, and engaging with the methodical use of photography, collage, renderings, virtual reality or real space installations.

The results of the preliminary explorations will be used to develop a project defined as a blurry mix of the mythic and disappeared Library of Alexandria and the universal Library of Babel, described by Borges. These are two of the most suggestive spaces to embrace both the accumulation of human knowledge to the extent of becoming universal, and will be used as a starting point to reflect on the meaning, distribution and preservation of culture, knowledge and experiences.

This is an Ithaca based studio, and no major trips are expected during the semester.



Underground Station, Plaster Model. Beals Lyon Architects

MATERIAL MATTERS

FALL 2018 OPTION STUDIO

ALEJANDRO BEALS, LORETO LYON (BEALS LYON ARCHITECTS)

In 1958 Sverre Fehn was invited to propose a 'Nordic' Pavilion for the Venice Biennale. He answers the problem of designing for three different countries by evoking a common 'Nordic light', in the middle of Venice's *Giardini*. He does so by means of two perpendicular layers of exposed concrete beams, each one meter high and only 6 centimeters thick, spaced at intervals of 523 millimeters. This concrete grid avoids direct sunlight to enter the space, even during summer solstice, when rays hit the ground at a 64° angle. A filtered and uniform light is what defines the atmosphere of the space, soft and diffuse, just as in the northern latitudes.

We, as architects, are constantly confronted by this paradox: we design spaces, voids to be lived and occupied, but what define such spaces are the physical and tangible properties of matter.

This semester we won't focus on the creation of objects, but instead in that we do not see, or at least not easily: the qualities of space that, as a void, exists between volumes. Void, as in what remains 'within' and what remains 'between'. However, we will consider architecture mainly as a physical fact and therefore, construction and materiality will be the driving forces in our studio.

We will explore how a single material and a specific constructive method, its structure and details, can bestow a particular atmospheric condition. Also, how materiality relates a new building to the history and narratives of a place.

First, we will record a series of anonymous structures: ephemeral or spontaneous assemblies, industrial or infrastructural artifacts, where there is no spatial ambition, but just one of pure material and structural efficiency. We want to reveal how such structures relate to context and also their capacity to define a specific atmospheric condition.

Secondly, we will identify and survey valuable spaces which remain hidden, abandoned or forgotten, to later design proposals for their re-use. Each student will define a site, explain its value, and also the scope and program of the intervention. Together, we will reimagine the site as a whole new piece of architecture.

We will explore these themes through detailed drawing and physical models at various scales, as ways of developing projects through the exploration of the tangible and atmospheric conditions of matter itself.

CORNELL AAP DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

Beals Lyon Architects partners Alejandro Beals and Loreto Lyon will co-teach the Ithaca based studio full time



NOTHING STOPS DETROIT

Design an Urban Incubator for revitalizing the city

Labics _ Maria Claudia Clemente | Francesco Isidori

FALL 2018 OPTION STUDIO

Theme

The general objective of the Option Studio will be to investigate the relationship between architecture and the city, focusing on the role it plays in relation to the public space:

- _ as a **Physical Structure**, and thus, how it can become part of public domain together with the streets, the squares and the urban fabric as a whole?
- _ as a **Symbolic Form**, how it can become part of a shared common narrative?
- _ as a **Political Act**, how it can respond to the critical issue of a lost identity, common to most of the peripheries?

Detroit as an experimental field

Detroit was never a beautiful city, but it had a muscular grandeur: broad boulevards radiating from its riverfront core, stolid stone-faced office towers crowding its downtown streets. The mammoth auto factories anchored more distant neighborhoods, surrounded by neat grids of wood-frame bungalows. By the time the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history was filed, in 2013, Detroit's population was from almost 2.000.000 to 700,000; many of its neighborhoods were as desolate as a moonscape, dotted with burned-out buildings and - for a city that once boasted exceptionally high homeownership rates - 80,000 abandoned, decaying houses. Detroit in this sense is taken as a prototype of a city that face the challenge to overcome an incredible economic and social crisis, whatever the reason behind it.

After forty years of decline, Detroit is in fact finally living a new of renaissance, but there is still much to do.

The design of an **Urban Incubator** in this sense is conceived as an infrastructure able to increase and enhance the quality of the urban space; a device able to revitalize and regenerate a part of the city, addressing some critical issues like the low density, low functionality, low identity. In a broader sense the Urban Incubator will be a model for scrutinizing alternative methods of urban regeneration.

Method

The project will host public programs – such as a theatre, exhibition space, library, food market, etc. – but also production spaces – like co-working, temporary offices, atelier for artist, studio, dining facilities, etc.

The project will be located in a critical neighbourhood of Detroit (the exact location will derive from an urban analysis) in order to act as a device capable of revitalizing and regenerating a weak part of the city. The first introductory exercise will be an abstract investigation on relation between space, material and structure, through a series of small models. **It is anticipated that there will be a ±4 day site visit to Detroit during between September 15-23rd - final dates to be confirmed!**

*Labics partners **Maria Claudia Clemente** and **Francesco Isidori** will teach the Ithaca based studio full time w/ alternating ±3-week visits, with 2-3 day overlaps as they hand over the proverbial baton each time. They will both fully participate in the Detroit ±4 day field trip in September (dates TBD but to occur within the general field trip period September 16th -23rd).*

NB This studio will require a \$100pp field trip contribution.



THE SECTIONAL CITY

URBAN HOUSING FABRIC FOR CHONGQING

Option Studio Fall 2018

Leslie Lok, Assistant Professor

Exploring the spatial, cultural, and infrastructural stratification of traditional and contemporary urban city fabric in Chongqing, the option studio seeks to design alternate systems of urban housing and to develop innovative construction methods to negotiate the city's unique spatial, topographic, and urban milieu. Built on rugged terrain and situated at the confluence of two rivers, the Yangtze and the Jialing, Chongqing is a geographically compelling as well as an urbanistically complex city. The region recently experienced massive spatial and demographic transformations shaped by large-scale infrastructural projects such as the Three Gorges Dam. Being the only provincial-level municipality and first-tier city in Central China, Chongqing has rapidly urbanized into a mega-city with over 30 million residents and dense urban clusters surrounded by rural districts.

Informed by its topography, the core city is a multi-ground agglomeration, stratified into a multiplicity of vertical urban layers. Transportation infrastructure such as monorail, elevated roadways, and overpasses float above the city penetrating buildings at all levels. While this forms a unique and fascinating multi-layered urban fabric where ground becomes roof and roof becomes street, the increasing conflation of infrastructural and urban development in the form of concrete towers has introduced hierarchical access to daylight, air, and circulation in the city center. Leveraging this highly intricate multi-ground context to privilege horizontal and oblique networks, the studio is interested in re-visiting fabric as an architectural and urban strategy for interconnected organizations of program, circulation, and infrastructure. In contrary to the generic mix of commercial and residential towers that have overtaken the urbanized landscape across China, the goal is to experiment with novel forms of high-density, mixed-use, and close-knit urban fabric housing systems for Chongqing. In tandem, design explorations which investigate new formal, material, and automated fabrication strategies to construct complex and locally adaptable systems for the city are fundamental to re-think conventional construction practices at an urban scale.

The studio will travel to Central China to visit Chongqing, Chengdu, and other selected sites in the region for field research between 9/15-9/23. Students will experience Chongqing as a multivalent place with its "rural-metropolis" character. In-situ observation will inform a series of mapping exercises to expand upon pre-trip research. This studio is developed in parallel with the Mellon Expanded Practice Seminar, "Spatial Tensions: Mapping Global Spatio-politics Through China", co-taught by Leslie Lok and Andrea Bachner.

NB This studio will require a \$500pp field trip contribution.

Photo by Clément Belleudy, 2013

Department
of Architecture

Manuel Aires Mateus
Rodolfo Reis Dias

Project:
A house with five spaces

Site:
Close a street
Carve a space in an old stone wall,
Bridge over an existing building
...

Program:
Wash, Sleep, Read, Eat, Gather

Objective:
Speculate about Architecture.



Main kitchen of the Monastery of Alcobaca, Portugal

Thinking about the richness of personal experience, about the definition of the characteristics of identity, about the materiality of the collective and personal life — speculating about Architecture as the form of memory, about Architecture as the possibility to intervene, about Architecture as the opportunity to transform — by creating a project for a specific atmosphere in a particular site.

The project will emerge from the contemplation of these questions and their inter-connections. A project on the definition and shape of the relationship between site, program and the possibility of transformation. The site will be a space selected and delimited by the student with a specific set of parameters. A space occupied or that can be occupied by the intervention, not only with the understanding of its characteristics and identity but as well as the selection of the space as a potential possibility to inhabit. The program will be what can be considered the most encompassing, closest and intimate to an individual, the feeling of home. A program centered on living, the definition of inhabiting, the value of the inhabited space, the ways and the relations with the inhabiting, the relationship between the body and the space, the space as function and as absolute value.

The possibility of transformation proposed will arise from the research focused on the definition of space. A space determined by its values of proportion, scale, dimension, materiality, light, shape, sound and temperature. As an intimate space that is posed as a challenge for the imagination, for the development of a sensual and corporeal creativity, and for the development of emotional and evocative intelligence.

A field trip with a workshop is planned to take place in Lisbon.

Manuel Aires Mateus (Aires Mateus) will be in Ithaca Wednesday 10/24 and for the final studio review on 12/5. He will actively participate in ± 5 bi-weekly studio Skype sessions throughout the semester. NB: the September ± 16 th - 23rd 'field trip' will be an 8-day intensive studio workshop with Aires Mateus in Lisbon. **Jorge Silva**, a senior partner with Aires Mateus, will conduct a ± 3 day workshop in Ithaca (date tbd). **Rodolfo Dias** will teach the studio full time in Ithaca. In Rodolfo's first years he worked with Aires Mateus in Lisbon and Paulo David in Madeira, before moving to New York where he was an associate at Steven Holl Architects for seven years. He joined Johnston Marklee in 2012 where he is currently Project Architect. Originally from Portugal, he received his Diploma in Architecture, Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade Tecnica de Lisboa (FAUTL), Lisbon in 1998. NB This studio will require a \$500pp field trip contribution.



Is it possible for an act of architecture to be invited in through the front door, and then to relocate or replace the furnishings inside? Is it possible for a presumably familiar work to budge an anaesthetized audience from complacency? Is it possible for architecture—normally the mute, compliant servant of a static social order—to introduce perceptions that would otherwise be kept unseen?

In attempting to answer these questions, our *modus operandi* for this semester will involve the concept of **genre**. Not only has it suffered from bad press since the start of the twentieth century, but genre's limited evocation in the literature of architectural theory has been so egregiously misrepresented that its aptitudes have been wholly ignored. ...Quite a shame really, because, like almost everything else, most architecture seems to operate through genres, with the subtlety and disingenuousness one would expect from a high art. And embedded in the genres of 'popular' architecture—not simply the blatant branding of franchised drive-thrus (meticulously premeditated contrivances, really), but the Moose lodges, the health clubs, the organic food markets, the amusement piers, the biker bars, the mirror-glassed office buildings, the exotically-trussed sport venues—there linger the biases, aspirations, and discursive interrelationships of a multitude of cultures and sub-cultures. Penetrating this embeddedness might bring to the surface a lexicon of formal significations as written and read by a public. It might also lead to an examination of the various mechanisms, latent within forms, that serve to perpetuate hegemonic structures and render entire cultures sedate, if not content.

The semester will begin with a series of intensive lecture/seminars, in which theories of genre and its operative modes—genericity—will be presented and discussed, emphasizing the recent and rapid rise of manipulated genres, such as feminist-inflected science fiction, eco-heavy metal, pacifist westerns, and bowling raves, as well as on one of the more prolific venues of genre manipulation: apparel design. These will be accompanied by some formal 'five-finger exercises,' in which the representational potentials of basic figures will be examined (imagine, for example, a 'toadying' pyramid). Meanwhile, each student will bring to the studio a primarily *non-architectural* genre, a genre that's perhaps more at home in a museum or on a television, on a stage or in a pulpy paperback, through a PA system or earbuds. It will be a genre that has some deep resonance with some culture or sub-culture somewhere; a genre—or a subgenre—like magical girl anime, eco-black metal, reggaetón, Kpop, time-travel romance, techno-noir, and so on. We will then develop various indices of the elements that provide specific genres with their distinctiveness, that endow them with their persistence, and that draw them to their audiences.

Once inside our genres, we will begin to surface some of their suppressed ideologies, displace some of their traditional associations, redirect some of their power. [It all sounds a bit evil ... or scary, doesn't it? Perhaps that's intrinsic when one attempts to let familiar things turn against themselves. Perhaps it's why genres have often been considered to be so dangerous.] We will accomplish this by transferring our genres across media toward architecture, in the form of the two projects that will form the bulk of the semester: a brief, 'low' exercise (involving something like a dental arts building, a tattoo/piercing parlor, a recruitment center, or the like), and a longer, 'high' exercise (something fairly 'exclusive' to an audience, like a club or hotel). Of course, the constitution of 'high' versus 'low' will inevitably be confounded.

We will attempt this because architecture always needs to find techniques for resisting its culturally-imposed inertia, and for sharpening its aim while honing the means and motives of its messages.

Notes: While no major fieldtrip is proposed, we anticipate that all participants will leave with a souvenir t-shirt and/or commemorative mug. Illustration at top partially excerpted from poster for Universal International's *La Robe Déchirée*, directed by Jack Arnold, 1957.