



E. H. Barton's Sanitary Map of New Orleans (1854)

# Architecture and the Urban Ecology of Disease

## Empathic Spatiality and Relational Landscapes of Care in New Orleans

EXPANDED PRACTICE STUDIO/OPTION STUDIO FALL 2020 | TAO DUFOUR

The Expanded Practice Studio is the culmination of the core MArch studio structure and is intended to introduce students to the interlaced complexities of socio-economic, historical, environmental, territorial, and geo-political contexts within which architecture is produced and experienced. The studio places emphasis on *research* in the development of programmatic understandings and propositions, as bases for design at multiple scales and assuming multiple temporalities: from the transience of intimate installations, to infrastructural and landscape propositions whose territoriality and temporality may be tied to geological and atmospheric scales. The Fall 2020 Expanded Practice Studio/Option Studio will focus thematically on the nature the *urban spatiality* in which the relationship between the historical ecology of disease and the sociality of urban landscapes is embodied in modes of spatial appropriation, exclusion, and segregation. This includes racialized, gendered and class structures, as well as the empathic spatiality of relational landscapes of care.

New Orleans and the wider deltaic landscape will be the site of study. The studio will begin with an historical and cartographic analysis of New Orleans and its enviroing landscape, with a focus on the period of the 1853 yellow fever epidemic. The studio will research and analyze in drawings, mappings and other visual media the transformation of the experience of the urban landscape from that of rigid racial, gender, class, and immigrant stratifications to an urban ecology of disease in which “the whole city was a hospital” during this period (Kelman 2006: 104). In its infection of lived bodies, the virus transgressed spatial and social boundaries generating both racialized and gendered landscapes of morbidity, as well as landscapes of care. With this historical perspective in view, the studio will develop analogous analyses of the urban ecology of disease and social practices/structures of care (Rawes 2013) in New Orleans in the face of the current pandemic, attuned to the fact that Black communities and communities of color have been and continue to be disproportionately affected. The historical situation and the current conditions are different in many ways, and do not exist juxtaposed as if side by side, but have historical depth. The studio is not proposing a coincidence or a parallelism, but rather it poses questions about the relationship between history, ecology, and urban space, as a way of conceptualizing the environmentality of architecture and its possibilities for generating modes of empathic spatiality. Based on this urban historical and ecological research, students will generate and develop programmatic proposals and design projects for New Orleans that aim to respond to the current situation. In light of the nature of the problem being investigated and the general aims of the studio, students will be encouraged to conceptualize design in expanded, non-normative ways that do not privilege the architectural object, but deeply explore the intersubjective *relational* and *temporal* nature of spatial and environmental experience.

CORNELL AAP DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

MWF 8:00 a.m. 1:00 p.m. EST