



Sexy Title Page.

Thesis Studio Four Hundred

PROSPECTUS

AY 2025-2026

Future Thesis Students,

We should call these ‘Unscripted Sessions’, as most students are probably asking themselves by now, ‘so, what is a thesis anyways?’, ‘what is a thesis *not*?’ or even perhaps ‘what *should* a thesis be?’ These are all relevant questions and contrary to what you may think, its surely primed to be both all of those at some point and none of those throughout the entirety of your fifth-year thesis exploration.

In the following prospectus, you will find some of those answers to what I consider a thesis to be, as well as an outline to what I consider to be a roadmap of sorts to ideas about how we might arrive there during this academic year together. As you review all the studio prospectus further, you will have plenty to contemplate over the coming weeks and summer, but I would like to provoke all potential students by prompting you to truly consider some of these questions *before* choosing your studio. Mainly, ‘*Is it going to a good fit?*’ As a practitioner and instructor, I can admit that the chance to explore new speculative and provocative possibilities within the built environment, the world, and otherwise the field of design to discover a new understanding sound equally exciting, daunting, and somehow, rare. And yet, the year ahead of us all, undoubtedly will not disappoint.

As we begin to *formulate* and *speculate* about the world around us, you have been afforded a great opportunity to not just develop a meaningful discourse around these questions, but to actively begin to seed its growth, no matter how inconsequential your questions may seem, and implement a physically creative motive of solutions. Is architecture complicit in these motives, should it be? In acknowledging and respecting the importance of individual identities within our built and cultural environments, we can help shape our perceptions on what design should and could do for the living subjects around us. And by doing so, we can support alternative modalities of thought, curiosity, and creativity to inspire *new realities*. And that is ultimately the goal of *Studio Four Hundred*.

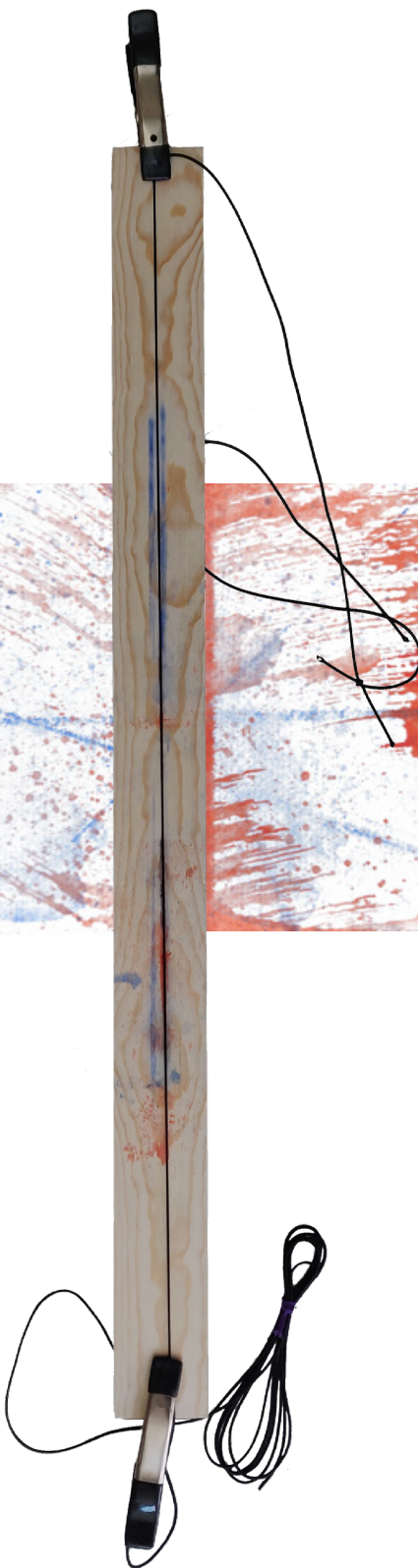
To further implicate within and outside of architectural education, Thesis Studio Four Hundred will focus its attention on and initiate a framework for questioning the way in which we learn academically and confront the way in which we instigate within the architectural design process. The standardization of architectural education is quickly encroaching on our abilities to make mistakes and therefore, the benefit that those mistakes can afford us. The prospect of discovery is but a window into the past and the eagerness to predetermine and undermine is rampant. By attempting to define empathy within our constructed environments and using narratives, tectonics, programs, and sites, this framework will deploy three simple questions—What is Gained, What is Lost and What is Owed?

And of course, finally, I would also like to extend an invitation to answer any questions you may have to discuss your fifth-year thesis plans using the contact information below. Accordingly, I look forward to browsing your statements and getting to know you just a little bit better. And while I am ultimately interested in learning more about your past experiences, I make no qualms about our true intentions of this studio, which is both speculating and discovering your and my own future experiences. Given thorough research and rigorous explorative processes of both old and new technologies, the near future of reality is more realizable and present than you think.

Regards,

Jermaine Washington

n – Jermaine Washington
e – jewashin@calpoly.edu
c – 228 596 8006



Thesis Studio Four Hundred will focus its attention on and examine a framework for questioning the way in which we learn, *academically* and confront the way in which we practice architectural design, *professionally*. By attempting to define empathy within our constructed environments this framework will utilize three simple questions to dissect this phenomenon—What is Gained, What is Lost and What is Owed?

The term ‘Bottom’ has a significant frame of reference for answering these questions and is geared towards providing a better understanding of what making amends within our physical environments could potentially look like. In her *Avery Review 34* October 2018 essay, *The Bottom: The Emergence and Erasure of Black American Urban Landscapes*, Ujjiji Davis states that the Bottom reflects a colloquial term used to describe marginalized communities within visibly segregated urban areas. An eponym that either describes the presence of dark marshy soil or land of poor value, the term emerged in the twentieth century to illustrate both where *black* people lived and their social standing in society. She goes on to state that with these characteristics and implications, the Bottom as an urban typology possesses a distinct structure that deprioritizes—and destroys—the presence and importance of these communities. Seemingly making it easier to not engage oneself with intentions of sympathy when considering new proposals. Davis reveals that at its core, the Bottom is a neighborhood, with neighborhood things, like homes, shops, families, schools, and churches, but throughout history, the Bottom has faced scrutiny because of its concentrated ‘marginalized’ population, which was often coupled with insufficient and inferior opportunities for housing, employment, and high quality of life. The Bottom does not exist in one place but in every place that share these common characteristics.¹

Contrast this with the term ‘Manifesto’ in the *Theory & Experimentation*² stated by Lebbeus Woods, Architecture and War are not incompatible. Architecture is War. War is Architecture. I am at war with my time, with history, with all authority that resides in fixed and frightened forms. I am one of millions who do not fit in, who have no home, no family, no doctrine, no firm place to call my own, no known beginning or end, no ‘sacred and primordial site’. I declare war on all icons and finalities, on all histories that would chain me with my own falseness, my own pitiful fears. I know only moments, and lifetimes that are as moments, and forms that appear with infinite strength, then ‘melt into air’. I am an architect, a constructor of worlds, a sensualist who worships the flesh, the melody, a silhouette against the darkening sky, I cannot know your name. Nor can you know mine. Tomorrow, we begin together the construction of a city (a New Reality).

We rely heavily on the ideas and ultimately the beliefs that architecture is a complicit contributor to the social and judicial constructs of racial and equitable idealogues that its spaces acuate; allowing us to investigate and experience this complicity in a very real and physical way. From The Bottom, it is believed, is one such way in which we define this complicity and how it might afford us the terminology to address its challenges within our constructed environments. Traditionally and currently, this has happened phenomenologically in tangible places such as on courthouse steps, as well as in more obscure places or right in front of our own eyes and even hidden in plain sight, such as in the Bottom. We judge the usefulness or worthiness of spaces that we occupy much the same way we adjudicate, and attribute in other human beings; based on their physical qualities, characteristics, and appearances. We then relate our own personal values on to these environments that we experience or encounter. This frame of reference is the process through which each of you situates oneself in society to better understand your surroundings. We base these assumptions on many different perceptions, conditions, discomforts and scales.

In her assignment, *Learning with an Empathic Pencil*, Professor Emily McGlohn, argues that by interjecting empathy into that judgment, we can understand the misstep of inappropriateness and provide solutions that are much more intuitive and responsive to both our history and our popular culture. A classically contemporary design process in which we might understand a glimpse of knowledge into what makes space inclusive versus spatially unjust through the eyes of the occupant.³ Therefore, empathetic design processes is based on the premise that by visualizing through an empathetic lens and by analyzing cultural and geographic location we may envision, not just a better understanding of those living subjects who are in peril and subjugated to the spatial realities in which they exist, but simultaneously allow for a more appropriate area of interest, topic of concern, as well as a solution to be contemplated in the future.

The studio will search for measurable and immeasurable methodologies in interpreting how we use **drawing** and **modeling** as a way for our hands to help our brains comprehend that which our eyes are in fact seeing but does not completely understand. A transitive concept created by humans that plainly equates to what we think about our spaces to how they look and the way we exist within them. Physical elements and ethnological experiences embody themselves both in tangible objects and experiential moments; often seen as additions, deletions, fragments, arrangements, repairs, furnishings, collective memories, and frozen imagery. As designers, we are complicit in the designing of these elements, but ultimately not in defining their true meanings. The occupant defines the home, the community its public spaces and so forth. History and pop culture, for example, play a far greater role in these determinations. As design thinkers, we face a particular challenge and provide a unique opportunity when socio-cultural differences exist amongst us. We serve as a bridge for the affordance to see what is beautiful; perhaps even possible, when conjuring public spaces such as the ‘bottoms’ of our built environments and searching for new and different ways of existing within those spaces. And through an array of thesis explorations steeped in empathetic appropriateness perhaps can discover some type of atonement, not predetermined by the designer, but by the very *social* constructs and orders that allow for the designers to exist in the first place.



Notes:

Drawing on empathy takes courage. And none possess more courage than those female minorities that not only have given life to our human populations, but those that refused to sit where told, defied standing in place, and ran into harm’s way so that their children no longer would need to. Collective memory, the imaginary, and experiential fragments are all part of the theory in which one can unlock empathetic practices in the realm of the built environments. All Images courtesy of Jayda Liabarten, Ella Gleason

¹ Ujjiji Davis, “The Bottom: The Emergence and Erasure of Black American Urban Landscapes” in the *Avery Review 34*, October 2018.
² First published in *Theory & Experimentation*, ed. Andreas Papadakis, Academy Editions, London, 1993.
³ Emily M. McGlohn, “Drawing the Obvious, Seeing the Hidden: Learning with an Empathic Pencil”, ASCA Conference, 2019.

STUDIO DESCRIPTION

ARCH 481 Senior Architectural Design Project. Fall, Winter, Spring

Advanced architectural design and research project. Integration of architectural theory, principles, and practice with creative, organizational, and technical abilities in architectural design and design research.

In the Fall term of this Arch 481 Studio course, the overarching goal and associated seminar class is to provoke, instigate, formulate, and otherwise demonstrate architectural adjacent empathetic approaches within the built environments around us. While the realm of practice rarely provides the opportunity for such a dedicated self-reflection of the architectural discipline, it is nevertheless crucial to the healthy growth and development of architecture as it continually negotiates its relationship to a constantly evolving social, cultural, and technological world of conditions. In the Winter and Spring versions of Arch 481 studio, you will continue to translate and produce a thesis proposition that is conceptually profound, theoretically convincing, well-researched, and of disciplinary consequence—and to help demonstrate that theory in a thesis project that is thoroughly designed at multiple scales, architecturally compelling, and represented via a diverse range of media.

There are three goals to keep in mind for the Arch 481 Studio. First, we will begin to unpack and intersect/dissect your thesis ideas with popular culture, with natural or constructed environmental systems, and with socio-political, socio-economic interests by formulating a series of methodologies for design research, processes, and speculative and physical object-based provocations. This is to help define both the abstraction of thought within your ideas, as well as organize those same thoughts into a cohesive thesis argument. Second, this studio aims to develop a variety of investigations (both *individually* and *collectively* for the studio) in which to reframe thesis arguments, *What's the best way to ask the same question, differently*. Our third goal is exploring and experimenting with the infinite ways that those same ideas can be expanded upon by deploying them into different environments (constructed, imaginary and/or real), as well as beginning to translate them across different media typologies—including high-quality drawings (these are different from Rhino modeling), renderings) *What's the photo-realistic debate?*, animations *Let's Make Gifs* !, diagrams *Speak Without the Author*, physical models *Intuitive and Tangible (Gravity)*, full-scale prototypes 1:1, fictional or sci-fi narratives *See Simon Stalenhag*, films *Krumbick*, graphic novels *Kid Cudi*, and more.

In the Arch 481 Studio, we will be looking at multiple areas of speculative thought with interesting research and then constructing material translations from those theoretical issues. The topics are inherently intertwined in the Arch 492 Seminar, described next, will serve as an intersection between spatial and form-finding exercises and the research and readings of the seminar; providing you an intellectual foundation in studio to be able to unpack and speak to the complexity of your ideas and allowing you to frame your own unique interests within the discipline of architecture itself. The thesis is, *in-and-of-itself*, a way to define what your project is, the issues involved in its potential proposition, and the methodology of research and processes necessary to begin to develop your concerns. The written thesis is the product of Arch 492 but informs and facilitates creative acts that generate the work in Arch 481 in All Three Terms. To begin, we will construct a caste of your proposal making visible your initial narrative or theory. After that we will participate in Vellum with an artifact that should help further unpack your thesis. After vellum, we will move on to more physical experiments of design based on your topic. All documented by you throughout.

Some Thoughts on Design Research

We tend to define and limit our use of the term ‘research’ to menial tasks such as the collection of information in places that are uber familiar to us, mainly by using the internet. But what about the credibility of those sources? Fake news is rampant, algorithms are sophisticated, and our information and our data are both accessible and available to anyone possessing only a basic understanding of the internet to pilfer. What about the analytical antithesis and synthesis of this information as a chain of custody? Citing sources, relevance and your analysis is a critical process.

Research is defined for your thesis, as speculation, instigation, provocation, exploration, and experimentation. The testing of architectural ideas remains a cornerstone of any research project. Methodologies of research are changing at a rapid pace; how will you know an opportunity when it's staring you in the face? The collection of data alone is not considered ‘research’, but through exhaustive **rigor** and acute depths of **exploration**, your research should position itself within both historical context and future conversations. The rigor with which you apply these research methods is paramount. What new tools and new technologies are best suited for your argument or problem and how might you need to innovate or invent new ones? Architectural solutions will, in time, manifest themselves but only by way of rigorous physical development motives and clever rulesets of one's own ideological directives and design.

Medial Section

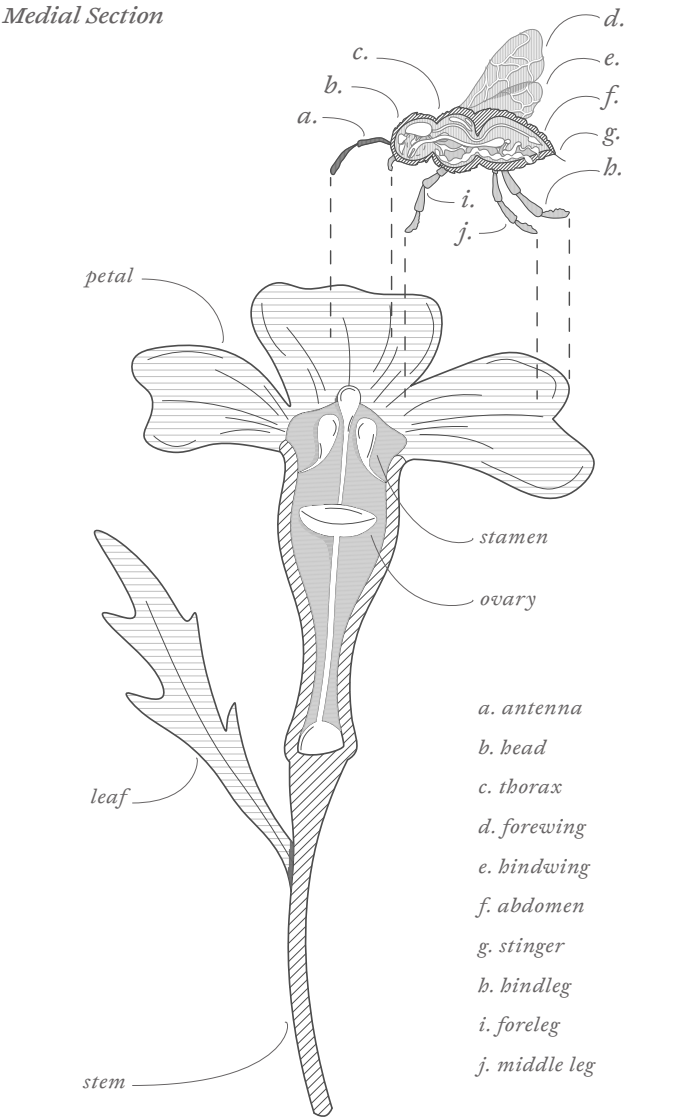


Fig. 1
Scale 1" = 1"

Medial Section Enlarged

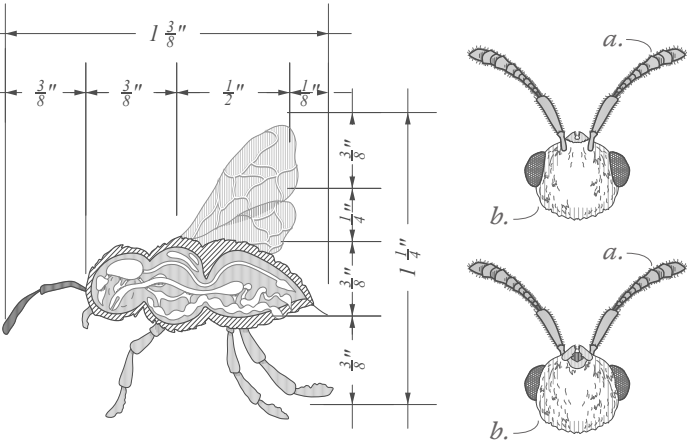


Fig. 2
Scale 2" = 1"

SEMINAR DESCRIPTION

ARCH 492 Senior Design Thesis. Fall Quarter

Review & research of architectural theory & precedents related to the specific design option. Development of a thesis & a design project proposal.

Each thesis is meant to develop problems that can be researched historically, perceptually, theoretically, and physically. These problems then are not ONLY related to architecture but to other areas of influence such as regional sites, cyclical climatic environments, and the consumption of natural resources for energy.

We will use the seminar in the fall as a workshop for crafting your thesis research and written text from the beginning. And our goal will be to challenge your assumptions and break your habits of thought, some perhaps you didn't even know that you possessed. The topics will give you the ingredients needed for a thesis that meets the expectations outlined in this prospectus. They represent a guide of sorts for discovering, organizing, and developing the thought that will allow thesis testing in the fall and winter design studios.

In the Arch 492 Seminar, we will specifically begin to disentangle and critique the way in which architectural form and space may have endorsed and empowered certain subjects at the expense of others (based on race, gender identity, ideology, etc.), and the possibility for reformulating architecture to empower and engage a plurality of subjectivities—including those that are either marginalized and oppressed, or those that fall outside of the limited categories imposed by dominant cultural frameworks.

The work of the seminar is intended to be both collaborative and individual. We will dissect and examine readings, debate ideas, suggest affinities, and critique each other's written work. The written thesis is an individual endeavor, but one that links a personal position to existing conversations in architecture and culture; it is an **argument**. Each student's argument will be developed through hypothesizing questions, testing theoretical frameworks, working in new processes, and producing visual and text-based artifacts.

Readings, writings, visual analysis, and discussion will be organized into three units. First, working together to understand architecture as a set of ideas, research, and systems. We will familiarize ourselves with some current positions on the overlaps of architecture and visual culture. Second, we will look at the development strategy in discrete attempts of design problems that get clearer with time and whose solutions improve by making more attempts, iterations. We will also address how the value of originality has impacted our willingness to make mistakes within our processes. Third, we will engage the subject of new environments by mapping the intellectual interest of each student's work onto sites (real and unrealized) by supporting, expanding, and clarifying everyone's argument.

The Arch 492 Seminar will then reflect on architectural design from the standpoints of view – storytelling and representation; problem solving across time; the theory and history of mapping place; the ideals of programmatic functions; and the collaborations needed for installation. All formulated to inform a clear methodology of developing a problem and providing educated solutions via your research, writings, and discourse. The representation of the narrative of your argument and the conviction of your personal manifesto towards that story is what the seminar seeks, exploring the many theories of problem solving, mapping of the built and yet-to-be built environment, organizing the programming of the problem, and finally leading you to collectively creating and implementing a designed demonstration for these writings.

Lastly, you will be developing architectural issues of your project: form, circulation, structure, and environmental systems, based on your concept. Ideas of thesis, no matter how creative and extreme, need to be translatable into a form that is broadly defined as *architectural* or an *adjacent and instrumental ally*.

Some Thoughts on Making Architectural Problems

Whether you are looking for trouble or making a mess; either way the fundamental aspect of any thesis is defining a problem to work on that you will then in turn spend a great deal of time and energy avoiding having to solve. **Good Problems** are both significant and relevant in some larger contextual zeitgeist of architectural or cultural expression or specific enough to capture and elicit a response from the human condition; and thus provide an evaluation to one's successes and failures. Our studio and general design discourse within this seminar will follow the feedback loops and attempt to close them via your arguments.

A thesis doesn't need to 'solve' a problem as the only measure of its success. Instead, it must be durable and malleable enough to disrupt all common understandings of said topic and challenge conventional practices and position itself amongst a higher order of architectural ideas, common sense convention and disciplinary discourse.

Notes:

The application of sustainable farming practices and include a focus on minimal waste with the utilization of large-scale composting, as well as an emphasis on the nurturing of pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. These pollinators are essential to agriculture. It is of the utmost importance to provide an "appropriate nesting habitat and ensure the availability of alternative sources of "forage" to sustain populations when the target crops are not in bloom." The presence of pollinators on site can also become a source of meaningful involvement for the community, with the possibility of "adopting" a beehive box and learning the process of beekeeping.

Integrating a holistic Complex for Agriculture and Mindful Practices (CAMP) in rural California these practices will link together people, plants, and insects/animals, leading to a holistic improvement in the cultivated landscape will lay the foundation to, encourage the allocation of designated resource spaces to uplift farm workers, provide affordable co-housing and family oriented spaces where a sense of community can be built on site and catalize the connection between productive landscape and the rural communities which surround it. By giving resources to the farm worker – the stakeholders who nourish the community – there is an opportunity to better serve needs, which creates a mindful and productive environment for agricultural processes, and stitches together the nourishers with the nourished.

Dorsal

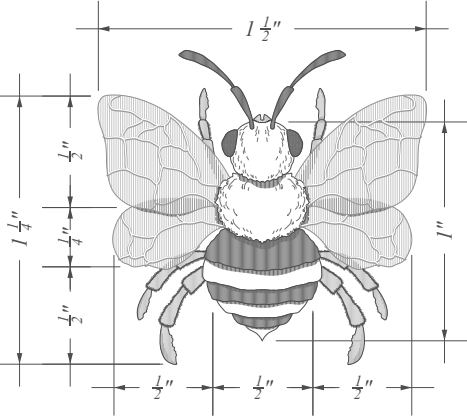


Fig. 3
Scale 2" = 1"

Dorsal Section

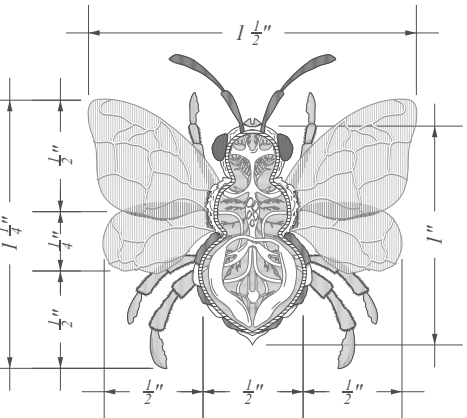


Fig. 4
Scale 2" = 1"

Ventral

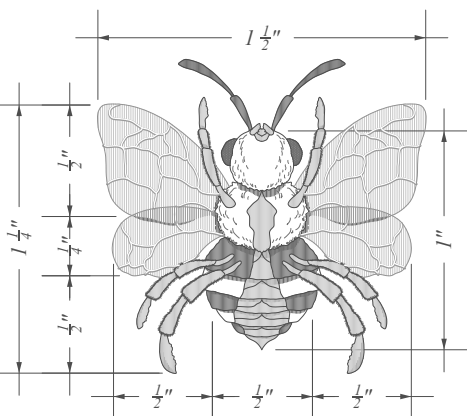


Fig. 5
Scale 2" = 1"

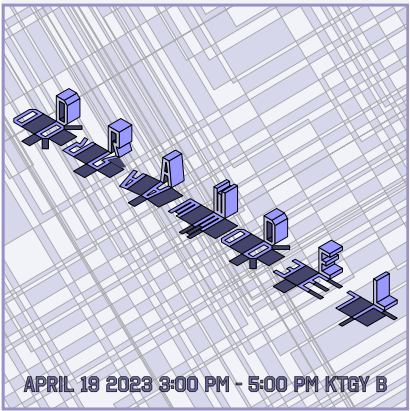
STUDIO SHOWS

Prospectus 2025 – 2026
Fall, Winter, Spring

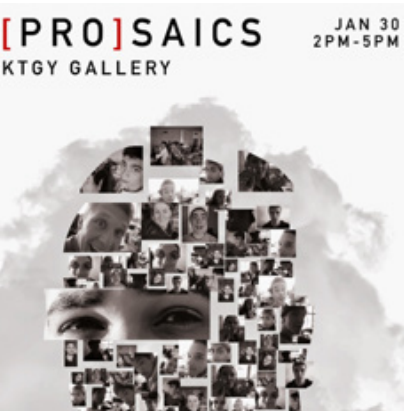
Developing a discourse around your areas of interest is an important and insightful way to both provide output to clarify one’s thoughts, as well as to receive valuable input on your arguments. Therefore, there are several ‘Scripted’ and ‘Unscripted’ outlets that we will need to take advantage of throughout the course framework. I’m especially interested in the topic of how we showcase ourselves and position our articulations for venues as being some of the most meaningful content that you will produce and share out to the various corners of our department, our college, and community. Specifically, I can attest to the value that a fifth-year student possesses, the knowledge repository of our institution in a way that is packaged and complete and ultimately meaningful for our younger students. As the upperclassman in this scenario, you hold in your possession some critical and powerful keys of knowledge that must be conveyed to our younger students in a provocative and interesting manner.

Throughout the entire year, we will have a multitude of opportunities to present your work, receive input on your work, and rebut, verify, or clarify in response to your work from faculty members, colleagues, as well as outside guests. Formats and delivered content will vary in methodology and will ultimately be discussed amongst the group as we encounter them along the way. Studio shows, whether desk crits or more formal exhibitions, are all meant to express identities of both individual project intentionalities and the collective studio manifesto. Detailed and more informal organizations of studio shows can be thought to include: the Abstraction and Organization of one’s ideas with initial provocations, the Abstract Show, Vellum, and Proof of Concepts all happening in the Fall term; some Variation of Conceptual Content and Criticality of Spatial Forms with the Section Show, Qualifying Review in the Winter term; and finally, in the Spring term, some versions of Detail Resolution and Material Propositions with the Detail Show, our Final Studio Show, Final Reviews, and Thesis Books.

In saying this, I am interested in and remain committed to both the individuality that each of your well-conceived projects will bring to the table, as well as the collective experience of this creative and curative endeavor. We are not merely the totality of our parts, as we are the sum of something far much greater as we work collaboratively throughout the year. It is as much about the cultivating and the celebrating your own individual prowess, as it is about making a bigger deal about our shared identities of discovery as living beings. What are some of the most powerful ways that we can communicate via an exhibition of your work whilst challenging the curation of the work of the entire studio? In that scenario, we must maintain our curiosity and both our inward and outward expressionisms. Our timing allows for an exploration of useful formats to examine your own thesis projects with new and interesting insights, perspectives throughout various times of your fifth-year experience, consequently providing for milestones within your thesis arguments and speculations.



THE
ESTRANGED
OBJECT



Notes:
An opportunity to present one’s work should never be overlooked and we will have a host of exhibits/demonstrations that will give you both time to be critical of how your arguments are be communicated, if they are being communicated, and how to better communicate them. Whether they are informal or formal, these are instrumental times in which you are able to test reactions, inspirations, and collaborations to the limits of possibilities. Delivery formats will vary and will always be vetted as a collective group first. Receiving fresh insights on your questions/arguments will be an important mechanism of verification amongst faculty and your fellow peers alike.

A range of shows & posters from 2015 - 20025 Prohibition, Abstract, Personality Mosaics, Drawdels, Car Parts, Japanese Joinery Detail, slipCASE Book Project, and Big Moody charcoal drawing

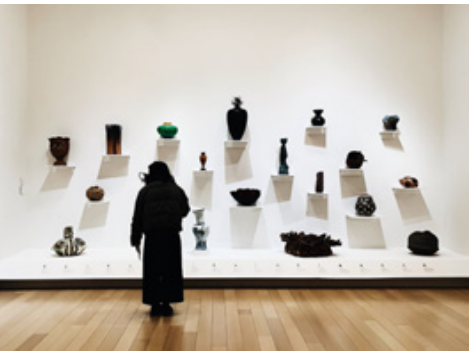
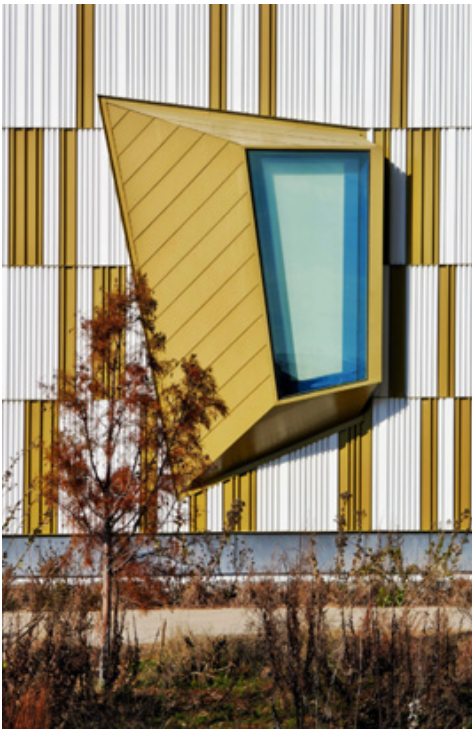
I believe in the power of travel and onsite experiences. And the field of architecture has literally taken me across the globe. The friendships, connections, new understanding established when traveling is inconceivably the most important aspect of becoming a credible designer in a broad and often crowded field. Augmenting your horizons both establishes a way for your ensuing thesis to offer a broader scope and reflective insight. Group travel that happens is often once in a lifetime, unique, and never forgotten. This will be a tremendous factor in what can influence the work of the studio. I have some general thoughts here about travel both for our Winter Break and our Spring Break, but for this possibility, we need to decide soon as a group a scenario that ultimately works for everyone included. For this, I propose a shorter distance traveled domestically in lieu of the massive international trip, which as I write is slowly dissolving in its possibilities. My rough draft itinerary of possibility thus far may look something like the following, but leaves room for discussion:

- Fall Retreat** – Studio Four Hundred – Shaver Lake, California
- Winter Break** – Rural Studio, Alabama – New Orleans, Louisiana
- Spring Break** – Mexico City, Mexico – Nueva York, New York
- End of Year** – Central Coast Architecture Wine Tour

Over the past five years I have traveled with students, predominately domestic in nature to the cities of Brooklyn, New York, Chicago, Illinois, Baltimore, Maryland, Nashville, Tennessee, Portland, Oregon, Mexico City, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and the US-Mexico Border San Ysidro San Diego, California and more recently to Fayetteville, Bentonville, Little Rock Arkansas, Memphis, Tennessee, Birmingham, Newbern, Marion, Montgomery, Alabama, Biloxi, Picayune, Mississippi, and Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Louisiana. I'll continue to encourage opportunities for us to experience some places off the beaten path that are just as fruitful for seeing amazing architecture and atmospheres that are more accessible, more affordable, and just as steeped in rich culture that are foreign to what most of us think we already know. We will discuss as a group where we think we would like to go and when we think we would like to go there over a warm campfire and S'mores! Seriously, who wants s'mores?

This brings us to my final point on travel. We will go camping the first weekend after the first week of classes, be sure this is a 'right fit' studio for you. And make s'more memories? Our 'unscripted sessions' are meant to serve you and your future ideas while also having fun in the great outdoors. Once there, you'll be asked to pitch your top ideas as well as provide insight to one another about your intentions. We can hike, we can boat, we can cook, we can eat, we can lounge or otherwise just sit and breath-in some fresh mountain air. All the while helping to add diversity of thought and clarity as we move forward with your fifth-year theses. The best golden-brown s'more and fireside sketch gets bonus points (worth the life of our studio), so please bring your sketchbooks.

With all of that said, we must strive for sensitivity in deciding any travel and field trips, as this will remain up for discussion and needs to be vetted by our entire studio. There's everyone's realities and abilities and accessibilities and that means offering *universality* with respect to all our endeavors, and this process will be a start in how we display empathetic creativity via travel that is accessible to all.

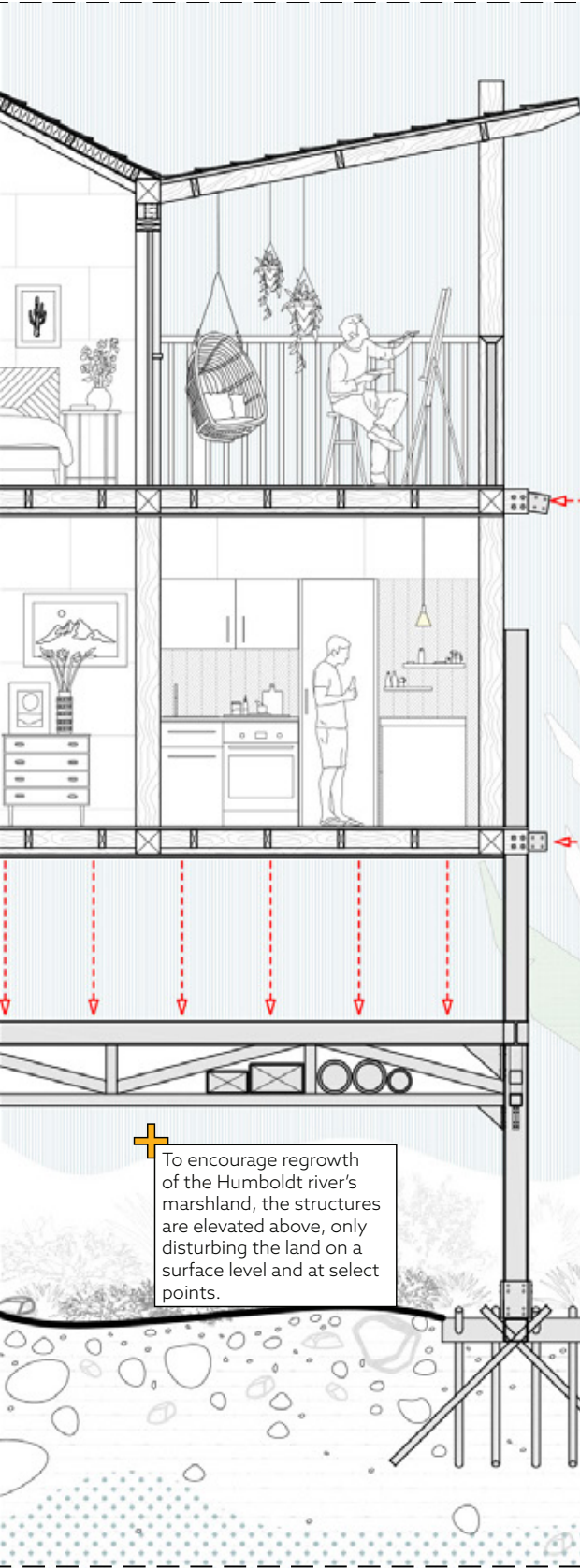


Notes:
As you probably have just freshly realized that travel is essential to your future. I believe in some instances that its not so much the where sometimes as it is the how. The unfamiliar and the efimeral all wrapped up into one fantastic experience means that the chance for discovery is at the forefront of the process of traveling with one's eyes open to the opportunity of the unknown.

Excerpts images from author in reverse, counterclockwise from above the Brooklyn, New York, Chicago, Illinois, Baltimore, Maryland, Mexico City, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and more recently to Fayetteville, Bentonville, Little Rock Arkansas, Memphis, Tennessee, Birmingham, Newbern, Marion, Montgomery, Alabama, Biloxi, Picayune, Mississippi, and Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Louisiana

ARCHITECTURAL PROBLEMS

Prospectus 2025 – 2026



So, what is an architectural thesis anyways? What is an architectural thesis, *not*? What can an architectural thesis be? How does an architectural thesis relate to a design project? If you have been asking yourselves these questions or some variation thereof, let me be the first to express; you are not alone? The anxiety that comes along with such types of questions and the **BIG** ideas that you'll be conjuring up to grapple with, signify that you truly care. And that is exactly the energy that Studio Four Hundred intends to leverage to formulate new levels of depth, complexity, and meaning in your work in ways you have yet to visualize thus far.

If you are good at looking for trouble or otherwise architectural adjacent problems and vetting those problems in a rigorous way while making a mess in that attempt, then this studio is designed just for you. Your theses and subsequent design projects will ultimately be judged by your ability to make new connections between research, theory, and architecturally adjacent acts. These acts will then be conveyed primarily through **carefully crafted models** and **high-quality drawings**, but do not exclude an even broader scope of renderings, animations, diagrams, 1:1 prototype, fictional and non-fictional character narratives, filmography, graphic novels, and more.

Our year together will be structured in way that allows a stable path of processes and ideation to instigate and iterate a better and stronger argument about the work, to communicate new speculative positions in compelling and credible ways. To make arguments with drawings, models, and other architectural mediums, as much as your words and gestures means that we are all teachers and learners in this arena. The first position that must be shared is that we as architects are in an ongoing state of negotiation for the value of what we bring to the table within our constructed environments, and that nothing is static or fixed about the value of that architecture. As a professional, you will be confronted at every step of the way and challenged by the value of the work you do. You will then share this with colleagues, clients, market conditions, communities, and just about everyone else. We must, therefore, fight for this value in every project, and in every building, even the least notable acts of design should prototype, experiment with, and otherwise tackle these challenges as incredible opportunities for discovery and curiosity.

The architectural thesis then, at its core, must be an argument for new *value* for the discipline and provide new *relevance*, new processes for connecting historical contexts with **BOLD** and meaningful affordances for the future. Anything short of this, would be a demotion to the status quo and only serve to weaken our professional position in the eyes of rampant and rapid change. Thesis is a way to seed and cultivate new opportunities for architecture and advance its relevance. **BOLDNESS** in the face of obstacles can be interpreted as more opportunity for self-reflection, and more importantly, rewarded. Thesis will call on you to commit to being uncomfortable at times, ambitiously speculative and experimental in other ways, specifically generic and vague, argumentative, socially personable to produce something that looks like success.

So How Does an Architectural Thesis Relate to a Design Project?

If we can understand an architectural thesis to be a specific type of argument in design research with the primary goal of producing new knowledge, it should question existing cultural and disciplinary languages and practices to discover new potentials within our environments via new methodologies, new materialities with new outcomes that result in potentially new behaviors. A good thesis can make a speculative proposition about what those environments around us could or should be. A thesis has implications well-beyond the scope of any one design project and caters to a larger constituency than any one single instance of architecture can provide. So, should you be making a 'solvable' architectural problem, making *more* problems in general, looking for trouble where there *is* none, or 'making a mess of it' only to come back and clean it up later? A thesis does not need to solve a problem; in fact, being careful not to create scenarios where solving a problem can be the only measure of success is inherently problematic. Your problem should angle to be disruptive to common misunderstandings and challenges within current conventional practices and methodologies, placing your argument square in the middle of evolving architectural idealogues. Finally, it is believed that the hardest part of any one thesis lies in framing the project defining a problem valuable enough to work on, crafting a stable argument for how one intends to approach the problem, developing the formal and spatial strategies deployed to respond to the problem, determining the most appropriate context

Notes:

It is important to know that our workflow throughout the year will remain fluid in order to accommodate both the shear complexity of your projects, as well as our studio's need to adapt to new methodologies and processes.

A range of architectural problems and questions will most certainly lead to a range of explorations and indeterminate searches. The uncomfortable nature of this, as individuals who mostly seek answers should not be swayed or discouraged by this factor.

MAPPING THE ACADEMIC YEAR

Fall, Winter, Spring Quarters 2025 - 2026

Below are the major indices that we intend to use to reach our goal for the completion of a written thesis book and a comprehensive design project; reviewed, printed, and demonstrated upon graduation.

Fall Quarter

Arch 492 - Thesis Seminar

- How to construct an argument
- What is a Thesis? And what should I do with it?
- Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of your research
- Development of a Dialectic – disruption vs. grounding
- Take critical positions and explore, assess their validity
- Review & Present abstractions (architectural cookies)

Arch 481 – Design Studio – Ideation

- Introductions & Provocations
- Abstract Show - Ideas & Organization of Thoughts
- Exploring Schematic Ideas through topical charettes
- Vellum Show - Physical Artifacts and Analysis
- Proof of Conceptual Design Proposal - material/form/light
- **Thesis Book – DRAFT #1**

Winter Quarter

Arch 481 – Design Studio – Development

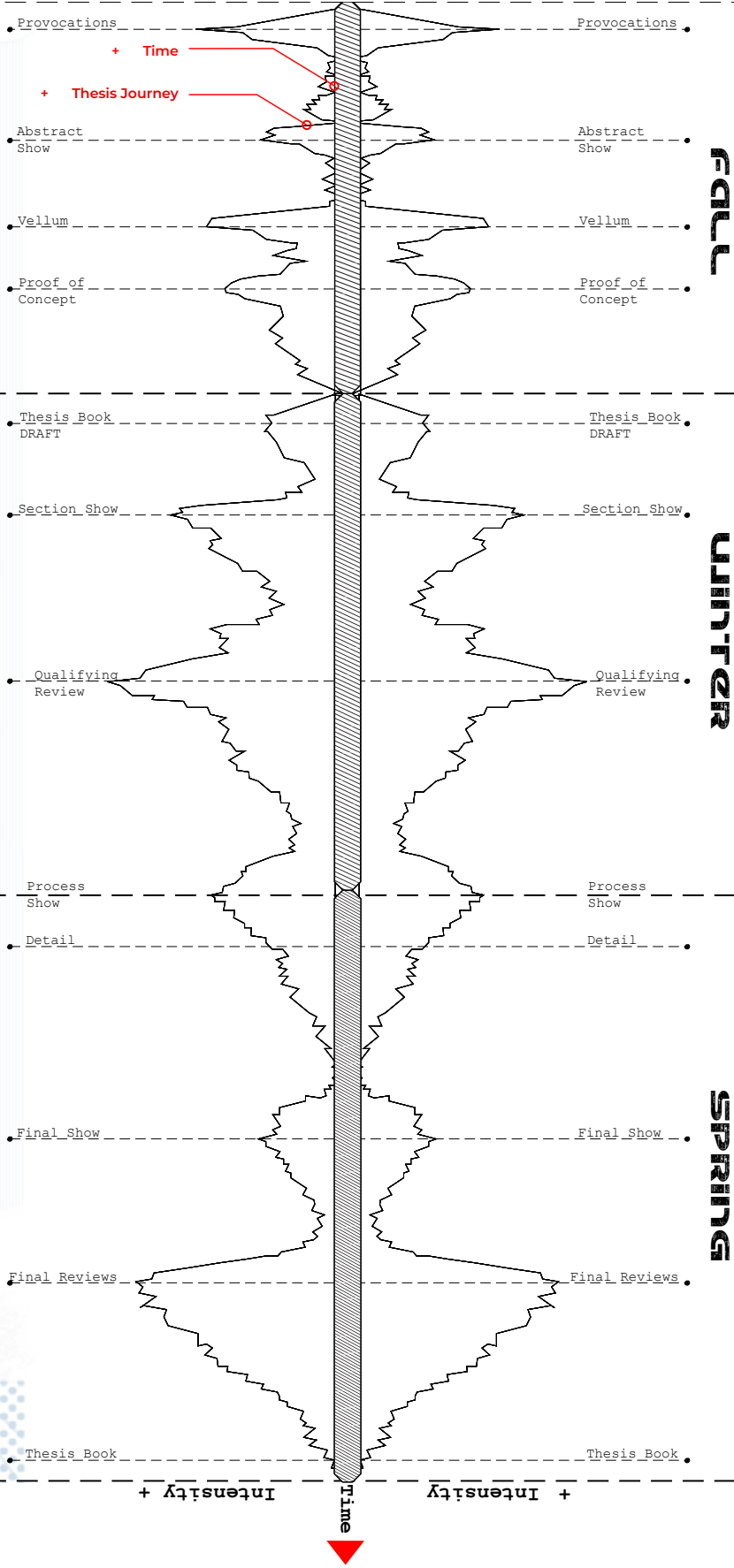
- Variation and Form
- Re-evaluation of Conceptual Ideas
- Design Proposal Development
- Section Show
- Interim Reviews
- Qualifying Reviews
- Process Show
- Juried Reviews
- **Thesis Book – DRAFT #2**
- Fieldtrip-s

Spring Quarter

Arch 481 – Design Studio – Synthesis

- Fieldtrip-s
- Detail and Material
- Detail Show
- Final Studio Show
- Final Juried Reviews
- Completion - **THESIS BOOK**
- Graduation

Reclaimed materials make up the primary steel and wooden modular units. Sourced from abandoned mine sites and settlements.



PROVOCATIONS

Prospectus 2025 – 2026

Design Research, as it relates to your thesis, is meant to be both exhaustingly rigorous and possess a layered approach in depth of explorative activities and speculative topics. These are all AGI generated images below, is this the world you are conditioned to exist within, are you pleased with this notion? Here are SIX broad scopes that Studio Four Hundred intends to investigate this academic year.

HOUSING

Architecture is an institutional system weaving together racialized class struggles, competing approaches to social policies, typological experimentations, politically and materially fraught infrastructural networks, engendered cultural values, intense pressures toward commodification, and basic human needs.

We need housing but why is the policy surrounding it so hard, and somehow, less human-e?

Where are some places that have seemingly solved the housing problem? How?

So, what equates the Right to Housing; or the Right to Housing Legislative Law?



CLIMATES of EXTRACTION – Water, Minerals, Life

Using the overlapping lens of your individual ideas, concerns and interests, thesis studio is a journey into examining how architecture and the built environment are implicated in systems of exploitation, colonialism, and most recently climate fueled extraction in the name of human consumption.

Do we ever really give back to mother nature? Or do we just take...

A sustainable environment is less about taking and more about offsetting our own existence.



THE INSTITUTIONS of ARCHITECTURE

“Architecture” is not confined to those durable objects called buildings but take on immense implications within our social ordering systems. It takes form amid the myriad of institutions—professional, pedagogical, curatorial, critical—that are engaged with architecture’s foundations, limits, and ambitions.

Are these outdated, stuck in the past? How have they adapted over time and how have they not?

These are unmistakably flawed, but are they somehow repairable or should we ‘begin again’?



ENVIRONMENTAL POWER + CONTROL SYSTEMS

Architecture’s uneasy relationships with power and control structures has long been a bastion of critical engagement within practice. So much so that the control ‘on’ and ‘of’ the environment has resulted in catastrophic results for global communities. The more control we seem to harness over nature, the more nature seems to struggle and fight back. But don’t we require nature for our very own survival?

Those that *have* the power, *control* the systems



ARCHITECTURE and the PLANET

Architecture has long provided a critical medium for production within nations. Define ‘productions’ as monuments, national malls, and embassies are the most recognizable of its outputs, but even more mundane typologies make tangible the abstractedness of a nation, while also controlling its image and reinforcing its power dynamics of architecture and the building industry as a whole.

Complicit or Savor? Architecture matters but there must be more ways for it to matter.

Meanwhile, the planet suffers alone, and we provide to it as an industry, institution, and profession about 37% construction waste and pollution...and climbing



DEFINE Access ENRONMENTAL Access PUBLIC Access

For whom is architecture? Who constitutes the imagined public around which an architectural project is designed, and what role does financial capital play in outlining those publics? Whose or what’s presence is omitted and suppressed, explicitly or implicitly? What then is architecture’s role on-the-ground, and what does it effect in-the-world? Whether by revisiting existing urban spaces or by excavating the latent assumptions that undergird any idea about the future of the city, **WHO** has access to our public spaces matter, but equally those that presume the brunt of the environmental impact within those same public spaces are also want for equal access of environmental and public opportunity.

Those having access define perception of place, but what is public access, and who has it?



BIOGRAPHY SKETCH

Prospectus 2025 – 2026

Before joining the Cal Poly Architecture Program in 2013, I was a practicing architect for three years as a partner in Regarding Architecture in a little-known area of North Birmingham, Alabama where with a former architecture classmate (thank you Patrick Nelson), we delved into the rescue, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse within an area of the city that was all but abandoned. While practicing there, we learned about community engagement, initiating community buy-in from key stakeholders, as well as demolishing and restoring a turn of the century former bank building and adjacent A&P Grocery Store into an incubator space that included our own practice, another sole designer practitioner, a sign-maker, and a handmade soapmaker called Freedom Soap Company.

Before Birmingham, I spent the previous two years working in a local office in the City of Sydney, Australia which has much to offer in peering through a lens at night and you can discover something more than just what is seen on the surface. I was focused predominantly on residential and commercial design with a firm called Mark Hurcum Design Practice (thank you Mark Hurcum). There, I was exposed to and infatuated by the likes of Glen Murcutt, and the challenges of culturally sensitive design as it related to the native Aboriginal inhabitants, although we focused our work within urban environments, I became much more adept to being an architect.

Before Sydney, I lived and worked in Barcelona, Spain for the roughly three years. There, I worked for a world-renowned design shop in Battle I Roig Arquitectes (thank you Joan Roig) where I would learn the shear significance of design to an entire culture of people, serve as design team member for a local furniture fabricator and interiors workshop in Casadevall Export SA (thank you Xavi Casadevall), and otherwise travel to the far corners of Europe, living and breathing architecture along the way. I also worked for and owe a giant debt of gratitude to my mentors and former instructors, Andrew Freear and Xavier Vendrell for leading me on this path of discovery & cultural significance.

Before Barcelona, I studied Urban Design--Community Planning with graduate level studies, and undergraduate level studies in Architecture, and minored in Interior Architecture and Economic Development at Auburn University where I twice experienced the design/build program at the Rural Studio as a 2nd year design student and later as a fifth-year thesis student (thank you Sambo Mockbee & DK Ruth respectively) in Newbern, Alabama. I learned about the power of architecture in directly addressing the human condition and that every human deserves an architecture that is warm, dry and noble.

My thesis work was featured in the Architectural Review and the Architectural Record both in 2004, among other books and journals. I am a licensed architect that continues to practice today, and I have been a part of Cal Poly’s CAED foundational teaching cohort for over ten years now, where I recently received a Research, Economic Development & Graduate Education (R-EDGE) grant for “Mapping for Social Justice: Using Architecture and Urban Design as Agents for Change,” and look forward to new and existing collaborations with students, colleagues in academia and in general. Contact information below and timeline to the right, and as customary...

n – Jermaine Washington
e – jewashin@calpoly.edu
c – 228 596 8006

“walk softly, but carry a big stick”

Notes:

Although the diagrammed path of my journey seems linear, the experience of these 30 years has been anything but. And the survival of a pandemic is only the more recent, but life-altering hurricane in Katrina, a 3-plus year stint of cancer fighting family, and an economic downturn of 2008 to boot. Resiliency and perseverance is something the diagram fails to communicate truthfully.

- Fig 1-6. Images generated using PIXLR image generator, Microsoft 365 AI image generator, Canva AI image generator, and Deep AI image generator for the following prompts: 'Housing', 'Climates of Extraction', 'Institutions of Architecture', 'Environmental Power and Control Systems, Architecture and the Planet, and Environmental Access/Public Access, 16 June 2024.
- Emmet Holton. Experiential Drawing Along the US-Mexico Border. February 2018.
- Potrait. Rubi Z Director of Photography for RubiZ Photo. Montana del Oro, 2015.

