Architecture 401 Studio Abstracts, Fall 2014
(All registrants are to be 4th year Arch 401 students)

Section 1: Not Used.

Section 2:
Searching for Chicago’s Contemporary Elysium, Chicago IL
Instructor: Montserrat Bonvehi
Bonvehi_mbonvehi@iastate.edu

Taking place in the city of Chicago and developing a collaborative research with IIT students, this studio is going to search of what contemporary public space can be. Public Space understood as a place for human and non human interactions, individual activities in a group environment, technology performances, agora for acknowledgment, place for socialization, community celebrations...

The context of the public space will be defined not just in relation to its physical surroundings, but in terms of the congregation of people that use it. A congregation, here, is understood beyond the usual meaning of a single social group bound together in worship or by politics. Rather, it implies links with other social groups, natural species, ecosystems and objects, including technological ones.

Taking the term Third Nature originally coined by the Italian historian Jacopo Bonfadio to refer to a new reality halfway between existing categories will enable us to refocus architecture in the field of interaction between things, helping to redefine our links with technological objects, with the social realm and nature.

Those premises will encourage us to a deep rethinking of buildings as public spaces or public space as buildings. The combination of different science and leisure programs will be explored by teams of 2 students, new programmatic situations to engage different social groups to celebrate knowledge. Non of the programs are defined yet encouraging programmatic mixtures to appear through the process of understanding all city agents involved on the site. All projects will be defining in a comprehensive level indoor and outdoor spaces according to the Sci-Tech requirements.

Logistics: Field trip to Chicago (max. $950) from Wednesday September 17th till Sunday September 21st. As part of our field trip we will doing a workshop in Chicago with IIT Thesis Students at Crown Hall building.

Section 3:
The Architecture of the High-Rise: Global Circulations and the Urbanization of Panama City. Panama City, Panama
Instructor: Ross Exo Adams
readams@iastate.edu

The modern history of Panama is dominated by circulation. From the Spanish colonial project of the 16th century, where Peruvian silver loot was hauled across this Isthmus, to the prophetic schemes for its designs by 19th century techno-imperial evangelist Claude Henri de Saint-Simon, to the US geopolitical control over this narrow strip of land connecting the Pacific to the Atlantic, Panama's fate in the world has been burdened by its geological predisposition for traffic. One could say that Panama invites this most fundamental of modern concepts in its terrestrial thinness. Following a dramatic 20th century of ‘revolutions’, military dictatorships, corrupt
oligarchic rule, and proximate governmental control, the new century has brought a new sense of stability to the country. Since gaining control over the canal, its neoliberal government has opened the country up to Foreign Direct Investment, created Special Tourism Zones, the largest Free Trade Zone in the Western Hemisphere, and, most importantly, encouraging massive construction industry.

Yet its history plagues its present: still today, Panama operates as a stopover—a point of transfer of goods, people, money and resources. And its recent urbanization is the concrete outcome of this. Only a few years ago, Panama boasted the second highest hotel occupancy rate in the world and tourism, next to canal-related trade, is one of its largest economies. Because of its small size, Panama City has become a city of high-rises, attracting architecture firms from around the world to design hotels, residential, commercial and mixed use towers, and (generally American) corporate headquarters, many of which for transient populations inhabiting the city for only weeks each year, despite a drastic need for low income housing. The result is a city whose public life is sharply divided and dispersed across its sprawling fabric. It seems that today’s dominant modes of circulation have converted the capital city into a forest of towers.

This studio will examine the typology of the high-rise within the context of contemporary neoliberal trade and against the background of 500 years of globalization to interrogate the high-rise beyond its pragmatic extrusion of space or its reduction to architectural icons. Through critical research, this studio will attempt to reinterpret the high-rise as a political and economic apparatus—we will examine it as both architecture and abstract instrument of private finance. In this way, we will understand how architecture operates both economically and politically in a world which seems to recognize only the former. If the high rise has become the ultimate materialization of the excesses of a private mode of human existence made general through neoliberal capitalism—then how can we re-conceive this typology in order to serve a more collective form of life?

By studying a set of radical precedents, we will propose a new class of ‘high-rises’ which challenge or even oppose its capitulation to abstract global finance and the privatization of life that its repetition throughout the city makes public. We will attempt to explore new architectural forms of the high-rise that seek spatial configurations for a collective, urban life to emerge. For some, this may mean radically new building forms that subvert the high rise altogether; for others, it may mean affecting the most subtle of changes for a strategic effect witnessed only in its multiplication through all floors.

Logistics: Field trip to Chicago (est. $750 - 950) from Wednesday September 17th till Sunday September 21st.

**Section 4:**
**Center for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods campus in Kamuli, Uganda**

In 2006, ISU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences has established an internship program in a rural region in Uganda, CSRL. Every summer, students from ISU and Makerere University, Uganda live together in a facility in Kamuli, Uganda and commute daily to elementary schools in the region. For five weeks, around thirty students from both universities work together to teach students integrated science subjects, maintain a productive school garden, raise awareness on issues of health and hygiene as well as multiple other related projects. CALS collaborates with VEDCO, a local NGO, to conduct their activities in the region where they use the Kamuli facility for their meetings and workshops. This architecture studio is about developing a new campus facility for CSRL, which needs to accommodate the growth of the program and future projects.
In developing the project program and design, students will be interacting with CALS faculty and students that have been part of the program as well as users of the facility in Uganda.

While the premise of the studio is pragmatic, the design investigations will address larger questions about the intellectual, technical and representational tools needed for the architect to design in foreign unfamiliar contexts. Technically, designing for rural region of Kamuli in Uganda, needs to consider conditions of tropical climate at zero latitude, local labor, available materials, waste production and maintenance requirements. These considerations could be part of any architectural design project, however, additional effort is needed to bring such climatic, technical, social and most importantly experiential conditions to your “desktop” to inform the way you design spaces. This shifts the focus of the design studio from accumulating knowledge about Uganda to a creative process where various forms of representation of that knowledge is explored in order to make it active in every step of the design process. Through these representations, various levels of colonization of the designer to her place of action will be closely monitored!

No field trip required.

https://www.google.com/maps/place/Kamuli,+Uganda/@0.9443031,33.1291993,7648m/data=!3m1!4m2!3m1!1s0x177ea98277f16db3:0x9296acdfb563947f
http://www.srl.ag.iastate.edu/Service%20Learning.html
http://www.vedcouganda.org/

Section IT (Italy):
Tadzio’s Bouyant: Black Box Theater. Venice, Italy
Instructor: Peter P. Goché
goche@iastate.edu

Floor is the primordial element on which spatial productions are founded and the site of deliberate and spontaneous transformation, as well as constative and performative relation between peoples. Architecture is about constructing the event as much as it is about accommodating and facilitating social formations. The floor represents both instrument and implementation that procures and obscures forgotten pasts while eliciting future mediations.

Instability in land morphology (though difficult to optically register at times) has produced a tectonic perceptual stability that varies from region to region. We find similar consequence with the specific topography of the Laguna Veneta and thereby directly link the intellectual evidence of a seemingly stable set of fundamentals to the visual evidence of an unstable aquatic ground plane. This relationship forms the basis for our comprehensive studies in architecture with emphasis on programmatic gestures and design as a full undertaking of issues surround the production of space.

Taking inspiration from Death in Venice, a novel written by German author Thomas Mann, this investigation will delve into issues of beauty and obsession through the production of a phenomenological sense of spatial logics in the production of a floating theatre to be conceived in the context of the Venetian Arsenal (a shipyard founded in early 12th century). Floating theatres were characteristic of Venice in the 18th century (see Aldo Rossi’s II Teatro del Mondo, 1979). This work will be developed concurrent with experimental productions in paper in preparation for our field trip to Venice, Italy October 15-19 where we will participate in a workshop in the Teatro Piccolo Arsenale for the Venice Biennale: Fundamentals (Elements of Architecture) curated by Rem Koolhaas. We will work in teams.

**Important Note: our field trip will be to the Venice Architecture Biennale, on Oct (14)15-19.** This section of Arch 403/603 is designated to represent ISU.CºDºA at La Biennale Architettura 2014 – The 14th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice Italy. The field trip will be financially assessed as a University Study Abroad Program. Therefore, in lieu of typical “course fees,” the total program cost that will appear on each student’s U-Bill is $1,105.00 USD. This cost will cover round trip air travel and lodging for four nights ($1000), and a minor university fee ($105.00). The College will make arrangements for travel and lodging. There will be no additional “course fees” billed to the student. The student must pay their own costs for food and other incidentals out-of-pocket. We have estimated out-of-pocket expenses to be $300 for meals and incidentals and $175 for passport, if needed. Because of the Study Abroad status of this program, participating student may be eligible for financial aid through the University to cover all of the above costs, if the student qualifies. A student should decide to take this course only if they can make the financial commitment and secure the appropriate travel documents prior departure date of October 14. Non-US citizens requiring visas will need to compile application materials during the first week of the semester. US citizens without passports will need to apply immediately, as regular service to receive a passport is generally running at 4-6 weeks, and expedited service 2-3 weeks for an additional cost. Information regarding passport application is available here: [http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/apply.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/apply.html). Other questions regarding travel documents can be directed to the College’s International Programs Coordinator, Erin French efrench@iastate.edu

In Venice, we will form a partnership with the other designated studio, Arch 403/603 taught by Mitchell Squire, and with the talents of Cameron Campbell and Chair Deborah Hauptmann, and engage the ISU.CºDºA Biennale Session. This featured session will consist of two parts: a two-day student workshop that addresses the Biennale theme *Elements of Architecture*; and a one-day colloquium of invited speakers that will address the theme *Absorbing Modernity 1914-2014*. Our participation in the Biennale is, in part, a celebration of our department’s centennial. More on the ISU.CºDºA Biennale Session will be distributed on the first day of studio.

**The extremely low cost for this one-time opportunity is due to a number of financial contributions that have been made to the College on behalf of the program.**

**Section 6:**
**The Altman Museum of Independent Film (AMIF): Improvisation, Surface, and Structure**
Instructor: Mikesch Muecke
polytekton@icloud.com

“Altman builds a Western town as one might build a castle in the air—and it’s inhabited.”¹

In this studio we develop a proposal for a Museum of Independent Film by considering the process of filmmaking as an analogue to architectural design. Both activities are team-dependent, highly complex, expensive, and require scripting, iterative editing, montage, spatial and temporal sequencing, sensory design, and a thorough knowledge of materiality.

---
The project is named after Robert Altman (1925-2006), an innovative and prolific independent filmmaker who rewrote cinematic genres with films such as *M*A*S*H* (war epic), *Nashville* (musical), *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (Western), *Brewster McCloud* (fantasy), *Short Cuts* (short stories translated to film), *The Long Goodbye* (detective story), *The Player* (Hollywood movie producing), *Cookie's Fortune* (comedy) and *Gosford Park* (whodunit), among others. Unlike mainstream Hollywood blockbusters, Altman’s movies tend to be anti-heroic, acerbic, and bitingly funny in their critique of American culture and society.

For Altman making movies is a complex hybrid of careful planning and intuitive improvisation (much like architecture) and the resulting film requires repeated viewing. Rather than be passive receivers of mindless entertainment, he requires his audience to do analytic work in deciphering the scenes on the screen. His films often consist of a series of vignettes loosely linked in time/space where “meaning is achieved by lateral, diachronic juxtaposition, not by layers that can be penetrated.” In other words, his movies are about surfaces, not unlike architecture, and of course the stuff that holds up those surfaces, like structure.

Faced with Altman’s resistance to articulate a theory of his own work we’ll base the studio’s theoretical footings on writings about modern society, film, and specifically montage, consulting Walter Benjamin (e.g. *Einbahnstrasse/Oneway Street*), Sergei Eisenstein (*Montage and Architecture*), and others.

The semester is divided into three sections. During the first we’ll analyze several of Altman’s films by considering them as sites of critical production. In phase two we use these analyses to develop a program and physical site for the museum, and in the third section the building emerges out of the films/site as a comprehensive architectural construct.

There will be no field trip.

---