

INDEPENDENT THESIS / COLLECTIVE STUDIO

Inquiries, Observations, and Provocations through Architecture

Sarah Rafson + Laura Garófalo

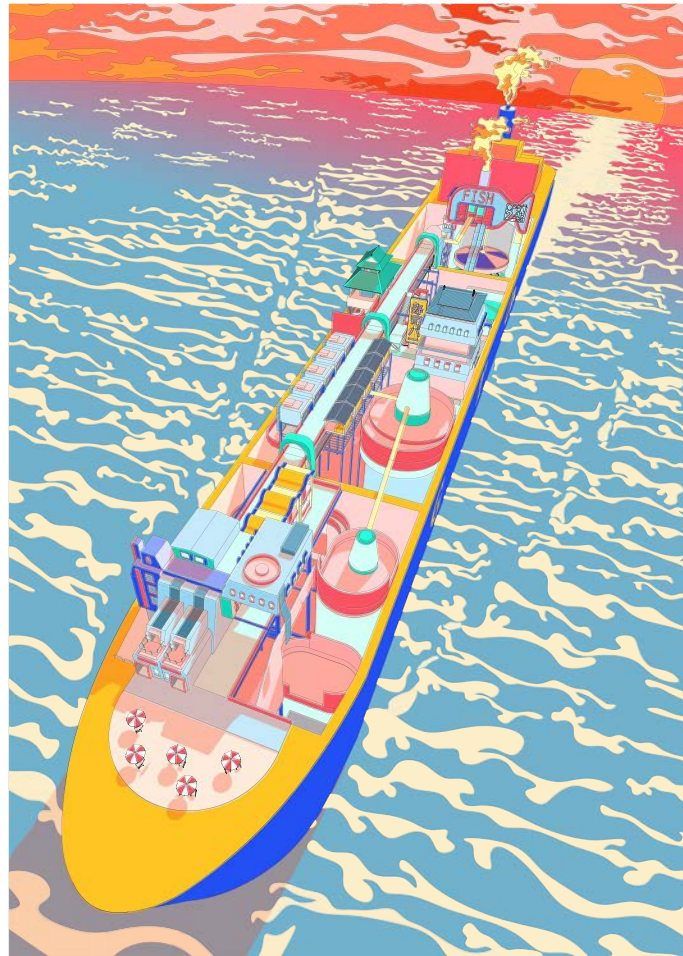
An architectural thesis is a proposition that results from a critique and reexamination of the role of architecture as a critical participant in the conditioning of (public) space. Marking the transition between academic and professional practices, the thesis project is an exciting opportunity for students to define their unique positionality and modes of practice relative to the discipline of architecture. Thesis topics reflect the diversity of student experiences and interests, ranging from building construction, design research, emerging technologies and materiality, social issues, landscape, urbanism, spatial perception and methods of conceptual thinking. Together, the studio will create a public exhibition and symposium to discuss the ideas and projects students propose.

PROMPT

In relation to this semester's theme—Materiality: Extractivism—students will be challenged to find tangible, material ways to convey the abstract and conceptual underpinnings of their projects. The focus on extractivism in the spring will also require students to confront the political and planetary implications of the projects they propose.

CONTEXT

A thesis project is thrilling to develop; students are defining a space for themselves ideologically and artistically in the landscape of architecture practice. As a studio, students push each other to test ways of working, thereby making an impact in the discipline and reflecting critically on their own creative processes. To that end, students will be working under the guidance of carefully selected, trusted advisors, but the project is ultimately their own. Throughout the process of designing a thesis, students exercise strategies for writing, research, time management, organization, and communication that will be invaluable throughout their careers. At the end of the year, they will have completed a personally, intellectually, and creatively satisfying project that will reap dividends after graduation.



Adam He (B.Arch 2022), Perspective,
A Fisher Ensemble: An Age of Discovery of the Urban Shoreline



Juhi Dhanesha (B.Arch 2022), Installation View,
A Glossary of the Unvertical,
Platform Gallery, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. April–May 2022



Olivia Werner (B.Arch 2022), Collage Detail,
Mediated Worlds: Transformable Bodily Interfaces



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PROGRAM

This studio will be devoted to:

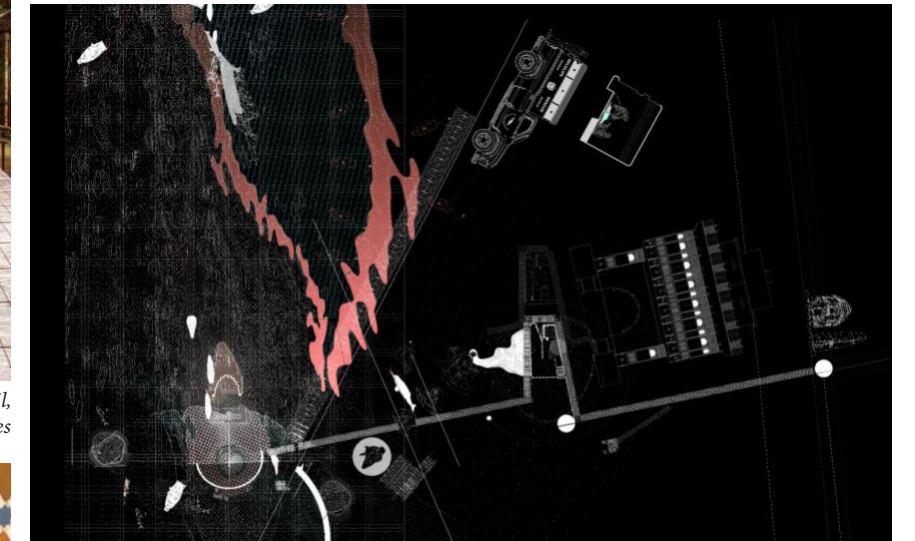
- Group discussions to review project milestones, requirements, and ideas
- Desk critiques to track the development of independent work
- Conceptualizing and developing a thesis exhibition and publication
- Reviews with advisors and invited critics to refine design projects and exhibition strategies
- Independent design, research, and writing

In addition to group discussions, desk critiques, and independent work sessions, a series of “thesis talks” throughout the semester offer students an opportunity to engage with faculty, scholars, and practitioners working in related topics. These regular presentations help foster critical thinking and reflection on the projects’ relevance beyond the academy.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of this studio, you should be able to:

- Conduct independent, original research related to architecture & design
- Express a critical outlook and perspective on architecture practice
- Work with an advisory team to develop a unique research-based project
- Provide critical feedback, support, and encouragement to your peers as they navigate their independent work.
- Design and install an exhibition that reflects the ethos of your cohort
- Write, edit, and design a thesis book that compiles the outcomes of your research and design process
- Sustain and manage a long-term independent project
- Practice polishing verbal and visual presentation of your creative work



Shariq M. Shah (B.Arch 2022), Diagram,
Entangled Territories: Weaving Memory, Local Practice, and Ecology from
Mohenjo Daro to Sukkur