INDEPENDENT THESIS / COLLECTIVE STUDIO

Inquiries, Observations, and Provocations through Architecture

“Choose carefully the site of rebellion.”
—Terence van Elslander

Background
An architectural thesis is a proposition. A proposition that results from a critique and reexamination of the role of architecture as a critical participant in the conditioning of (public) space. A thesis demands that the student take a position and have something to say, something to contribute to the ongoing discourse in the widening sphere of architecture.

Marking the transition between academic and professional practices, the thesis project is an opportunity to define an individual position 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. The studio will present their work together in a public exhibition and symposium.

Context
In defining your thesis project, you are also defining a space for yourself ideologically and artistically in the landscape of architecture practice. You are testing ways of working, making an impact in the discipline, and reflecting critically on your own work. To that end, you will be working under the guidance of carefully selected, trusted advisors, but the project is ultimately your own. You must trust yourself to envision the outcome and make it happen. Throughout the process of designing a thesis, you will exercise strategies for writing, research, time management, organization, and communication that will be invaluable throughout your career. At the end of the year, you will have completed a personally, intellectually, and aesthetically satisfying project that will reap dividends after graduation.
Program
Class time will be devoted to:

• Developing a thesis exhibition and publication
• Desk critiques to ensure the timely development of independent work
• Group discussions to review project milestones, requirements, and ideas
• Reviews with advisors and outside critics to refine design projects and exhibition strategies
• Independent design, research, and writing

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 outside the classroom.

Learning Outcomes
In this studio, students are expected to engage and develop a wide range of interrelated capacities, including critical thinking, analytical writing and reflective design production.

• Refining research skills in architecture and design
• Developing and expressing a critical outlook and perspective on architecture practice
• Designing and installing an exhibition of work
• Writing, editing, and designing a thesis book that compiles the outcomes of the research and design process
• Sustaining and managing a long-term independent project
• Polishing verbal and visual presentation skills