

Micropolitan America

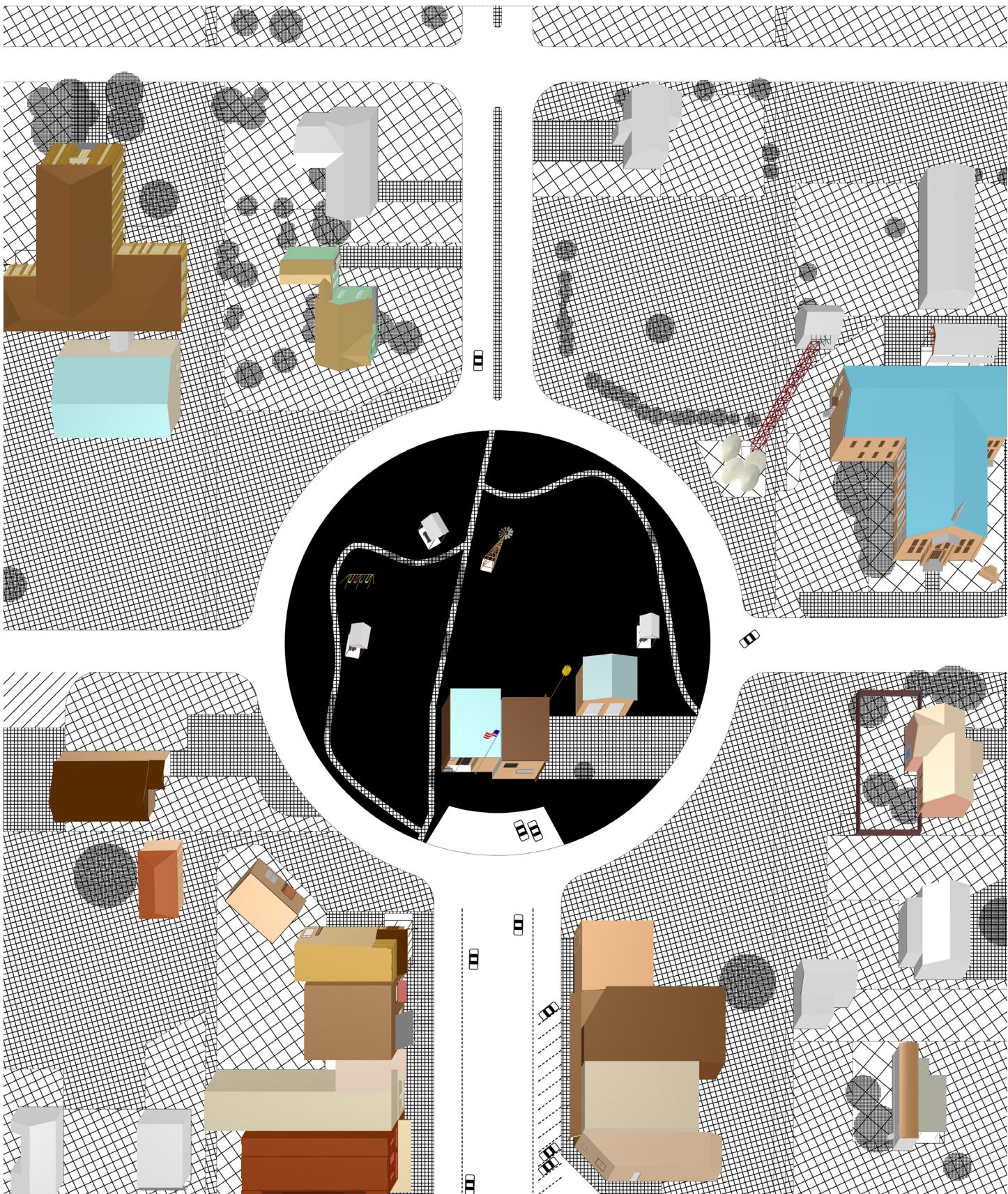
Micro-urbanism in hyper-context

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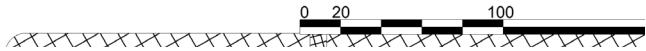
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Advanced Design Studio, UTSOA



Spring 2019



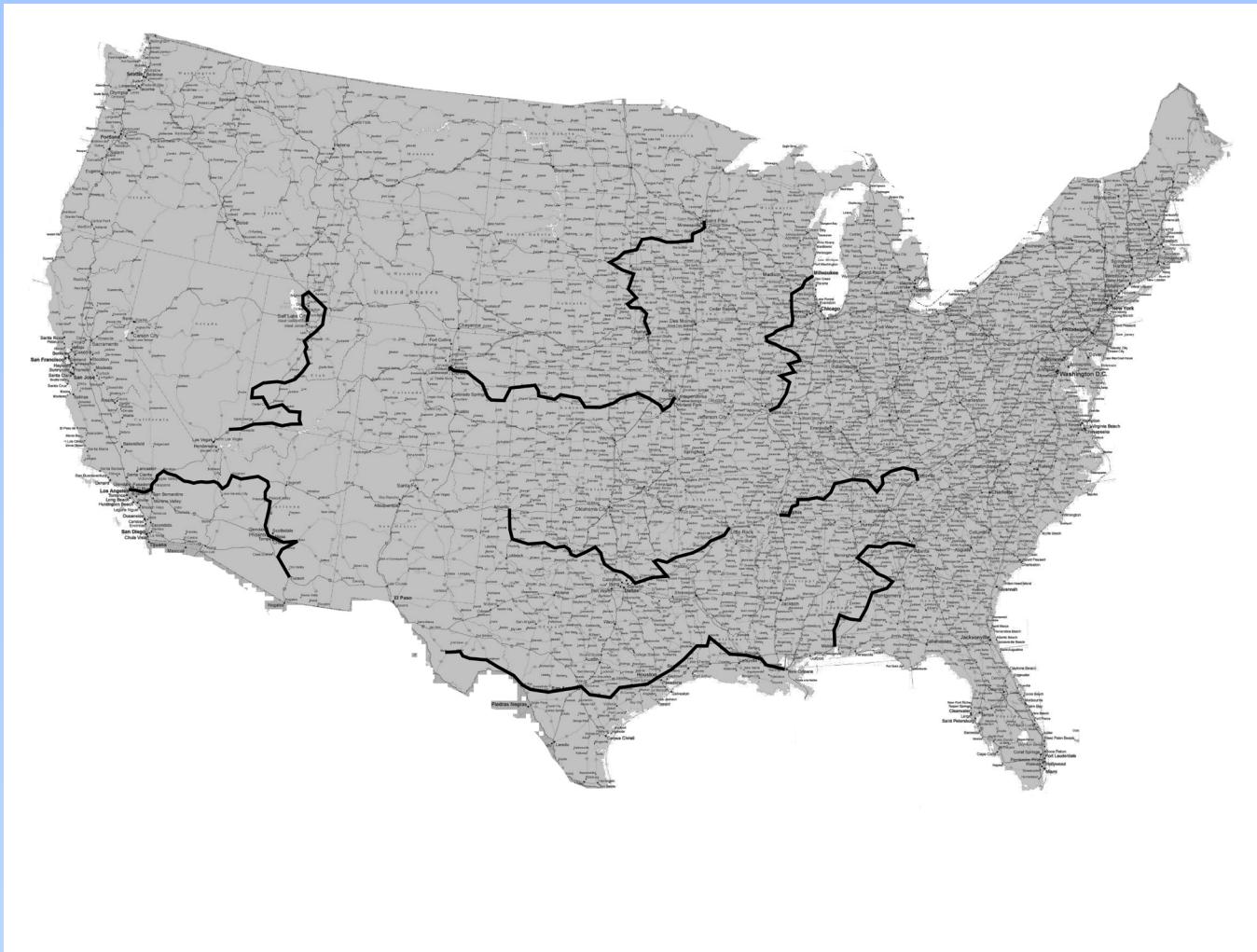
Anton, TX



Studio premise:

‘Micropolitan America’ focuses on an alternative understanding of urbanism that studies the American town as an instant and autonomous urban setup, one that is simple enough to be broken down in primary and identifiable elements, that can be used as tools to enable micro-urban function. The American town is seen through the lens of remoteness. Its content is detached from its form as it invisibly links to greater systems and networks. The town is seen in two extreme scales. A nationwide scale of networks and their local built manifestations. Students, working in defiance of a conventional academic approach will be asked to identify, analyze and ultimately comment and intervene on the nodes of the Texan town grid system through real, surreal or entirely speculative interventions. Working between and across scales- that of the street, the town, the road, the territory- students are going to be operating as archeologists of the immediate future -only to paraphrase Reyner Banham.

If America is the original version of modernity according to Baudrillard, then the extremities of the American internal territory- understood here as a sequence of Greysvilles, Crossvilles, Maryvilles but also Moscows, Paris, Florences spread out in Tennessee, Texas, Louisiana or Arizona- offer us an insight to an accelerated end of that initial modernity.



performed trips

In situ, TEXAS: (local specificity)

In many ways Texas defied description. Not only in terms of its scale, or the disconsolate vastness of the West Texan desert, but also as an idea. Larger than any European country, yet still only one of the 50 states in the union. Texas is a place where, as the writer Cormac Mc Carthy once suggested, we all come to be cured of our sentiments. Mark Campbell

Because Texas is a part of almost everything in modern America - the South, the West, the Plains, Hispanic and immigrant communities, the border, the divide between the rural areas and the cities - what happens here tends to disproportionately affect the rest of the nation. Lawrence Wright

We will look into the generic, the unseen, the overlooked, the irrelevant, the unfinished, the unwrought. Between the micro-urbanism of the Texan town and the hyper-context of the state, we will deal with urbanism and architecture in a radically small and vast scale respectively.



Ed Ruscha, Drive

The Project:

Phase 1a – Analysis:

Students will be asked to perform an in depth reading of the selected territory aspiring to generate an understanding of the region through the elemental notion of the town inscribed within a networked landscape of power. The networks at play can be physical or notional and can be summarized as the basic requirements to organize and sustain an urban community.

Landscapes of power (types):

- Nutrition (Water network, food provision)
- Energy (Oil/ gas- gas stations, electricity – power plants)
- Education (Schools, universities)
- Transportation of people and goods (Railway, highway networks)
- Administration (Local government, state, federal)
- Law (Legislation, police and correction)
- Organized Religion (Temples and communities)
- Leisure (Recreation, tourism)

Phase 1b – Trip:

Having selected an analytical lens to examine the territory through, the students will travel long spans visiting towns on predefined cross sections of the research regions. The area around Austin provides a great example of extremities between the desert, countryside and the town. The studio will establish an archive of urban and/or building typologies and of the greater networks they serve. Both the building types and the networks will be broken down with consecutive zoom ins and outs until they are able to formulate a new understanding and a critical position vis-a-vis the studio premise.

Research Building Typologies:

- The Town Hall
- The Courthouse
- The town Jail
- The School
- The Church
- The Gazebo
- The main street Store
- The Water tower.

Phase 2– Design Interrogation:

Coming back from the road trip to the territory the students will be asked to translate their observations into design interrogations acting on the latent potential of the town constellation. The objective is to loop the design arguments through a local intervention scale that exemplifies and challenges the current conditions as identified during the research. The aim is to be critical and not attempt to solve problems, rather hack the laid-out system and subvert it.

Phase 3 – Design Thesis:

During the final phase of the studio the students will be asked to select the design medium through which they are going to deliver their thesis. The intellectual arguments produced by each project are expected to invent a format specific to each case and challenge conventions of architectural representation. The studio will emphasize the importance of dealing with the context and the design innervation on equal terms in an attempt to elevate the existing architecture to an unprecedented level of detail and focus.

Studio methodology:

Team work is extremely important in the context of this studio. The research produced in all stages is considered an open resource within the group. What is more, students are invited to work in teams of two or three throughout the semester.

This is a research upper lever studio meaning that the syllabus is only providing an intellectual framework and an overall methodological process, not a building brief.

Nevertheless, the specific and unique argument and thus thesis and direction proposed by each team is going to be derived from their original research and intellectual curiosity.

Deliverables

Students will be asked to produce a coherent analytical index of the typology they have elected to work with that will seamlessly blend into a synthetic proposal for a diversion of the current condition.

Larger analytical drawings of the town and relationship with the territory can be produced within the groups. Archival in-situ research is also expected in the initial stages in order to tap into local resources (libraries, town archives, collections etc.).

As we proceed towards specific typologies, each student will develop a body of work identifying a thesis question around the chosen type that will be explored through a design proposal that intervenes in a microscale while consciously affecting a much wider context.

Architecture can be vast and urbanism radically small in the context of the studio, allowing students to work at a diversity of scales and mediums, yet a design project is expected from each student that will explore the thesis question asked though the initial research.

Drawing scales will range from the building element to the scale of the country.

Grading Criteria:

Thesis:

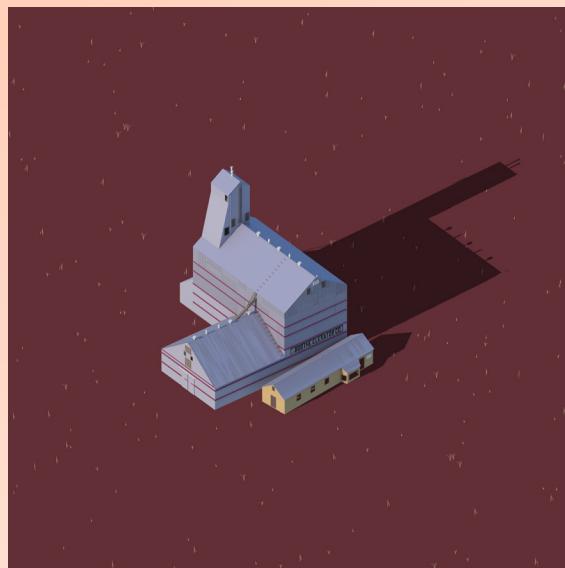
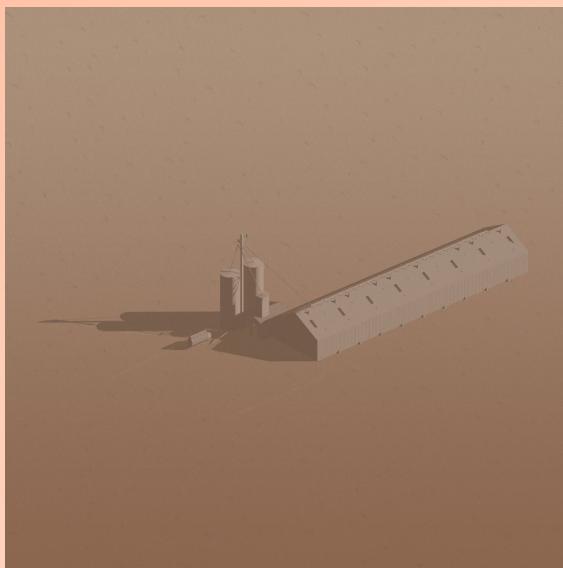
A clear and precise narrative and line of historical grounding that delivers a critical argument about the project throughout the semester.

Representation: The ability to challenge drawing conventions and prepare the necessary graphic documents that both design and communicate the thesis.

Engagement: Class attendance, participation in conversations, creative and productive response to feedback.

Intellectual contribution: The ability to produce original ideas and introduce findings, demonstrating a deep understanding of both the research/ analysis, and the project thesis, as well as the ability to develop the project accordingly.

Output: The quality and volume of final production. Emphasis is given to exploratory drawings, models and hybrid studies.



Anton, TX

Proposed timeline

(dates subject to change)

Phase 1:

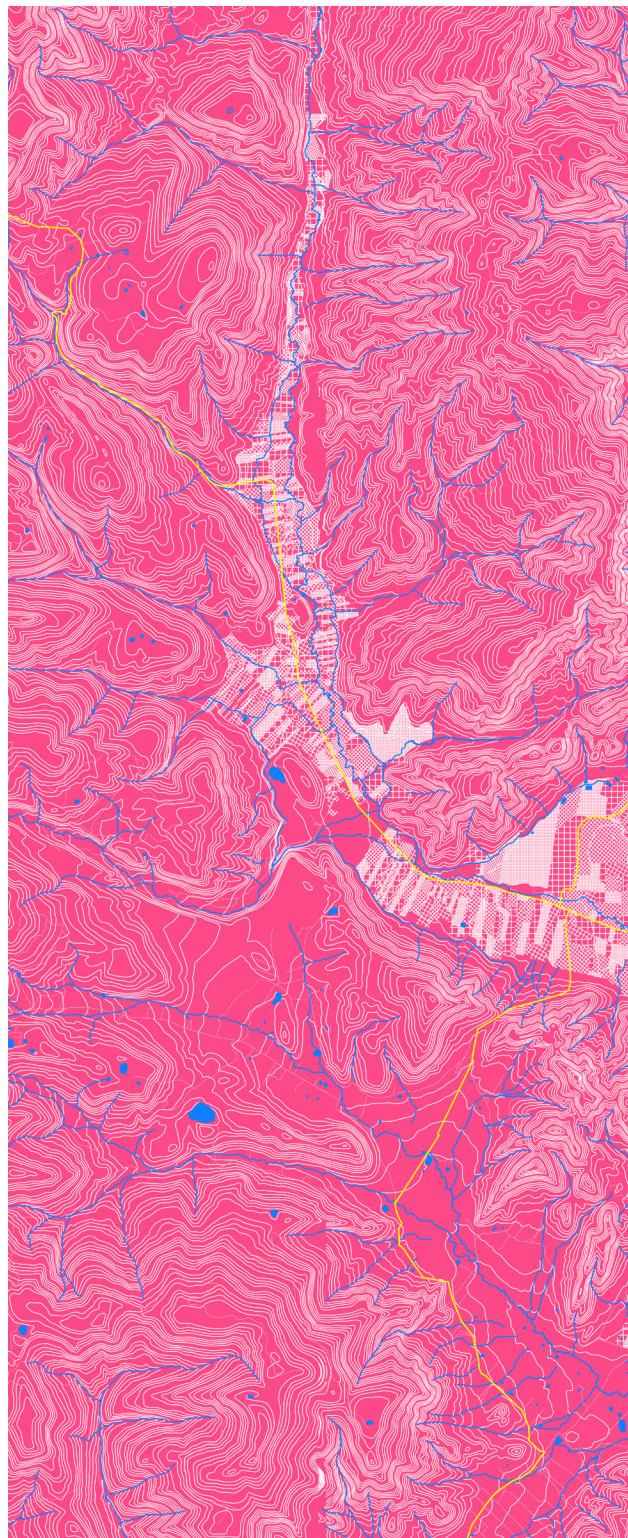
- 1/23/19 Studio lottery
- 1/25/19 Introduction formation of groups preparation for road trip
- 1/31/19 Road trip
- 2/4/19 Presentation of findings

Phase 2:

- 2/5/19 Selection of topic start of research
- 3/4/19 Research presentation
- 3/6/19 Project proposal
- 3/15/19 Mid review

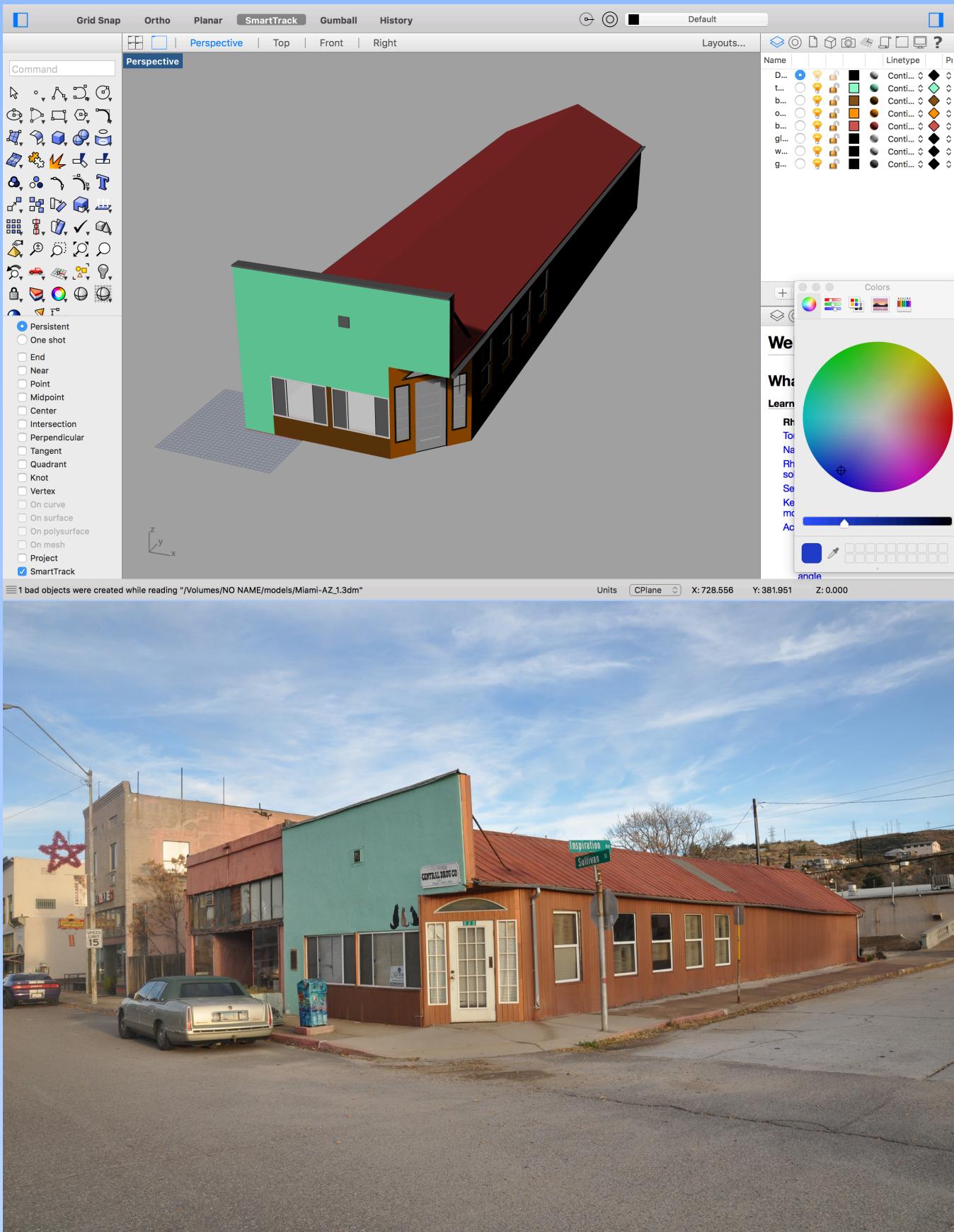
Phase 3:

- 3/18-22/19 Spring-Break
- 5/1/19 Pre-final review
- 5/8-10/19 Final review



Selected Bibliography

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Miami, AZ

Studio Culture:

The School of Architecture believes in the value of the design studio model. Studio learning encourages dialogue, collaboration, risk-taking, innovation, and learning-by-doing. The studio offers an environment where students can come together to ask questions and make proposals, which are developed and discussed among classmates, faculty, visiting professionals, and the public-at-large. Studio learning offers intensive one-on-one instruction from faculty members, and provides the opportunity for each student to develop his/her critical thinking skills and spatial and material sensibilities. The design studio offers a synthetic form of education, where project-based learning becomes the foundation for developing an understanding of and commitment to the school's core values — broadmindedness, inter-connectivity, professionalism, exploration and activism — all in service of architecture's fundamental mission: to improve the quality of the built and natural environments.

<https://soa.utexas.edu/programs/architecture/architecture-studio-culture>

collaboration, group discussions and reviews.

Grade Descriptions:

A/A- : excellent

Project surpasses expectations in terms of inventiveness, appropriateness, visual language, conceptual rigor, craft, and personal development. Student pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class. Project is complete on all levels.

B+/B/B- : above average

Project is thorough, well presented, diligently pursued, and successfully completed. Student pursues ideas and suggestions presented in class and puts in effort to resolve required projects. Project is complete on all levels and demonstrates potential for excellence.

C+/C : average

Project meets the minimum requirements. Suggestions made in class are not pursued with dedication or rigor. Project is incomplete in one or more areas.

C-/D+/D/D- : poor

Project is incomplete. Basic grasp of skill is lacking, visual clarity or logic of presentation are not level-appropriate. Student does not demonstrate the required competence and knowledge base.

F : fail

Project is unresolved. Minimum objectives are not met. Performance is not acceptable. Note that this grade will be assigned when students have excessive unexcused absences.

X : excused incomplete

Can be given only for legitimate reasons of illness or family emergency. Simply not completing work on time is not an adequate cause for assigning this evaluation. It may only be used after consultation with the Associate Deans' offices and with an agreement as to a new completion date. Work must be completed before the second week of the next semester in which you are enrolling, according to School of Architecture policy.

Collaboration:

Projects are developed in collaboration with a partner, and your performance will be evaluated collectively. You should be mindful of the give and take that is associated with a collaborative design process. If the relationship between you and your partner becomes strained in any way it is imperative that you bring such issues to the attention of your instructors. In addition to the specific relation you will have with your partner, a general spirit of collaboration amongst all members of the studio will be expected.

Attendance:

Punctual and regular attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to work on their project in the studio. Active participation in studio readings and discussions is expected.

With three (3) unexcused absences, the student's final grade for the course will be lowered by a full letter grade. The final grade will be lowered by a full letter grade for each unexcused absence thereafter. Aside from religious observances, absences are only excused with written documentation of a medical issue or family emergency. The student is responsible for completing work missed due to excused absences and initiating communication with the instructor to determine due dates.

If a student is late (5 minutes after the start of class) three (3) times, it will be counted as one (1) unexcused absence. Students should notify the instructor prior to class if lateness or absence is known in advance. Students must notify instructors directly regarding lateness or absences; Asking a classmate to inform the instructor is not acceptable.

Religious Observances:

A student shall be excused from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for the purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. University policy requires students to notify each of their instructors as far in advance of the absence as possible so that arrangements can be made.

By UT Austin policy, you must notify the instructor of the pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, an assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Academic Integrity:

Students who violate University policy on academic integrity are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on academic integrity will be strictly enforced. Refer to the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website for official University policies and procedures on academic integrity: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php>.

University Code of Conduct:

<http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/#universitycodeofconduct>

Care Program:

Counselors in Academic Residence (CARE) Program places licensed mental health professionals within the colleges or schools they serve in order to provide better access to mental health support for students who are struggling emotionally and/or academically.

Laura Dannenmaier (LCSW) is the CARE Program Director and is the assigned CARE counselor for the School of Architecture. Faculty and staff may refer students to the CARE counselor or students may directly reach out to her.

Laura Dannenmaier | BTL 114B | (512) 471-3115

https://cmhc.utexas.edu/CARE_dannenmaier.html

Student with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor in each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time.

<http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

Security, safety and the studio:

The studio is an exceptional learning environment. Since it is a place for all, it necessitates the careful attention to the needs of everyone. All spraying of fixative, spray paint or any other substance should be done in the shop. Security is a necessary component for a studio that is accessible to you and your colleagues 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Do not leave your studio without your studio key and do not leave your studio unlocked. Hold yourself and your studiomates accountable for the security of your shared space.

BCAL:

Concerns regarding the safety or behavior of fellow students, Teaching Assistants (TA), or Professors can be reported to the Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050. Calls can be made anonymously. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

Emergency Evacuation

In the case of emergency evacuation:

- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- Students should familiarize themselves with all exit doors of each classroom and building they may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.
- Reentry into a building is prohibited unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services offices.

