TOPIC: Opportunistic Urban Modes: Investigating the Rural-Urban Boundary

BACKGROUND: Current metropolitan expansion, particularly in the United States, consumes vast amounts of agricultural land. In a world where the human population continues to rise and demands for food become greater, such modes of urban expansion are unsustainable. This studio challenges contemporary methods of urban expansion and looks to define more synergistic urban-rural boundaries.

THESIS: How do modes of architectural aggregation affect the rural-urban border? In what ways are agriculture and cities linked? Do there exist physical opportunities to accommodate population growth in cities that also benefit cycles of agriculture?

STRATEGIES: Students will be tasked to respond to two (2) challenges:

1. The first is to investigate, in significant detail, attributes pertaining to the environmental, social, political, cultural and economic condition of the rural-urban boundary. Students will be tasked to map these relationships in a variety of historic and contemporary contexts. This investigation will be collaborative, and students will be divided into small groups. A heavy emphasis will be placed on innovative ways of graphically presenting information.

2. The second challenge is to formulate an architectural response that is sensitive to the aforementioned investigation. Students will fulfill this challenge by individually developing an architectural solution that fits into an urban “master plan.” Each student will work individually on an assembly of building designs that, collectively with the rest of the students, fulfills the requirements of a master plan. Each student may interpret the master plan differently and will be responsible for comprehensively articulating an urban strategy.

STUDIO MODUS OPERANDI:

“All important concepts are dialectically vague at the margins” - Herman Daly
This studio will be confronting the ecotone that exists between urban and rural. For this reason, resolutions must be argued; defended by clear justifications for architecture and urbanity. A successful project in this studio is not only well resolved, but clearly argues a position relative to the thesis.

GOAL: The goal of this studio is to give an opportunity for students to investigate the margin between agriculture and urbanism; to create an authentic source of understanding that can, in turn, propel future investigations towards a truly sustainable resolution.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS: It is expected that only students interested in challenging themselves to perform INTENSE INVESTIGATIONS should register for this studio. Students will be expected to work with a variety of media and mediums, but the focus of this studio will be on physical models (small and full scale fabrications) and mixed digital media (photography, digital line drawings, digital renderings, and layered analogue drawings). Students will be expected to use the CNC router, so familiarity with Rhino is recommended.

Resources (preliminary):
“The City in History” - Lewis Mumford
“The Endless City” - Ricky Burdett, Dylan Sudjic
“Ecological Urbanism” - Mohsen Mostafavi
“The Urban Food Revolution” - Peter Ladner
“49 Cities” - WORKac