Activating Architecture: A Center for Peace in the Middle of the Jungle

ARCH 571 | Fall 2017
Illinois School of Architecture
University of Illinois Urbana Champaign
Assistant Professor Aaron Brakke
ACTIVATING ARCHITECTURE
Project: A CENTER FOR PEACE

ARCH 571 Design: Detail and Architectonics
Credits: 6 Hours.

Course Catalog Description
Design studio investigations of multiple techniques and methodologies addressing the design and fabrication of small-scale architectural constructions, explorations of specific sites and places, and interdisciplinary projects. Field trips may be required. Shop safety orientation required. No professional credit. May be repeated in separate terms to a maximum of 12 hours. Prerequisite: Graduate standing or consent of instructor.

Program and Site for the Studio Project
The program for this design studio will be a Center for Peace. This will be an inclusive cultural center that serves as a safe platform to promote peace, including space for but not limited to: conflict resolution, training, legal council, social entrepreneurship, dining, artistic practices, etc. To this end, students will focus their efforts on a site located in the country of Colombia which has been afflicted with armed conflict for more than half a century. A major milestone was reached in the past year when the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Colombian Government signed a peace agreement. A United Nations led process of disarmament concluded just days ago. It is envisioned that housing and the facilities necessary to prepare members of the FARC for the complex process of demobilization also be provided. A smooth and successful transition from being a soldier towards reintegration with society is sought and the architectural program will need to ‘react’ to this.

Challenge for the Studio: Ethics, Aesthetics and Agency
This studio will be developed on the premise that architecture can be a powerful tool for active engagement with the world. In this studio we acknowledge the strange nature of our contemporary reality. We are situated on planet earth in an epoch unofficially known as the Anthropocene. We reap the benefits of an industrialized, technologically advanced and connected society, however we also inherit the consequences which include political instability, deterritorialization, accelerationism, violence and environmental catastrophe. Students are challenged to think critically about the role of design in this type of world. You will be asked to think outside of the box and develop projects that explore and promote agency in architecture.

Objectives for Student Development
This studio is taught as part of the Detail + Fabrication Program Area and values a design process that incorporates both analog and digital tools. A variety of media, materials, fabrication techniques and prototyping will be utilized to test hypotheses, speculate, develop and propose architectural design at a variety of scales. It is believed that computational design thinking and digital tools can help foster novel approaches to design so each student will be encouraged to develop their own design communication skills and design abilities through intensive use of parametric modelling, simulation and digital fabrication. The skills gained will be valuable in both academia and in practice.

LAKA Competition
Students will submit their projects to the Laka Competition’17: Architecture that Reacts. Further information may be found at: https://lakareacts.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/BriefLaka17.pdf