

AMAZONIA STUDIO, 2024

MANAUS, (inter) cultural dialogue in Amazonia

MIT Spring 2024 – Architecture Design Option Studio 4.154

Tuesday and Thursday, 1-5pm ET

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in collaboration with Marcos Cereto, UFAM, Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil



Argument

Morzaniel Iramari, awarded Yanomami film director; *The Falling Sky*, a bestseller book by the Yanomami Xama; Jaider Esbell, a Makuxi worldwide celebrated painter; Djuena Tikuna, a Tikuna journalist, composer and singer; and many others as an evidence about how we are shaped by a co-existing group of cultures.

Introduction

The fourth edition of Amazonia Studio is located — one more time and with a more specific approach — in Manaus, the largest city in the region with 2.5 million people. Located at the border of *Rio Negro*, right before its junction with *Rio Solimões* to become the Amazon River, Manaus has a hydrological condition that made it a cultural hub for ancestors and outsiders, as if it was a metropolis for native peoples well before its modern cosmopolitan incarnation after the arrival of post-Colombian colonizers. Today it remains a metropolis for two worlds at same time. The city of Manaus represents an extremely rich cultural amalgamation that produces artists whose work has been more and more recognized in their own voice, bringing the possibility of a horizontal intercultural dialogue.

Cultural Calls

As a public program on affirmative policies to promote and sponsor artistic expression, in 2014, the Brazilian Government established the legal framework for partnerships between the public administration and civil society organizations, under a system of mutual cooperation, for cultural calls. This policy has proved to be quite effective to mitigate social inequality empowering and giving voice to a large portion of population recognizing their role as source in making Brazilian culture.

Cultural calls operate in Federal, State and City governments and it contemplates groups (cultural collectives) engaged in all ranges of expressions: Music, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Literature, Religious Art (that encompasses artistic manifestations that express spirituality, religiosity, transcendence, the sacred and its symbols), Afro Brazilian (in its artistic manifestation as samba, jongo, carimbó, maxixe, maculelê and maracatu, among others), Urban Culture (Hip-Hop — in its four elements DJ, MC, break and graphitte — rhyme battles, funk — in its scenic expressions dances, songs and dances, sound walls, sound systems, theater, circus and street dance, *lambe-lambe*, LGBTQIA+ pride parades, ballrooms, living statues, poetry slams etc). Indigenous culture is not clearly addressed but is being more and more formally included as a result of the collective activism.

Cultural Collectives

The cultural collective movement in Brazil started in 2005. It is very meaningful that it arouses outside from the mainstream that in Brazil is represented by Rio de Janeiro — Sao Paulo axis. As the movement was disseminated, they are now dispersed all around the country. It is remarkable the fact that the majority is composed by young people from the outskirts of big cities and their activism for access to culture and social gender equality. In addition, they value horizontality, collective decision-making; solidarity economy and collaborative production. The funds that allow the cultural collectives action comes mostly from cultural calls.

Cultural Houses, a new architectural program shaped by affirmative policies

At the point a collective is contemplated through a call, there is the need of a new architectural program: a place to work systematically in order to produce their proposal. The need is more related to the development of a project, it tends to be more a rehearsal than a performance space, more a workshop than an exhibition room, for example. Although the goal is to produce a performance or an exhibition, what is mostly missed is a place to work. These new facilities buildings are supposed to offer proper spaces for the collectives according to their specific activities, such as: visual arts, music, theater, dance, literature, filmmaking and audiovisual, photography, circus etc.

A Cultural Facilities Axis along *Sete de Setembro* Avenue in Manaus

A significant portion of the history of Manaus is written along the 2.4km of the *Sete de Setembro* Avenue. Starting on the west at *Sao Vicente Igarapé* and Island (the first settlement of the city), it goes as a straight line toward east up to the *Igarapé Educandos*. In between there are many landmarks, listed buildings and testimonies: On the west, right North from the Harbor Manaus, The Museum of the City in front of Dom Pedro II square, which is actually an archeological site as an indigenous cemetery; the indigenous hospital (since 2018 as a remarkable event in overcoming prejudice) and the Biatuwi indigenous restaurant on Bernardo Ramos Street; the Amazonia Bank by Severiano Porto; the Cathedral; the crossing with the Eduardo Ribeiro Avenue that connects with Teatro Amazonas and Congress Square on the north side and with the Harbor of Manaus at the south; the Amazonas Public Library, Heliodoro Balbi Square; Dom Pedro II School; Getulio Vargas Avenue that is actually an embanked *Igarapé*, the Polytheama movie theater, the Romana I bridge over the *Igarapé de Manaus*; the *Rio Solimões* room; the *Rio Negro* Palace; the Vila Ninita; the Romana II bridge over the *Igarapé Bittencourt*; the historical old Prison; and finally the Benjamin Constant casting iron Bridge over the joint of *Igarapés Educandos*, *Mestre Chico* and *dos Quarenta*.

Specific Sites

After, or not, choosing a form of artistic manifestation, each student will choose along the axis of the *Sete de Setembro* Avenue a specific site to place their proposal. Notice that empty plots is almost inexistent there, so it is expected projects interacting with existing buildings. As the scale of these programs are relatively small, those *casarões* — old single houses — could be suitable to be picked, combined with a small neighbor plot for some proposals.

Construction method and environmental issues

As a design studio, concepts and assumptions are open to be discussed along the semester. That said, wood construction from renewable forests could be encouraged. Some key-points about the relationship of architectural with the physical context in Amazonia formulated by Marcos Cereto could be highlighted: the ground level detached from any surface, ground, water or flooded area; a generous roof, which covers well beyond the building itself is welcome; a permanent cross ventilation and shading as louvers and mosquito screens instead of glass; adequate orientation for insolation favoring sunlight and mitigating heat; maintenance of the vegetation cover, with tree canopies serving as the first layer of shading and preserving soil permeability.

Work in partnership / design in dialogue

The studio will be in touch with people from Manaus. At a first glance, we will receive as guest lecturers, Marcos Cereto, faculty at the School of Architecture at the Federal University of Amazonas, UFAM.

A studio trip, during spring break, will further our connection with local people and institutions.

Studio Culture

From Andrew Scott: ‘a positive, active and lively culture in the studio is important and therefore regular attendance in the studio is required, and participation in the discours of the studio is essential. It is expected that all students will work and show presence in the studio during studio hours. Students must commit to the incremental development and iteration of their work on a regular basis (ie daily). The project work will call for a high level of collaborative discussion and problem solving whether working on individual projects or an a team basis.’

Methodology

As a design studio, activities are developed through dialog under two universal formats: desk crits, individually; and pinups, sharing ideas among the group. The dynamic of working is modulated in time along the semester, three reviews [preliminary, midterm, and final reviews] according to milestone events for three successive emphases of the design process: concept, development and closing. These emphases are enchainned like three acts, phases, to make us realize how time inflects changing goals and atmospheres along the design process.

The first one, concept, is dedicated to opening our field of possibilities. Arriving at a worthy decision, besides clear criteria, requires selecting the best among several possibilities, which come up during the design process as sketches. Therefore, at this first act, we should be dedicated to open more than to focus, as in a productive drift. It is in this phase that architects renew themselves by formulating hypotheses that are unusual or unexpected. The question here is 'what?' The goal is a clear concept. Although it might seem simple, this concept produces a fundamental drawing, usually a diagram or a sketch: clear enough to guide us at the beginning of the process and, at the same time, open enough to allow several possible unfoldings. For this reason, a single concept remains in our mind, with the power for multiple proposals that we see as recurring along the life of an architect. The concept aims at the density of a synthesis. This phase could be related to arch (*-arkhi*): as starting point, foundation and cause of the process.

The second act, development, corresponds to a dive into the grammar of architectural language emphasizing its constructive and aesthetic aspects. This phase is dedicated to tectonic (*-tektion*). Here, the question that we must face is 'how?' Its resolution requires that the unity, from a clear concept, must be dismantled in parts. It is an analytical search for the possible essence of each part and the judgment of its constructive meaning in relation to the whole. It is a phase of accumulation, but at same time it is crucial to clean all that is not the case anymore to be kept. As if we were shaking the drawing paper strongly enough to make fall away what is all that is no longer relevant. It is accumulation under a clear criterion of validity.

The third act, closing, requires the most rigorous filter, at same time strategic and poetic, in order to frame a clear discursive sequence that can properly present a proposal. The essence of this phase is conciseness. The question here is 'why' which, at this point, must be properly supported by the architectural proposition.

Schedule

Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 1pm to 5pm

phase	week	date	activity
Phase 1: CONCEPT (group/shared research)	1	FEB 06 FEB 08	STUDIO LOTTERY Presentation / introduction to phase 1: concept
	2	FEB 13 FEB 15	Desk crits / guest lecturer 1 (Marcos Cereto) Desk crits / PINUP
	3	FEB 20 FEB 22	Desk crits PINUP / concept presentation
phase 2A: DEVELOPMENT 1	4	FEB 27 FEB 29	Introduction to phase 2A: development / Desk crits Desk crits
	5	MAR 05 MAR 07	Desk crits PINUP / midterm preview
	6	MAR 12 MAR 14	Desk crits Desk crits
	7	MAR 19 MAR 21	Desk crits MIDTERM REVIEW
		MAR 24 - 30	SPRING BREAK / STUDIO TRIP TO MANAUS
phase 2B: DEVELOPMENT 2	8	APR 02 APR 04	Introduction to phase 2B: development 2 / Desk crits Desk crits
	9	APR 09 APR 11	Desk crits Desk crits
	10	APR 16 APR 18	Desk crits PINUP / pre closing
Phase 3: CLOSING	11	APR 23 APR 25	Introduction to Phase 3: Closing / desk crits Desk crits
	12	APR 30 MAY 02	PINUP / Final ReviewPreview Desk crits
	13	MAY 07 MAY 09	Desk crits Desk crits
	14	MAY 10 or MAY 13 or 14	FINAL REVIEW

Studio Objectives:

- Strengthen the students' ability to research, conceptualize, and developing an understanding of complex urban environments
- Strengthen the students' ability work across urban, landscape, and architectural scales
- Learn and practice presentations skills in front of clients and user groups
- Ability to represent a design concept through accurate graphic representation

Evaluation Criteria:

Students will be graded according to the following criteria:

Studio Criteria:

- Quality and depth of analysis and design research.
- Engagement in communal discussions and contribution to the studio's shared learning.
- Ability to process criticism in a productive manner and to self-evaluate.
- Clarity and organization of oral presentations.
- Completion of assignments by their deadlines.
- Individual growth over the growth of the semester.

Attendance:

Attendance for the full duration of each class is mandatory. Greater than three absences for the semester without a medical excuse supported by a doctor's note or a family emergency confirmed by a school official may result in a failing grade. If you miss six or more classes, you will be asked to drop the subject or receive a failing grade.

Grading Definition

A: Exceptionally good performance demonstrating a superior understanding of the subject matter, a foundation of extensive knowledge, and a skillful use of concepts and/or materials.

B: Good performance demonstrating capacity to use the appropriate concepts, a good understanding of the subject matter, and an ability to handle the problems and materials encountered in the subject.

C: Adequate performance demonstrating an adequate understanding of the subject matter, an ability to handle relatively simple problems, and adequate preparation for moving on to more advanced work in the field.

D: Minimally acceptable performance demonstrating at least partial familiarity with the subject matter and some capacity to deal with relatively simple problems, but also demonstrating deficiencies serious enough to make it inadvisable to proceed further in the field without additional work.

F: Failed. This grade also signifies that the student must repeat the subject to receive credit.

Final Studio Deliverables

Grades will not be posted for students to view on their grade report until their work has been archived. The projects need to be properly prepared and formatted, and delivered to the Archiving TA. Studio TA's will collect project archives from each student immediately following the review. Detailed requirements and instructions for formatting will be posted to CRON, the Department website, and sent to students at the beginning of the semester.

Student Performance Criteria (Grading)

The final grade will be based on a combination of attendance, participation, timely completion of assignments, and the quality of the work produced.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

All work submitted will fall under the jurisdiction of the MIT Policy on Academic Integrity. MIT's expectations and policies regarding academic integrity should be read carefully and adhered to diligently: <http://integrity.mit.edu>.

Disabilities

A student who has a documented disability, or any concerns which he/she thinks may affect his/her ability to perform in class are invited to consult with the professors early in the semester so that suitable arrangements may be made. For MIT's policy on accommodations for disabilities, please follow this link: <http://mit.edu/uaap/sds/students/>.

Diversity Statement

Massachusetts Institute of Technology values an inclusive environment. A sense of community in the classroom shall be fostered, while the classroom should be considered to be a place where students will be treated with respect. This class welcomes individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations – and other visible and non-visible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. If this standard is not being upheld, please feel free to speak with any instructors.

NAAB Student Performance Criteria

Required by NAAB and organized by "realms" to better understand the relationships between individual criteria. (The "NAAB Student Performance — Educational Realms & Student Performance Criteria" document is available on the Faculty Handbook website.) Include the criteria your subject addresses:

Realm A: Critical Thinking and Representation

- A1. Communication Skills: Ability to read, write, speak and listen effectively
- A2. Design Thinking Skills: Ability to raise clear and precise questions, use abstract ideas to interpret information, consider diverse points of view, reach well-reasoned conclusions, and test alternative outcomes against relevant criteria and standards.
- A3. Visual Communication Skills: Ability to use appropriate representational media, such as traditional graphic and digital technology skills, to convey essential formal elements at each stage of the programming and design process.
- A4. Technical Documentation: Ability to make technically clear drawings, write outline specifications, and prepare models illustrating and identifying the assembly of materials, systems, and components appropriate for a building design.
- A5. Investigative Skills: Ability to gather, assess, record, apply, and comparatively evaluate relevant information within architectural coursework and design processes.
- A6. Fundamental Design Skills: Ability to effectively use basic architectural and environmental principles in design.
- A7. Use of Precedents: Ability to examine and comprehend the fundamental principles present in relevant precedents and to make choices regarding the incorporation of such principles into architecture and urban design projects.
- A8. Ordering Systems Skills: Understanding of the fundamentals of both natural and formal ordering systems and the capacity of each to inform two- and three dimensional design.
- A9. Historical Traditions and Global Culture: Understanding of parallel and divergent canons and traditions of architecture, landscape and urban design including examples of indigenous, vernacular, local, regional, national settings from the Eastern, Western, Northern, and Southern hemispheres in terms of their climatic, ecological, technological, socioeconomic, public health, and cultural factors.
- A10. Cultural Diversity: Understanding of the diverse needs, values, behavioral norms, physical abilities, and social and spatial patterns that characterize different cultures and individuals and the implication of this diversity on the societal roles and responsibilities of architects.
- A11. Applied Research: Understanding the role of applied research in determining function, form, and systems and their impact on human conditions and behavior.

Realm B: Integrated Building Practices, Technical Skills and Knowledge:

- B1. Pre-Design: Ability to prepare a comprehensive program for an architectural project, such as preparing an assessment of client and user needs, an inventory of space and equipment requirements, an analysis of site conditions (including existing buildings), a review of the relevant laws and standards and assessment of their implications for the project, and a definition of site selection and design assessment criteria.
- B2. Accessibility: Ability to design sites, facilities, and systems to provide independent and integrated use by individuals with physical (including mobility), sensory, and cognitive disabilities.
- B3. Sustainability: Ability to design projects that optimize, conserve, or reuse natural and built resources, provide healthful environments for occupants/users, and reduce the environmental impacts of building construction and operations on future generations through means such as carbon-neutral design, bioclimatic design, and energy efficiency.
- B4. Site Design: Ability to respond to site characteristics such as soil, topography, vegetation, and watershed in the development of a project design.
- B5. Life Safety: Ability to apply the basic principles of life-safety systems with an emphasis on egress.
- B6. Comprehensive Design: Ability to produce a comprehensive architectural project that demonstrates each student's capacity to make design decisions across scales while integrating the following SPC:
 - A.2. Design Thinking Skills
 - A.4. Technical Documentation
 - A.5. Investigative Skills
 - A.8. Ordering Systems
 - A.9. Historical Traditions and Global Culture
 - B.2. Accessibility
 - B.3. Sustainability
 - B.4. Site Design
 - B.5. Life Safety
 - B.8. Environmental Systems
 - B.9. Structural Systems
- B7. Financial Considerations: Understanding of the fundamentals of building costs, such as acquisition costs, project financing and funding, financial feasibility, operational costs, and construction estimating with an emphasis on life-cycle cost accounting.
- B8. Environmental Systems: Understanding the principles of environmental systems' design such as embodied energy, active and passive heating and cooling, indoor air quality, solar orientation, day lighting and artificial illumination, and acoustics; including the use of appropriate performance assessment tools.

- B9. Structural Systems: Understanding of the basic principles of structural behavior in withstanding gravity and lateral forces and the evolution, range, and appropriate application of contemporary structural systems.
- B10. Building Envelope Systems: Understanding of the basic principles involved in the appropriate application of building envelope systems and associated assemblies relative to fundamental performance, aesthetics, moisture transfer, durability, and energy and material resources.
- B11. Building Service Systems: Understanding of the basic principles and appropriate application and performance of building service systems such as plumbing, electrical, vertical transportation, security, and fire protection systems.
- B12. Building Materials and Assemblies: Understanding of the basic principles utilized in the appropriate selection of construction materials, products, components, and assemblies, based on their inherent characteristics and performance, including their environmental impact and reuse.
- **Realm C: Leadership and Practice**
- C1. Collaboration: Ability to work in collaboration with others and in multidisciplinary teams to successfully complete design projects.
- C2. Human Behavior: Understanding of the relationship between human behavior, the natural environment and the design of the built environment.
- C3. Client Role in Architecture: Understanding of the responsibility of the architect to elicit, understand, and reconcile the needs of the client, owner, user groups, and the public and community domains.
- C4. Project Management: Understanding of the methods for competing for commissions, selecting consultants and assembling teams, and recommending project delivery methods.
- C5. Practice Management: Understanding of the basic principles of architectural practice management such as financial management and business planning, time management, risk management, mediation and arbitration, and recognizing trends that affect practice.
- C6. Leadership: Understanding of the techniques and skills architects use to work collaboratively in the building design and construction process and on environmental, social, and aesthetic issues in their communities.
- C7. Legal Responsibilities: Understanding of the architect's responsibility to the public and the client as determined by registration law, building codes and regulations, professional service contracts, zoning and subdivision ordinances, environmental regulation, and historic preservation and accessibility laws.
- C8. Ethics and Professional Judgment: Understanding of the ethical issues involved in the formation of professional judgment regarding social, political and cultural issues in architectural design and practice.
- C9. Community and Social Responsibility: Understanding of the architect's responsibility to work in the public interest, to respect historic resources, and to improve the quality of life for local and global neighbors.