U N I T
T I N U

UNIT SYSTEM AFRICA 2020

gsa GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

GSA METRO

GSA MAIN

2020
**COURSES, LEADERSHIP
& PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

Welcome to the **Graduate School of Architecture** and to **Unit System Africa 2020!** In this year, as we welcome in the new head of school, Mark Raymond, we are building on the strength, ambitions and transformative agenda of previous years. After a successful SACAP validation visit in April 2018, we've made some substantial changes to the curriculum, including a brand new History & Theory Programme for both M1 and M2, and a formative Design Realisation Course. In 2020 we will consolidate, build on and continue to develop **Unit System Africa.** Our operations are now housed in two locations in Johannesburg, GSA MAIN (FADA) and GSA METRO (Braamfontein). We have a vibrant line-up of Units, Core Modules and Extras this year. As ever, on Day 1, listen carefully to the presentations, keep an open mind and choose the Unit that feels right for you. Whilst we're keen to give everyone their first choice, please remember that all Units are equally good. If you don't get your first pick, give your second (or even third) choices a chance!

U N I T

2020 DESIGN MODULES

'Architecture can be analogous to a history, a fiction, and a landscape. We expect a history or a novel to be written in words, but they can also be cast in concrete or seeded in soil.'
—Jonathan Hill

Sumayya Vally
Thandi Loewenson
Tonia Murray

UNIT 12R

AN AFRICAN ALMANAC (ON TOUR)
UNIT LEADERS: Sumayya Vally and Thandi Loewenson
RESEARCH ASSISTANT: Tonia Murray

These bones will rise again

Dear reader,
thumbs pressed into these pages, eyes expectant, *cursor blinking*, what was to have been here is gone and – in the eleventh hour of a new decade - this proposition has arrived in its place.

Today we find ourselves, as Hanif Abdurraqib writes,

'…all born of the 80s.
All born of parents who watched the revolution
shove itself into too small a suit at the turn of a decade that
left them in homes with welcome mats that read:
"Your hearts are the lost luggage at the airport
of the next generation.'

2020 – two zero, two zero – brings cause to shun repetition and fiercely, tenderly, lead our hearts in a new direction.
This year, Unit 12 attends to the call for that change and we migrate and transmogrify into a new kind of creature - in Unit 12 style, we embark on a hijra (a migration) into a new kind of practice - a roving research laboratory in pursuit of an African almanac of architectural speculation.

In 2020, Unit 12 continues to travel with - and trouble the fringes of - the term hijra هِجْرَة , an Arabic word referring to 'emigrating', 'passing' or 'coming'. The term hijra also speaks to the 'gathering' one might find in preparation of the journey, at its midst, in the line of flight, and at the destination (if, indeed, such a place exists). In Unit 12 we are interested in creating cross-world spaces for dialogue between peoples, cultures, ideas and ambitions; where politics, presence and futures are discussed and declared; and through which relations are built, tested and performed.

This year, Unit 12 will be on tour - we will collaborate with the Bartlett School of Architecture, the Royal College of Art, BREAK//LINE and Fugitive Images in London; and University of Technology in Sydney.

In a series of winter studios, we will visit Benin, Accra and Senegal - regions rich in myth, magic, and age-old tradition and culture. Building on the methods of story-telling that the Unit has grown - performance, speculative fiction, theatrical tactics and choreographies - we will explore and deepen these design tools and languages for expressions of hybrid cultural identity.

Through '12 books on architecture', our Unit will become: a workshop, a publishing house, a stage, a dialogue, a script, a choreography for a set of public events, a journey (or maybe a few), a pavilion, a performance, a map, a code, a new set of conventions, an echo, and, and, and …
all to be produced with alumni of the GSA, and collaborators anew, to tell our own 'stories', to find our own appropriate tools of representation, and to speculate with ambition and aplomb on the appropriate form, structure, material and programme for a uniquely African architectural vocabulary: A Contemporary African Almanac of Architectural Speculation for our times.

At the beginning of the year, we will not be taking new students. Instead, we will take stock of the last five years of the unit, inviting those who have shared their histories with us, to be part of this next incarnation. We will rove the GSA and beyond, working with students across the school in our projects and in theirs.

Don't, for a moment, think we've been cut adrift.
Now now, these bones will rise again.

"Possibly, there was something to be said for the intellectual discipline of second-guessing what you thought was true."
—Kwame Anthony Appiah

Eric Wright
Claudia Morgado

UNIT 13

LATITUDE: UNDISCIPLINING ARCHITECTURE
UNIT LEADERS: Eric Wright & Claudia Morgado

We are interested in building. Not only the act that entails bricks and mortar, but building the vocabulary of our discipline, the spaces they occupy and the institutions which occupy them. As Architects, we make edges, we construct limits, we build walls and we conceptualise spatial ideas. We do this not only in the built fabric but in employing norms and standards of the discipline within the practice of architecture. If we understand 'practicing architecture' as the active application of our discipline, how do we expand our methods and tools in order to expand the limits of what we do? By pushing against restrictive definitions and orthodoxy, we champion and elevate the divergent and the uncertain in order to allow architecture to grow. Through the work we celebrate the ambiguities of architecture; drawing on data, history and art, forming structure, stories and material culture, working with technology, parametricism and form.

The site of practice continues to expand. As we construct alternative sites of practice, we simultaneously locate the study in unexpected sites for architecture. As climate change brings unfamiliar scenarios that defy traditional understanding, we can no longer consider it solely through the realms of science and news media. Climate change offers opportunities for imaginative inventions – a new lens through which Architects and cities are forced to reconsider established dogma. Latitude, defined as a freedom of action, choice and opinion, as well as the point on the earth's surface as measured North or South from the equator, is engaged as both an attitude and a site. Students are given the latitude to explore their practice beyond the limits of codes and conventions, while the studio looks to those lines of latitude below the equator that span Johannesburg and other Southern cities under climates and forces of change.
Architecture is most important when intersecting with other disciplines. By merging key ways of observing and communicating from different disciplines, we foster a process that travels across borders and definitions. Looking at both traditional professions and those currently emerging in the technological era, we construct transdisciplinary approaches to research and practice. We will borrow techniques and learn from digital design disciplines, to help us map current conditions, construct scenarios and communicate ideas. The Major Design Project of the year will be an '*Institute of Architecture*', focused on engaging radical change. Projects may look at real or fictional interpretations of an institutional programme, where latitude is given to exploring configurations of method, space and discipline. This institute will be developed in line with student's individual approaches to architecture, in order to critically examine what forces currently shape our profession. We are left with two main questions: *What does it mean to be an Architect?* and, *What does it mean to be an Architect, here?*

"From the beginning of civilisation until the industrial revolution a man could, as a rule, produce by hard work little more than was required for the subsistence of himself and his family, although his wife worked at least as hard and his children added their labour as soon as they were old enough to do so. The small surplus above bare necessaries was not left to those who produced it, but was appropriated by priests and warriors."
—Bertrand Russell, 1932

Thiresh Govender
Jiaxin Yan Gong

UNIT 14

ROGUE ECONOMIES: WORKING LEISURE
UNIT LEADER: Thireshen Govender
UNIT TUTOR: Jiaxin Yan Gong

'Post-traumatic' urban conditions (such as Johannesburg) are fertile ground for investigating these emergent 'rogue economies', full of visceral and raw conditions that test the traditional limits of architecture. Unit 14 is interested in revealing the inner workings and spatial effects of economic practices that are, by their very nature, clandestine and shadowy, often difficult to identify. Innovative ways of seeing and documenting are required. In Unit 14, we co-construct spatial literacy through forensic drawing methods. We use maps, catalogues and cartographies to divine and tap into the logics at play. Out of these messy, emergent configurations, uncertainties proliferate – legal, sustainable and ethical.

This year, Unit 14 seeks to investigate **Leisure**. Its politics, spatiality and the kind of society it produces. In Bertrand Russell's polemic essay – 'In Praise of Idleness', he draws a direct relationship between leisure and work – arguing the nature of our work directly determines the nature of our leisure. He further argues the powerful role leisure plays in producing quality of life, culture and power. In South Africa our work, and by default, our leisure is deeply politicised. Our dark history and extreme structural inequality strongly defines our urban lives and will continue to do so despite all promises of a better world. Through this reading, our distorted work, or lack thereof, comes to fundamentally define our society along lines of class, race and geography. We seek to understand how complicit architecture is in producing exclusive labour mechanics and exclusive leisure enclaves. Through the exhaustive working of Leisure we aim to grasp new tactics of how to intervene in finding speculative alternatives to shape our social, political and spatial arrangements through Leisure.

"Public space is the common ground where civility and our collective sense of what may be called 'publicness' are developed and expressed"
—Francis, 1989

Dr Finzi Saidi
Jabu Makhubu
Dickson Adu-Agyei

UNIT 15 (X)

REMEMBERING PUBLIC SPACE
UNIT LEADERS: Dr Finzi Saidi & Jabu Makhubu
UNIT ASSISTANT: Dickson Adu-Agyei

In 2020, Unit 15X will explore the theme of **Public Space as Territory**. Territory is a complex term: it has roots in the Latin word 'territorium', meaning 'the land around or belonging to a place' and in the Latin word 'terrere' meaning 'to frighten' or 'a place from which people are warned off'. This duality between a place of belonging and terror is suggestive of the contested nature of public space on the African continent.

Contrary to the rhetoric of openness and inclusiveness, the actual making and practice of public space often reflects a political reality deeply rooted in social biases of gender, class, and race (Fraser 1990). Public space is political and can easily be threatened by governance and privatisation. For Unit 15X, public space is always in a state of emergence, never complete, always contested and only won through concerted struggle.

In 2019, we (Unit 15 X) studied three public open spaces in Dar es Salaam to broaden our understanding of its meaning in the rapidly urbanising city. We learnt about the complexities of publicness in Tanzania, and used this as a springboard for speculative, critical and creative responses. Our work is not done, this is why we will continue the research in 2020, with the ambition to propose bold, innovative designs for future public space in African cities like Dar es Salaam. We will draw from literature, art, culture and politics to imagine alternative public space territories that are flexible, respond to the everyday and lucid. Our aim is to reintroduce the idea of territory back into the hands of the public through our design propositions. Taking on key tools found in critical visual studies, including 'art as enquiry', 'dialogic drawing', 'hypothetical design', 'mappings' and 'visual narratives' we aim to unlock creative understanding and investigation through image-making, model-making and written text.

Architecture's primary tool is space. Yet who is the space for? What purposes does it serve? Public space is ambiguous. Do you consider the space in between buildings? Or the spaces in buildings?

Gregory Katz
Nico van Loggerenberg

UNIT 17

SCALE_SHIFT
UNIT LEADER: Gregory Katz
UNIT TUTOR: Nico van Loggerenberg

Unit 17's research interrogates and broadens the range of techniques, materials and processes with which we build, by taking on the project of thinking-through-making. The contemporary philosopher Richard Sennet describes the process of making, as a kind of dance between problem-finding and problem-solving. Architecture and making are part of an iterative process of feedback loops. Whether it be a conceptual maquette or a 1:1 prototype, in the act of making we uncover the many hidden and under-exploited potentials of our materials. This explorative process opens up new possibilities for how we use materials and what we do with them. We make, we discover, we draw, and we think. We make with our hands, with tools and with machines, both analogue and digital. We recognise that the technologies we adopt are integral to design, from conceptualisation to production.

All big societal issues can be discussed through the lens of materiality and making. Making is not just about how we make and what we make with, but it can broaden and deepen our understanding of the environment, politics, ideology and context. Whether your obsession is climate crisis, global migration, gender dynamics, class or labour issues, material scarcity, polarising politics, surveillance paranoia, land ownership, throwaway culture – it's all material.
Each year Unit 17 selects a fairy tale as a catalyst for our research. As a narrative device, fairy tales allow us to temporarily suspend belief. Things that may seem impossible or untenable in the act of making we uncover the many hidden and under-exploited potentials of our materials. Over the past three years our research has looked at innovative building materials (The Fourth Little Pig), alchemy and detective-work (Rumple-stilt-skin) and reverse engineering (Hansel, Gretel and a Trail of Breadcrumbs). This year it's the idea of shifting scales and calibrations as conveyed in the Goldilocks story: too big, too small, too hot, too cold, too hard, too soft… just right. Through strategies of comparison, of incremental adjustment, of intensification and transposition we find unexpected ways forward. Unit 17's methodology is to look deeper, to assess our findings, to pull them apart and make something new.

"Power can be invisible, it can be fantastic, it can be dull and routine. It can be obvious, it can reach you by the baton of the police, it can speak the language of your thoughts and desires. It can feel like remote control, it can exhilarate like liberation, it can travel through time, and it can drown you in the present. It is dense and superficial, it can cause bodily injury, and it can harm you without seeming ever to touch you... It causes dreams to live and dreams to die. —Avery Gordon 2008, 3

Sarah de Villiers
Dr Huda Tayob

UNIT 18

INSTITUTE OF HYPERREAL PROTOTYPES
UNIT LEADERS: Sarah de Villiers & Dr Huda Tayob

Unit 18 takes on the haunting presence of power through the **Institute of Hyperreal Prototypes**. In the age of the 4th Industrial Revolution, things are moving faster than ever. Political dissent, wars and economic crashes rise and fall with the same planetary crunching of time and space, across media and image, as fast as a new hairstyle emerges from Beyonce. This post-modern, late-capitalist, post-colonial, and neo-colonial world represses and projects its ghosts and phantoms with similar intensities, if not entirely in the same forms as the older worlds did. We live with the horrors and nightmares of past-violences, struggles for liberation, dreams of freedom and hopes of future worlds yet to come. The *hyperreal* and *supernatural* is indistinguishable from the real and authentic. Artificial Intelligence has infiltrated every semblance of our life: we are all cyborgs, all part-human, all reliant on robotic and prosthetic parts.

"The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory – precession of simulacra – that engenders the territory."
— Baudrillard, 1994

The word prototype derives from the Greek πρωτότυπον prototypon, "primitive form", neutral of πρωτότυπος prototypos, "original, primitive", from πρῶτος protos, "first" and τύπος typos, "impression". Architecture has thrived on the presence of the ghostly prototype: from phantom cities to model cities, prototypes that were never built, to mass-produced, globalised models. The architectural prototype is the ideal example, perfect copy, dream that was never built, tool of the revolution yet to come, sign of a lost civilisation, simulacra and seat of power. The line between the model and the real, pharaoh and robot, authentic and copy is blurred and haunted by history.

In its first year Unit 18 will travel to Egypt as the fulcrum of a globalised ancient world for centuries. Egypt continues to haunt architectural production in the replicas of pyramids, sphinxes and obelisks – transported and rebuilt worldwide. Looking at both very old, and rapidly emerging phenomena, we will explore the spaces of the Arab Spring, Valley of the Gods, histories of paper and writing, the Rosetta Stone, Suez Canal, Silk Road and New Silk Road, Cairo and New Cairo, Library of Alexandria, Geniza documents and Fustat. Our research will focus on the haunting presence of the supernatural in its otherworldly, digital, analogue and ghostly forms. The Unit is interested in an architecture that responds to the deep-pasts of haunted histories and, importantly a cognisance of planetary futures, drawing on the ambiguous and murky line between man-made and natural. The project will be a Hyperreal Prototype: a building, typology, process, policy or set of events which institutionalise or will into being a widely-held perception and emergent spatial practice of replication or hauntings as powerful architectural forces. We will use the prototype as a research methodology: a device that is sited between the real, surreal, authentic, model and copy. We encourage time-based representational techniques, large-scale model-making and engagement with the 'super', 'hyper' and 'natural'.

"We need to know where we live in order to imagine living elsewhere. We need to imagine living elsewhere before we can live there" — Avery Gordon 2008

"The appearance of égalité is always discursively sustained by an asymmetric axis of master versus servant." -Slavoj Žižek

Tuliza Sindi
Muhammad Dawjee

UNIT 19

THE ACT OF SERVICE
UNIT LEADERS: Tuliza Sindi & Muhammad Dawjee
VISITING CRITIC: Stephen Steyn, Leopold Lambert, Natache Iilonga & Patti Anahory

The term 'service' has multiple, seemingly unrelated meanings. While state structures define it as 'a system performing or supplying a public need' (municipality, highways), some commercial industries understand it as a unit of measurement (service ratings), and others are wholly defined by it (service industry). NGOs and social enterprises identify it as their 'bottom line', and it is also used to describe facilities, ceremonies and rituals (military, funeral and church services). The word's root 'servise' (old French) means 'act of homage', which describes the public expression of faithfulness to one's leadership structure/society, i.e. a social contract or public declaration to trust and abide by their set values.

Each definition of service is rooted in a transaction, but what/who the giver is and what/who the receiver is, is not always conspicuous; even what is given and what is received can be ambiguous. These transactions might take place primarily in the public sphere but also have private meaning.

Unit 19 is interested in the Trojan-horse agreements that were made between states through service-based relationality that function as tools of permission, legitimation, structuration and absolution for power structures. Three outputs (or ordering tactics) that both architecture and service have in common are of interest to the Unit: the first output is the categories that they produce, i.e. they differentiate public from private, solid from void, native from transgressor, believer from unbeliever, etc. Secondly, they build associations. The word 'association' comes from the same Latin root for society, namely 'socius', and describes the act of producing society – through containing, separating, eliminating, and so on. Finally, they produce obligations; to permanence, to consequence, to meaning. Unit 19 aims to establish the language of society-making derived by these outputs.

The Unit's pilot Major Design Project (MDP) will focus on religion in the form of a Church Service and will interrogate Christian gnosis's role as a disarming vessel through which world orders are offered. Although immaterial in definition, i.e. it is performed into existence and disappears after the performance is concluded, it requires a vessel in which to play out. We will approach society-making as a continuous and upscaled church service (tithes as tax, churchgoers as surveillance, bible-as-law, etc.).

Students will engage sites in their current geographic location, while traversing their realities and time. The Church Square Precinct in Pretoria, South Africa will be explored across three time periods. The first is 1904, when the church from which the city plan radiated, was demolished. There, we will approach the Church as a scaffold that held its space temporarily as the city's blueprint was drawn. Once able to stand on its own, the city removed its church scaffold without erasing its foundational imprint. 2020 will be the second time period of study, and a future year of the student's choice will be the third. Projections of the future will be tested by stepping into it in the present, to negotiate its lifelines against the threats that the present poses. This will allow us to interrogate simultaneous and comparative 'presents'.

2020 CORE MODULES

Dr Huda Tayob
Dr Ruth Sacks

AHT¹ & AHT²

HISTORY & THEORY DISSERTATION
PROGRAMME CONVENER: Dr Huda Tayob

This year, History and Theory develops and builds on the success of 2019 which saw the launch a new history and theory programme at the GSA titled *Methods, Fields and Archives* designed by Dr Huda Tayob. The programme convenor is Dr Huda Tayob, and in 2020 she will be joined by Senior Tutor Dr Ruth Sacks, an award winning and widely published artist and academic. Junior Tutors will offer additional academic support. AHT at the GSA is taught through 2 courses, an introductory methods course for all M1 students (AHT¹) and an extended methodologies of architectural research course (AHT²) for all M2 students. AHT¹ course develops and hones critical reading and writing skills through a seminar series which combines short creative and critical outputs on a weekly basis. Following the seminar series, students will chose a topic of interest covered in the seminars as the basis for an individual research essay. The course introduces students to a range of material which includes conventional architectural history and theory publications, along with manifestos, fiction, film and oral histories – all central to the recording, production and dissemination of architectural knowledge. Alongside seminars, AHT¹ includes an inter-disciplinary lecture series with invited guest lecturers who will introduce their area of study, ranging from architecture, to architectural history, history, curating, art history, archaeology and anthropology among others. In Q3 the outcome is a student-led collective publication and curated exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG), with theoretical and practical support from a series of workshops and masterclasses. AHT² builds on the skills developed in AHT1; the focus here is on methodologies of architectural research, to prepare students for their individual M2 Major Design Project. History and Theory takes place over three quarters, spanning the June/ July break. A guiding emphasis is to question and interrogate how and where architectural knowledge is produced and re-produced.

Prof Christo Vosloo

PP

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
COURSE CONVENER: Prof Christo Vosloo

Architectural Professional Practice aims to provide students with the essential knowledge and skills required to implement and realise their design solutions. It acknowledges that this may happen in a conventional or developmental context. The course covers both conventional agreements and protocols and those used in developing contexts. It also acknowledges that implementation requires specific people skills and a financially viable and well-managed office to support the process.

Mark Raymond
Anna Abengowe

DR

DESIGN REALISATION PORTFOLIO
PROGRAMME LEADERS: Mark Raymond & Anna Abengowe

This module provides an opportunity for students to engage with the more detailed technical and material resolution aspects of their projects. Students are asked to reflect upon their relationship with technology, the environment and the profession. Through lectures, specialised workshops, maker seminars, outings and tutorials with a wide range of dynamic industry experts, outcomes will focus on the development of a particular aspect of projects with appropriate experimentation, research, technological and spatial resolution. In 2020, the appointment of a board of in-house and visiting critics and consultants will enable us to best develop design projects in the most appropriate way for our fast-changing context.

Mark Raymond
Anna Abengowe
Prof António Tomás
Denise Fouché
Leslé Ince-Garcia
Steffen Fischer
Adeshnee Reddy
Ursula Wessels
Andre van der Berg
Zaheer Cassim
Fred Swart

LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Mark Raymond is due to take up his role as new Director of the School, along with **Anna Abengowe**, as Deputy Director, later this year. Together, they are committed to expanding programmes and facilities, as well as opening up the School to increased international student enrolment and staff development.

Prof António Tomás joined the GSA as Associate Professor/ Programme Convener in May 2019. He will supervise students enrolled in the faculty-wide PhD in Art & Design (with a specialisation in architecture or urbanism) and will also act as critic and reviewer for the Design Units.

Denise Fouché continues in her role as Senior Operations Manager, in charge of the Operations Team and all aspects of the GSA's professional and logistical services. **Leslé Ince-Garcia**, Senior Executive Administrator and Communications Officer, continues this year, alongside **Steffen Fischer**, a 2018 graduate of the GSA and our 'go-to' Administration Officer. **Adeshnee Reddy** joined as the GSA's Academic Administration Manager in 2019, and continues to be responsible for all matters related to academic admin. Behind the scenes, **Ursula Wessels**, and **Andre van der Berg** keep the GSA alive and well and ensure we have the HR, operational and financial support we need. **Zaheer Cassim**, our resident filmmaker and videographer, will continue filming the School's main activities and lectures. Our Exhibitions Team, **Sumayya Vally**, and **Sarah de Villiers,** together with **Bie Venter** and her professional team, continue their hard work in putting on all our public and academic exhibitions and events. **Fred Swart** is in charge of our graphics and branding and, together with Sarah and Sumayya, ensures our social media coverage is up-to-date and active. We build new relationships all the time, so keep a lookout on the website for new faces as the School expands!

EXTRAS

Following the 2018 introduction of G-PLUS courses, some of which were more successful than others, we are offering three EXTRAS this year: **Architecture & Photography**, to be presented during the semester, by Tristan McLaren, in the Seminar Space at GSA Main; **Speaking & Presentation**, with Caryn Katz and Motshabi Tyelele, which aims to improve your public speaking (and review and examination) skills; and teaches you productive and energising ways to turn your nerves to your best advantage; and the **GSA Reading Group** convened by Dr Huda Tayob provides a platform for critical conversations and generative discussions on architectural knowledge production outside of the classroom.

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