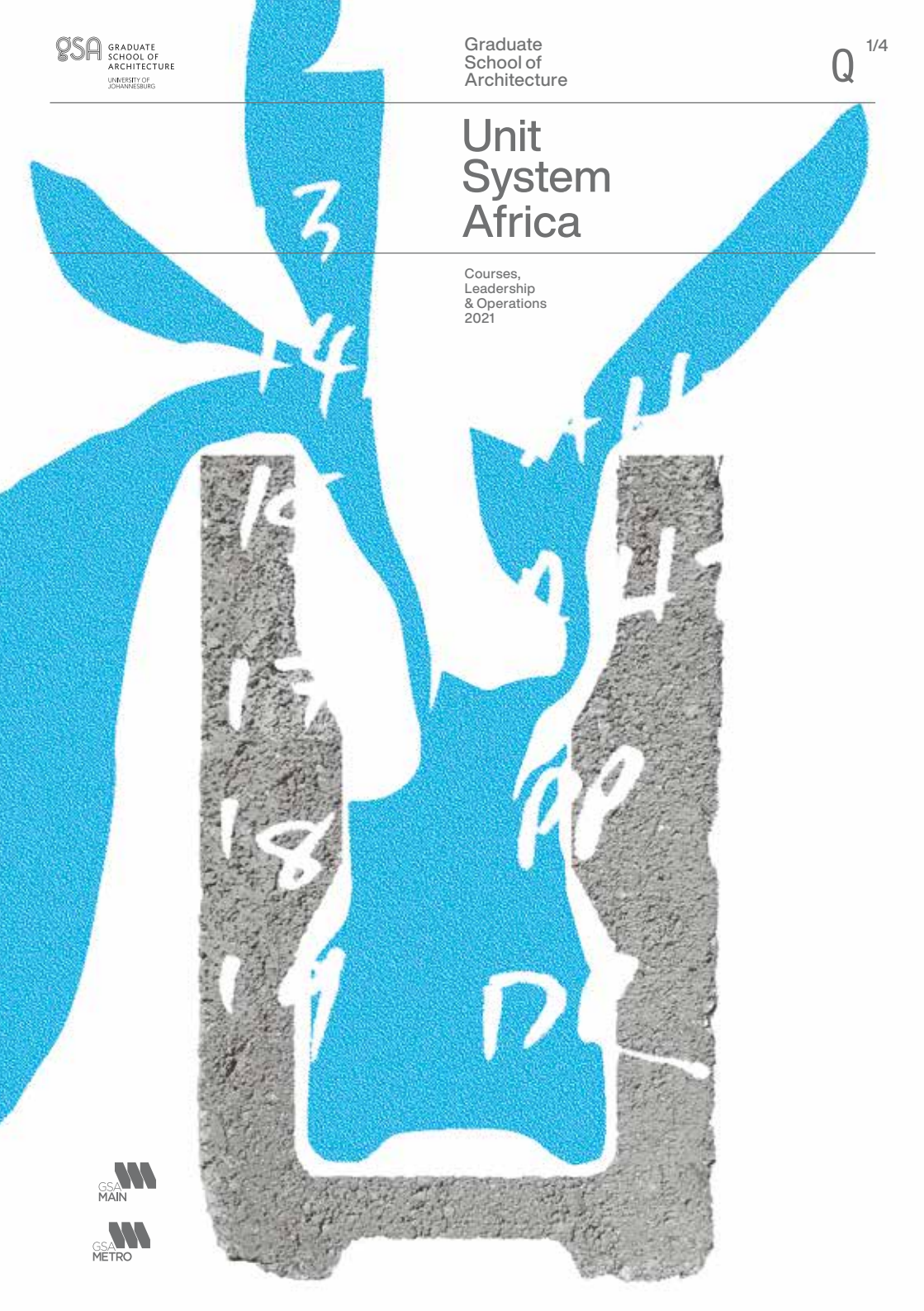


Unit System Africa

Courses, Leadership & Operations 2021



Unit System Africa

Courses,
Leadership
& Operations
2021



Welcome to the Graduate School of Architecture and to Unit System Africa 2021! This year, as we welcome the new GSA Director, Prof Mark Raymond, we look forward to building on our strengths, ambitions and commitment to a transformative agenda. We've made some changes to the curriculum, including an updated History & Theory Programme and a formative Design Realisation Strategy - 'Making'. Whilst for now teaching and learning will be online, our physical operations continue in two locations in Johannesburg, GSA MAIN (FADA) and GSA METRO (Braamfontein). We have a dynamic line-up of Units and Core Modules this year. On Day 1, listen carefully to the presentations, keep an open mind and choose the Unit that feels right for you. We will work to give everyone their first choice but please remember that all Units are equally good.

UNIT 13 Second Nature: New Shared Futures

Unit Leader: **Claudia Morgado**¹, Unit Tutor: **Mikara Naidoo**², Unit Assistant: **Azraa Gabru**³

“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.” – Arundhati Roy

The world has been weighed and measured and has been found to be heavy. Human-made material, concrete, asphalt, metal and plastic, now equals the weight of all life on Earth. The world around us is increasingly engineered; the artificial is overtaking the natural as construction grows. This confrontation brings with it curious creations and formations. A new geological substance discovered in 2012, plastiglomerate, is a composite of rock, sand, and plastic. This mash-up material is evidence of our impact on the world and a marker of the current geological epoch, the Anthropocene. This hybrid stone unites the human with; “the currents of water; with the breaking down, over millennia, of stone into sand and fossils into oil; ... with the refining of that fuel ... into plastic, into garbage” (Robertson, 2016). It is a physical representation of the connections between all matter, from the micro to macro, across time. The relevant scale now moves from the person to the planetary.

It is hard to think of architecture without thinking of growth. The discipline is continually in the process of making and remaking the material form of our world. We accept that there is always something else to build. The reality, however, is that this untethered growth is unsustainable. It is underpinned by continuous and accelerating processes of extraction and commodification of a finite (and shrinking) supply – the natural capital of the Earth. We only need to look at our current reality to see the effects of a ‘growth above all else’ approach. The Covid19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of the current capitalist paradigm, forcing us to embody a prolonged state of uncertainty and insecurity. Previous orthodoxies of typology and programme have become blurred as our homes now function as our offices, our playgrounds, our restaurants and cinemas, our churches, and our schools. Theme parks become vaccine centres. Parking lots, hospitals. The human endeavour is simultaneously expanding while it collapses and folds in on itself. Learning from where we have been and where we are heading, what could a future based on post-growth be?

Sharing is a key characteristic of a degrowth economy. The World Economic Forum predicts that by 2030 all products will have become services. “I don’t own anything. I don’t own a car. I don’t own a house. I don’t own any appliances or any clothes...” writes Danish MP Ida Auken. Additionally, in 2030 the youth population of Africa is projected to make up 42% of the global youth population. This is the space of inquiry. How can we imagine post-growth worlds, post-extractive realities, in a country and continent with the youngest populations of the world, and one whose global appeal seems to be based on cheap and abundant resource extraction? Using sharing as the primary operation of our future architecture, this year we ask students to design a Library. A library is an institution of sharing, a collective repository, and a living resource. How can we expand this typology to ask critical questions of individual and mutual responsibility, and stimulate the collective construction of both our practice and our future? We mobilise research,

invention, collaboration, and imagination to this task, where each project becomes a conglomeration of architectural materials and new materials – spaces, forms, programmes – positing new ways for us to inhabit our world together. If the world is something we make, how can we make it differently?

Claudia Morgado runs an architectural practice, BOOM Architects, in Johannesburg with partner Eric Wright. Over the last 13 years, they have worked on a wide variety of architecture, urban, and design-related projects and proposals, both locally and internationally. For 11 of these years, this has included teaching at UJ in both undergraduate and postgraduate schools of Architecture. BOOM Architects have lead UNIT13 at the GSA since 2016, using the space of the postgraduate studio to question the relevance of contemporary architectural approaches to respond to our expanding world and explore the agency of architecture to engage with this complexity.

Mikara Naidoo is an Architect and Service Designer who is deeply interested in fair and human-centred design, on every scale. Having graduated in 2013, her career has centred around urban and research work for both large and small companies. In 2020 she extended her practice into Service Design, applying similar thinking to solve ingrained complexities within the banking sector. Throughout her career, she has been interested in pushing the edges, boundaries, and biases within the practice of architecture, through continuous research, teaching, and learning.

Azraa Gabru is a candidate architect and graduated cum laude from Unit 14 in 2020. She has an interest in architectural representation, the different modes it can assume, and how the definition of it can evolve to reveal new ways of seeing, instigating new conversations between creator, subject, and viewer.



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UNIT 14 Rogue Economies - Trade Roots: HOME

Unit Co-Leaders: **Thireshen Govender**⁴ and **Jiaxin Gong**⁵, Unit Assistant: **Sarah Harding**⁶

“When you invent the ship, you also invent the shipwreck; when you invent the plane you also invent the plane crash; and when you invent electricity, you invent electrocution...Every technology carries its own negativity, which is invented at the same time as technical progress.” - Paul Virillio

Global trade and exchange has been a powerful force in shaping human societies throughout history. These include the Spice Route, Silk Road, Salt Route. They have shifted and made plastic static geographies and connected and bound otherwise hostile and incompatible partners around a shared commercial interest. The power of these exchanges and their capacity to shift, distort, merge, fracture, invent and destroy societies is of concern. These global exchanges create new languages, practices, spatialities in order to bring about rather unique rituals of exchange – sometimes symbiotic, sometimes exploitative. These exchanges of goods, services, cultures, labour and bodies are transcalar, operating at the scale of global corridors and networks, to more intimate neighbourhoods and homes. We are made more powerful, but also more vulnerable through these exchanges.

Our African cities are severely reliant and defined by these trading networks - be they large, sanctioned, small, illegal, ephemeral or permanent. Goods and services are being exchanged in the most extraordinary manner and defining our urban future in radical ways that exceed our imagination. We believe that a careful and critical gaze into these exchanges can yield untold truths and insights towards a more speculative, tangible and inventive urbanity.

The Unit investigates the origins, practices and spatial consequences of more contemporary and emergent Trade Roots affecting our cities. It does so by looking deeply and critically at the underlying orders that motivate these exchanges – be it out of necessity, power, opportunity and the social, economic and spatial consequences that result. We are interested in the exchanges at the intersection of great friction, chaos and rupture. These that are not sanctioned, clandestine, opaque and shadowy in nature. It is these almost un-welcomed, claimed and crude practices that are pushing the conceptual envelope of our existence and demonstrate new relational languages of prosperity and interdependence.

We see architecture playing a dual role, both as a discipline to observe and one to speculate on radical new possibilities. It is through the augmenting of traditional architectural devices, that we aim to draw out the extra-ordinary and build a compelling spatial lexicon spawned from emergent trading practices. We, too, lean on and exploit representational conventions of cartography, ethnography, plans, sections, axonometric, collage and animation to conjure the possibilities of what emergent trading practices can yield in making a more audacious, progressive and impactful architecture.

Trade Roots is a three-year investigation that will examine three specific conditions of a trade route in each of its three years, namely, Home, Port and Conduit. This year we will investigate ideas of Home as it relates to trade. We will examine polemically what it means to

establish, occupy and define a home along circuits of emergent trade. The MDP will focus on an informed design proposition illustrating what a contemporary home could be in the context of an emergent trading practice.

Threshen Govender is an award-winning architect, urban designer, and educator working in Johannesburg, South Africa. A keen observer of the contemporary urban world, Threshen is interested in the speculative nature of architecture and its ability to put forward necessary provocations and possibilities for post-traumatic sites and cities. Speaking back to society through a set of spatial tactics and strategies in order to make sense of, and build literacy around these troubled sites is central to his work. UrbanWorks Architecture & Urbanism, Govender's design-research studio founded in 2008, employs innovative and responsive design strategies toward radical transformation in South African cities across cultural and economic infrastructures.

Threshen also leads a design research Unit at the GSA investigating emergent spatial strategies and has recently co-authored the book *Township Economies: People, Spaces and Practices* (HSRC Press, February 2020) which collates and distills nine years of research.

Jiaxin Gong is a Unit 14 alumni (2019). She is an architect based in Johannesburg, working between design research at the GSA and practice at UrbanWorks Architecture and Urbanism. She is intrigued by the delicate underworkings of the city and believes in the importance of looking, holding and acting so as to acknowledge the unseen contributions of silent shifts in the construction of our spaces (social and political) which are often regulated by outdated legislation. Yan is preoccupied with methods and consequences of transcription, translation, transliteration as alternative means of communication.

Sarah Harding is an architect and spatial researcher. Her research focuses on (seemingly benign) everyday architectures and urban spaces, with the intention of revealing and challenging underlying political tensions that manifest in daily life. With an interest in the politics of the body and space, she sees potential for everyday spaces to be altered and reconfigured, in order to imagine alternative forms of social agency. She concerns herself with finding new ways of reading, interrogating and understanding "architecture".



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Unit 15X Toxic [urban] Landscapes

Unit Leaders: **Finzi Saidi**⁷ and **Jabu Makhubu**⁸, Unit Tutors: **Dickson Adu-Agyei**⁹ and **Mathebe Aphone**¹⁰

In 2021, Unit 15X will explore the theme of ‘toxicity’ and ‘landscape’ in the mining cities and/ landfills. Most cities and towns in South Africa have connections – historic or ongoing – with mining activities: open pit or underground cast mining of mostly, coal, gold or platinum. While mines close when mining activities cease, their toxic impact lasts for many years. Similarly, landfills are an ever-growing feature of cities symbolising the consumption economy of the urban landscape and these, too, have a long lasting toxic impact on urban environment. This toxicity is visible all around us, in the over-burdened mine-dumps, in contaminated surface and ground water and in polluted air-scapes. Socially, too, the effect can be felt in economically unsustainable townships and derelict infrastructure that remains long after the mines have closed. Mining and other similar capitalist driven industries (oil refineries, hazardous waste dumps), post-traumatic spaces can also be included in this array of toxic landscapes.

Unit 15X is not merely concerned with uncovering sites of environmental degradation, it is about exploring alternative ways to remediate the urban landscape and to create resilient public spaces. Moreover, it is about disrupting the crisis by asking what new questions may emerge by raising the term landscape [urbanism] alongside toxicity? Our interest is in this full and wide array of the term ‘toxic’. In our quest to uncover these new questions, we will borrow and build on the pedagogic work of various urban research centres across the world in order to develop an eclectic mix of methodologies in order to enable our students to develop their own voice, identity and context-appropriate methods. Unit 15X encourages several ways of working that include the production of composite drawings that mark significant milestones within the design process, namely, the base drawing, the operational drawing, and the scene. The base drawing is based on a culmination of research from which proposals are generated, the operational drawing visualises the complex relations that form the basis of the design proposal and the scene is an image that communicates the construction of the landscape as it is experienced.

Students will be encouraged to speculate on new uses for some of these toxic landscapes to contribute meaningfully to deeper understandings of the toxic ecology and to propose ecological and social solutions that ameliorate the damage. Our hope is that the work raises more questions such as how can the processes of making landscapes, through social, architectural and ecological means, be represented. How can the experience of landscapes (including toxic) be constructed and represented?

Unit15X uses conditions of working imposed by COVID 19 as a process for students to bring to the design studio conditions of toxic landscape within their towns and cities of their location. The aim is to identify common characteristics of toxic landscape and to collectively, with their peers, imagine remedial design responses that project an alternative future of the urban landscape in various contexts. These design projects go beyond biological and ecological remediation of landscapes, but imagine new relationships where people are active

participants in shaping the new environments. Our hope is that the proposals offer a multiplicity of unexpected possibilities.

Unit Leader **Dr Finzi Saidi** now heads up the Department of Architecture at UJ, having fulfilled the role of Acting Head of School at the GSA during 2020. He holds a PhD in Architecture from the University of Pretoria, Master of Landscape Design from the Newcastle-Upon-Tyne University and a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the Copperbelt University in Zambia. Dr Saidi has taught at four universities – Copperbelt University, University of Pretoria, University of Cape Town and UJ. His research interests are in developing responsive curriculum and pedagogy in architecture and landscape architecture. This research has underpinned his PhD studies titled “Developing A Curriculum Model For Architectural Education In A Culturally Changing South Africa”. This study has subsequently framed his research – he now calls himself #CurriculumMustFall practitioner.

Dickson Adu-Agyei is a Ghanaian born architect, educator and founder of Adu Agyei Architecture Studio, a Johannesburg based Architecture and Design Firm. He is an assistant lecturer at GSA and holds a Master’s Degree in Architecture Technology (Professional) and Bachelor’s Degree in Architecture Technology (Applied Design) from the UJ. His research interest is in collaborative design in the Art, Design and Architecture Disciplines. Developing a multidisciplinary design team that uses multiple mediums (Visualisation, Film, Art, Architectural Drawings and writings) to address social economic and cultural issues in the African context is his primary interest, which has led to his participation in design collaborations locally and internationally.

Jabu Makhubu is a lecturer and researcher in the department of architecture (DoA) and the GSA at UJ. His research interests are in architectural pedagogy, transformation, African cities, politics of (public) space, urban resilience, and sustainability. Prior to his academic practice between 2007-2013, Jabu worked in several architectural practices in Johannesburg. He is passionate about cities in Africa, and in 2016, as a response to the call to decolonised education in South Africa, he established a lecture series in the department of architecture at UJ that focuses on narratives on Cities in Africa through the voices of young graduates. Jabu has travelled and presented papers in Belgium, Netherlands, Italy, Uganda and recently to the US as part of the International Visitor Leadership Program organised by the US State department on the themes of Resilient Cities- Urban Sustainability.

Mathebe Aphone is a former academic in the Department of Architecture at University of Pretoria. Her research interrogates identity of township buildings and infrastructure in Pretoria’s oldest black settlement.



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UNIT 17 To Be Orna-ment To Be

Unit Leader: **Gregory Katz**¹¹, Unit Tutor: **Jaco Jonker**¹², Unit Assistant: **Senzo Mamba**¹³

“Details, when they are successful, are not mere decoration. They do not distract or entertain. They lead to an understanding of the whole of which they are an inherent part.” - Peter Zumthor

We love to decorate stuff. Since time immemorial, the spaces we inhabit, the tools we use, our clothes and bodies, have been the recipients of our desire to add colour, pattern, sculpture, and detail. Beyond their capacity for visual delight, adornments are an expression. They are encoded with symbolism and meaning. Their function is to communicate and educate, to identify and locate, to remind and organise, to guide our attention, and to individualise. Ornament creates experience.

Ornament unites us, but it is just as often socially divisive. Attitudes toward Ornament have changed considerably across the ages. In the Arts and particularly in Architecture there have been polarising schools of thought on the subject. The dedication to adornment in Gothic cathedrals is mystifying, some of their most intricate carvings are high up and out of view. One wonders why the stone masons might have bothered. And then we have Iconoclasts, who in their abhorrence of certain kinds of Ornament literally take up arms to erase it. The early Modernists' rejection of Ornament was absolute, and at times vitriolic, even portraying it as morally degenerate. Today, more than ever, we live in a world saturated by diverse visual and auditory patterns. The term “hyper-decoration” has been coined to describe the barrage of visual stimulus that threatens to overwhelm us. [Vaalsiner] Mass-produced and cheapened ornament has become ubiquitous, mundane, trivialised, and divorced from its original meaning. Historically, Ornament is something applied to the surface, for the Modernists it was the surface. Cultural, technological, and economic forces continue to shape our attitudes toward Ornament. Given the dire resource pressures we now face, Ornament may be perceived as especially superfluous and wasteful.

Ornament in Architecture is, however, not superfluous. It is a fundamental tool through which buildings convey meaning and foster identity. In this way, buildings reinforce the balance of individuality and diversity that underpins the social contract. This is an important function of Architecture. Buildings should promote identity: that is, the individuality of each citizen.

Architects of late rely increasingly on digital rendering software not only as a platform for representation but as a design tool. Simulations sell projects. There's an efficiency in using one tool for both design development and representation. The process tends to foreground surface treatments and lighting, such that tectonic relationships and details are rarely considered up front in the design process. Thinking about the construction details has been relegated to an afterthought. Design details are about relationships. The relationship of the parts to the whole. Details are a manifestation of generality in design. Whereas Ornament is an expression of particularity. When Ornament resides in Detail, these potential contradictions are reconciled to the benefit of the whole. The amalgamation of the functional and the expressive in the

design process elevates the tectonic. Construction becomes poetry.

What are the keys to designing in this way? Ideally a circular process is established where the details influence the overall design conception. For this reason, U17 now proposes a radical reversal: We begin with the details!

Unit 17 is known as the “Maker Unit”. But our research is not limited to craft or technology. Materials and processes are never neutral. They are bound up in cultural attitudes, they are shaped by politics and economics, they reflect histories and values. Materials and methods are a lens through which we, as designers, can reflect on and interact with broader societal issues. Unit 17 operates at the intersection of making, engineering, design, and fantasy. Architects have a unique capacity for imagining realities beyond the constraints of the present and Unit 17 encourages a speculative approach and an openness to possibility.

When making at built scale one learns in a visceral way about surface, volume, and mass. At 1:1 assemblies and materials offer up their properties and details. Texture, porosity, pattern, density, ductility, reflectivity, transparency, thermal transmission, odour, acoustic qualities and much more become apparent. Makers often use prototypes, materials testing, mock-ups, models, and drawings at scales close to reality to better assess, interrogate, and develop their ideas. This is Detail Design and U17 is going full scale! Only the brave shall pass! Come join us.

Unit 17 has been run by **Gregory Katz** for the past four years. The spirit of conscious experimentation with making is ideologically baked into his own architectural practice. Each project is an opportunity to test, to prototype, to observe, to think, to learn, and to make. A restlessness, a questioning of the status quo, and a desire to keep the learning pathways open. A dedication to the idea that while there is tremendous value and wisdom in our tectonic traditions, nothing is fixed or immutable, that ideas and values change and that technologies emerge via trial and error. The experiments and observations from each project, the questions that are asked and the discoveries that are made feed into a system of working that includes the work of the Unit. This year Gregory is joined by **Jaco Jonker** who apart from having a keen mind, brings a sophisticated knowledge of advanced technologies such as generative design and manufacturing software, AI-assisted design algorithms, VR and AR. Our Unit Assistant is Unit 17 Alumnus and cum laude graduate **Senzo Mamba**. Senzo's deepest desire is in material alchemy and advanced construction technology.



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13

UNIT 18 Hyperreal Prototypes: Supersurfaces

Unit Leaders: **Naadira Patel**¹⁴ and **Sarah de Villiers**¹⁵, Unit Assistant **Nothando Lunga**¹⁶
Key Collaborators: **Dr Huda Tayob**¹⁷ and **Cities Under Surveillance, UTS**

“The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation” – Donna Haraway

Unit 18 is interested in contemporary structures of power which interject or envelop existing contexts, rupturing continuity with haunting otherwheres, and otherwhens: White paint over messages of the revolution in Tahrir Square, Cairo; an Italian-themed gambling complex in Johannesburg; a rapper’s masterplan for a net-zero city in Senegal. We take on the landscape of the hyperreal – spaces which are augmented, and quite strange – cities, buildings and programmes which combine the original and localised; with the non-specific, global and replicated, often emboldened through machines and technology. Last year, our work aimed to reveal and recognise that which has been violently erased or altered in particular spatial contexts by these interjections. This year, Unit 18 shifts to study and reimagine the interjections themselves – which are often insurgent, alien, plastic, cyborg and new. We ask: where do these come from, what are they made of, and why are they here?

To begin to answer this, we claim surface as site. All of architecture is surface. Surfaces can hold that which is inside or outside a body, they can be a visual response to a gaze, they can define, order and identify use. Yet, surfaces can be spectral: they can be permeable, malleable and plastic, they can reveal or conceal. Surfaces can tell the truth, or lie. A surface is the dream of what the space wants to be, the fantasy or spectre of how the space, building or city wishes itself to be seen. The facade and screen become important architectural agents to understand and reimagine the creation of the virtual and the ‘dream’. The line between the model and the real, the authentic and copy is blurred and haunted. Here, the ‘morality’ of architectural surfacing is at stake, and we use this to interrogate and counter remnant legacies of coloniality and biased forces of power which have and continue to disenfranchise local communities, economic processes and cultures through the controls of access and use, and erasure of ‘inconvenient’ bodies through surfacing.

Supersurfaces will delve into research that tackles the way surfaces, skins and facades mediate, translate and transmute information, data, and history. We will attend a ghost-tour through a spectral, virtual gaze, of six haunted ‘surfacing’ on our continent - that include Durban’s ‘Golden Mile’ - a landscape re-veneered to copy Miami’s beach front; as well as sites in Senegal, Johannesburg and the Eastern Cape in South Africa.

Supersurfaces draws inspiration from and links to the cinematic works and writings of Harun Farocki in questioning the role of the surface in framing our engagement with history and power; the works of writers such as Judith Butler, Sarah Ahmed, Arjun Appadurai, Donna Haraway, Avery Gordon, Walter Benjamin, Hito Steyerl, Ruha Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Michael Sorkin and the work of Forensic Architecture among others. Supersurfaces, as a broader research project, aims

to engage with theoretical thinking about space; public, private, and political, through architecture and contemporary design.

Methodologically, we use the architectural prototype – a device which is sited between the real and the hyperreal – for research and design. 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. Here, we use it to simultaneously deconstruct (to lay bare the sometimes grotesque inner and underworkings of architecture), while also to speculate and test new arrangements. We prototype using several iterations of representation to show a passage of both evolution through time, and what is remnant of the original, toward the augmented and altered. This is promoted through bolstering of skills in the making of static or moving drawing, model and set-making, virtual reality and film.

We invite critical, experimental thinkers to contribute to pursue final propositions of new, rigorously considered, supersurfaces with their adjoining spaces or programmes, which communicate alternate positions towards the framing of power in overlapping and interjecting contemporary architectures or spatial systems, to be collated into a physically and virtually large-scale, projected Supersurface installation at its fruition.

Naadira Patel is an artist, designer and a researcher. She currently leads *studiostudioworkwork*, a multidisciplinary art, research and design studio covering a range of publishing related practices with a focus on issues of social justice, new surveillance landscapes, and questions surrounding productivity and work. She has an MA in Cultural Analysis (2015) from the University of Amsterdam's School for Cultural Analysis, and a BA Fine Arts (2010) from the Wits School of Arts. Her research areas cover issues arising from new forms of technology that shape, manipulate or augment our experiences of and our existence within the world; emerging forms of surveillance capitalism; and questions on the new world of work, with a focus on ideas of precarious labour, productivity and exhaustion.

Sarah de Villiers currently leads *Space Kiosk* – a multidisciplinary architecture, research and design studio which is fascinated with spatial apparitions of social, political and economic transaction. She formerly had contributed for six years as a founder, director and architect at *Counterspace*, an all-women architecture, installation and research firm in Johannesburg. She holds a Masters in Architecture from the University of the Witwatersrand. Preceding co-leading in *GSA Unit 18*, Sarah has also taught in *GSA Unit 14*'s *Rogue Economies* for three years. Sarah's interests lie in spatio-economic practices, as well as elements which involve 'otherness' – particularly practices which embed themselves as unexpected systems, defying logics of surrounding scale, time, accessibilities, identity or broader policy environments.



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UNIT 19 The Act of Service: The Myth of Violence

Unit Leader: **Tuliza Sindi**¹⁸, Unit Tutor: **Muhammad Dawjee**¹⁹, Unit Assistant: **Lynette Boshoff**²⁰

*“...For you, the ocean is for surf boards, boats and tans
And all the cool stuff you do under there in your bathing suits and goggles
But we, we have come to be baptised here
We have come to stir the other world here
We have come to cleanse ourselves here
We have come to connect our living to the dead here
Our respect for water is what you have termed fear
The audacity to trade and murder us over water
Then mock us for being scared of it...”- Koleka Putuma, Excerpt from *Water*.*

Unit 19 approaches state service infrastructures – such as religion, the military, and the law – as frameworks of societal myths, and through it, investigates what mythological role(s) their architectural translations fill. The word ‘myth’ comes from the Greek *mythos*, meaning (in part) “rumour”, that US philosopher Matthew Dentith (2010:4) describes as a social grooming activity that works together with existing social beliefs to produce alternative versions powerful enough to override those existing beliefs (Dentith 2010:4).

The Unit approaches architecture as a rhetoric device that induces compliance to the often-unintelligible societal systems of beliefs that constitute social production. Through storytelling, image-making and performance, the Unit investigates architecture’s semiotic and semantic constructions, toward proposing and (re)constructing myths that incite new spatial fantasies and futures.

In 2021, students will investigate the intersection between architecture and violence through the lens of military service. Militaries are inextricably linked with the formation of states and predate the creation of modern states. They fulfil opposing functions in different regions of the world. While Europe’s military forces are outward-facing and function to expand their territorial access, Africa’s inward-facing military forces were co-opted into colonial armed forces to preserve African states in their image, and to control their own people through a system that French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1992:4) calls a “society of control” (Deleuze 1992:4).

For this year’s MDP, students will propose a ‘Defence Base’ as a heterotopia. In definition, a defence base is a shelter for military equipment and personnel that facilitates training, innovation, and operations. In modern practice, however, it often masquerades as a supply centre for peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. French philosopher Michel Foucault (1967:31) describes ‘heterotopias’ as outside of all places, even if located within a real site, and calls them “counter-sites” (Foucault 1967:3) whose corresponding real sites are “simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault 1967:3).

As site exploration for 2021, students will go in search of shores of past, present and/or future military significance in Cape Town – South Africa’s colonial gateway. They will investigate the country’s spatial language of violence – and its socio-political and economic

dependencies on it – that includes its inland spatial systems of control expressed as apartheid townships. Designed as labour camps, townships' spatial articulations include militarised control elements, and infrastructural buffers as its bounds. The country's majority of citizens remain in those townships today, which sustains their historically restricted use of state resources in favour of hoarding and extraction by the ruling classes and the colonies; making their continued presence perversely bound to our shores. Housing spectres, superstitions, and myths, the Cape shores function as graveyards, yacht routes, nature reserves, and important routes for free shipping. They are portals steeped in economic pillage and betrayal, for classist respite and ancestral mourning. As mythologists, dreamers and performers, students will investigate the myths upon which their shore sites are spatially articulated, to reimagine those foundations and their corresponding spatial futures.

Tuliza Sindi is a lecturer in architecture and Unit 19 leader at the GSA. She is also the founder of South African-based experimental firm BRNWSH. Her firm – along with the Unit – approaches state service infrastructures – such as religion, the military, and the law – as frameworks of societal myths, and through it, investigates what mythological role(s) their architectural translations fill. She approaches architecture as a rhetorical device that induces compliance to the often-unintelligible societal systems of beliefs that constitute social production. Through storytelling, image-making and performance, and borrowing from theoretical, methodological, and visual languages from various disciplines, she investigates architecture's semiotic and semantic constructions, toward proposing and (re)constructing myths that incite new spatial fantasies and futures.

Muhammad Dawjee is an architect, educator and musician whose interest lies at the intersection of creative practice and cultural production. He works primarily through improvised music as a research praxis and is a resident performer with the ethno-jazz trio Kinsmen, the pan-Afrikan septet iPhupho L'ka Biko and the experimental performance-art ensemble The Brother Moves On. He has taught undergraduate courses in design and architectural history at the University of Pretoria and has been involved as a Unit tutor (Unit 13 and Unit 19) and an external critic at the GSA since 2018.

Lynette Boshoff is a young architect who is interested in deconstructing entrenched social myths of propriety. Her research seeks productive ways of making sense of our shared social reality. She completed her Masters in Architecture at the GSA in 2020. Her current research focuses on the logics of politeness and etiquette, specific to the Afrikaans woman in a post-Apartheid South African context.



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2021 CORE MODULES

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY AND THEORY

History & Theory Programme Convener: **Dr Ruth Sacks** ²¹

This year, Architectural History and Theory (AHT) develops and builds on the successes of 2020, which saw the launch and development of an innovative history and theory program by Dr Huda Tayob. In 2021 Dr Ruth Sacks, an award winning academic and visual artist, will be the Acting History and Theory Convener. Titled Methods, Fields and Place, AHT focusses on giving students critical academic tools for their individual practice-based research projects. The program is separated into 2 courses for the first (AHT1) and second (AHT2) years of the degree. For AHT1, the first semester will be taught by Prof António Tomás and the second by Dr Ruth Sacks. An extended methodologies of architectural research course (AHT2) will be offered to all Master's students.

AHT1 develops critical reading and writing skills through an introduction to cultural theory. The first semester course introduces the scope of architecture from an interdisciplinary perspective, straddling the gap between architecture and other disciplines and practices, such as Anthropology, Archeology and Art. It asks the question: is it possible to compare and gain insight from the processes that go beyond building a house to building an argument? Throughout the lecture series, students will be required to develop a research review for a final submission at the end of the semester, with regular written updates for assessment during the course.

Semester 2 builds on the skills developed in the first to prepare students for their individual Master's Major Design Projects (MDP). The focus will be on the context of architectural research, presented through a program of seminars and guest lectures. The course will be centered on the idea of situated practices, looking at the material and politico-cultural environments architecture occupies, from a Global South perspective. Students will be introduced to a range of research materials, including architectural publications, fiction, film and artworks. Assignments will consist of writing a research proposal and a micro-essay.

AHT2 is structured to assist students with completing their MDPs, in conversation with their units. Its purpose is to provide additional support through addressing the necessary practical skills needed to master academic writing (such as proposals, abstracts, referencing, reading and writing techniques, and structuring an argument). The first semester will consist of an optional seminar program whose theoretical content will be aligned with supporting the history and theory component of the units. The second semester will focus on the MDPs by offering group and one-on-one tutorials.



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PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Course Convener: **Prof Christo Vosloo**²²

Architectural Professional Practice aims to provide students with the essential knowledge and skills required to implement and realise their design strategies. 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 skills and a financially viable and well-managed office to support the process.



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MAKING

Course Convener: **Prof Mark Raymond** ²³

This year students will be asked to focus on the manifestation of their design work – the ‘making’ of architecture. Previously the detailed technical and material resolution of projects was referenced as ‘Design Realisation’ but this year we will shift this conceptualisation from the idea of realisation to the more broadly understood ‘act’ of making. We will explore how this new framing might support the GSA’s transformative research project. Through Unit work and supported by lectures from invited architectural and creative practitioners, students will be encouraged to explore how architectural ideas are manifested. This might be in the form of a strategy, the preparation of detailed consideration of material resolution or through the production of material evidence. The act of making is posited as a critical and instructive mode of continuing research, informing the process of design and the experience of architecture both conceptually as well materially. Guided by the thematic interests of their Units, students will be required to develop an appreciation of how their projects are made through experimentation, research and strategic, technological and spatial representation. In 2021, visiting critics and consultants will assist us in investigating and researching the myriad possibilities of how architecture might be made.



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DIALOGUES

Sumayya Vally ²⁴

Whilst Unit 12 takes a well-earned rest from the rigours of GSA teaching this year, U12 leader Sumayya Vally will be busying herself with various international commitments but will be supporting the GSA on an initiative to develop a programme of design-driven, disciplinary and cross-disciplinary dialogues in the form of interviews and virtual engagements. In speculating on this initiative, Sumayya imagines these as virtual hijras: *'Hijras, purdahs, ghosts, voices and other apparitions'. In Arabic, referring to 'emigrating', 'passing' or 'coming', the term hijra also speaks to the 'gathering' one might find too: in preparation, in the line of flight and at the destination (if, indeed, such a place exists), forming a series of virtual conventions that brings together different geographies, disciplines, languages and cultures. In multiple uses of the term – the convention as an event, a place or space for a meeting of various and different people, entities and ideas; and in the convention as a new set of standards or languages for a particular field.*

The programme will expand this idea of 'gathering', held within hijra, to explore the notion and histories of 'conventions' on the continent. That is, the convention as a gathering for dialogue between peoples, cultures, ideas and ambitions; coming from various places; in which politics, presence and futures are discussed and declared, and through which relations are built, tested and performed – a powerful and potent space, holding the present, legacies of the past and multiple, parallel and possible futures in play.



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LEADERSHIP & OPERATIONS

Prof Mark Raymond²³ takes up his role as new Director of the School and will be joined by **Anna Abengowe**²⁴, as Deputy Director, later in the year. Together, they are committed to building upon the project of the GSA and expanding programmes and facilities, as well as opening up the GSA to increased international engagement, student enrolment and staff development. **Prof António Tomás**²⁵ will continue to develop the Post-Professional Programme, now in its second year. The programme is open to candidates seeking to undertake advanced architectural (or related disciplines) design, theory and practice study. Prof Tomás also acts as a critic and reviewer for the Design Units.

Denise Fouché²⁷ continues in her role as Senior Operations Manager, in charge of the Operations Team and all aspects of the GSA's logistical services. **Leslé Ince-Garcia**²⁸, Senior Executive Administrator Communications Officer, continues this year, alongside **Gabisile Mahlangu**²⁹, who recently joined the GSA as our 'go-to' Administration Officer. **Adeshnee Reddy**³⁰ continues as Academic Administration Manager, responsible for all matters related to academic admin. This year we welcome **Boitumelo Mazibuko**³¹, who takes up the newly created role of Exhibitions and Social Media Manager, responsible for putting on all our public and academic exhibitions and events. **Fred Swart**³² is in charge of our graphics and branding. **Zaheer Cassim**³³, our resident filmmaker and videographer, will continue filming the School's main activities and lectures. Behind the scenes, **Ursula Wessels**, and **André van der Berg** keep the GSA alive and well and ensure we have the HR, operational and financial support we need. We build new relationships all the time, so keep a lookout on the website for new faces as the School expands!



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Unit System Africa

Courses,
Leadership
& Operations
2021

