



ABOVE: Lecturer Meg Studer

A CONVERSATION WITH MEG STUDER

In fall 2015, we welcomed Lecturer Meg Studer as a new junior, full-time faculty member in the Masters of Landscape Architecture Program. She holds a BS in Architecture from Washington University, an MA in Architectural Theory from the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, an MA in Art History from Columbia University and an MLA from the University of Pennsylvania. Third-year MLA student Mike Madden recently spoke with Prof. Studer to discuss her background, research, and approach to Landscape Architecture.

MM: *Let's begin by speaking about how you got into landscape architecture and how your background informs your current work.*

MS: I began studying architecture and anthropology in a traditional Bauhaus program, grounded in social use and tectonics. In studios, I gravitated toward urban planning projects. But, anthropology drew me back toward the body – spatial and corporeal – as constructed in social and architectural

encounters. My first Masters looked at picturesque perception in the 18th century – in landscape and natural history – comparing structures of dynamic judgment across, what we'd call today, art, science, and the nascent social sciences. As much as I enjoyed visual studies and material culture, I realized I preferred thinking visually, capturing social context and construction in graphics. I ended up in landscape, because it

choreographs similar feedbacks – cultural, material, and ecological. It taps larger networks and dynamics through focused forms. Although material culture still heavily informs my research, my interests in intensive systems and anonymous histories are pretty common in design today.

MM: *What is the focus of your current research?*

MS: I am working on a geographic and economic atlas of Henry David Thoreau's conservation classic, *Walden* (1854); it's a mix of interactive databases and articles. A lot of readers are familiar with Thoreau's caustic tone toward improvement, his dismissal of Arthur Young and Adam Smith. But rarely do they consider the global trade, industrial alliances, and colonial politics nested in Thoreau's seemingly local encounters. More than just geography, I find that digging into liberalism, early positivism, 19th-century statistics, and biopolitical models is an interesting way to reflect on big-data – its hype, ambitions, and anxieties. Plus, I like the coding and the creative anachronism: digitizing early state statistics makes visible patterns that they didn't have the clerks to chart at the time.

MM: *In light of your interest in digitization, what technological developments of the past five years have impacted your work and the field at large?*

MS: Since 2013, I have taught parametric courses and data-visualization workshops as well as having attended a number of digital humanities colloquia. Data-visualization, as a field, has matured over that time; it's moved from custom-built interfaces to easy, accessible tools

for the masses. I have conflicted feelings about this shift. On the one hand, I can teach my students adobe programs, in a session, for developing long-form, digital narratives. As design is so much about articulating complex socio-ecological interactions, these easy interfaces are great for helping students to argue visually, with different scales of information and hierarchical relationships. While teaching code is harder, there is value in creating your own tools and understanding computational logic – the relational and ontological assumption of parameters, how process loops work and their analogs in scenario thinking. Broadly, I'm interested to see how we might bridge between the wider access of argumentative tools and the projective or scenario thinking of computational tools (in the strictly coded sense).

MM: *What at the SSA has excited you?*

MS: Being at the Spitzer School is great because the classes are small; you can watch students evolve. Students are very aware of the social justice mission of the school and creatively integrate that into their projects. Moreover, being in New York generates a number of amazing opportunities. When students go off to do internships in the summer they can work for parks, planning, and city departments, they can explore the non-profit sector, including museum and outreach organizations, and a vast range of firms. The idea of what landscape can be is richer in New York, at the nexus of a much larger metropolitan formation.

STUDENT NEWS

DEAN'S MESSAGE:

As the Acting Dean of the Spitzer School of Architecture, I am pleased to introduce the first digital version of the Spitzer School's newsletter.

I would like to take this opportunity to note the retirement of Associate Profs. **Judy Connorton** and **Lee Weintraub**. As Chief of the Architecture Library, Judy played a central role in our school for 24 years. Lee was a graduate of our school and a committed teacher and leader in our MLA program since 1988. We wish them the best of luck in all their future endeavors.

We also welcome a number of new faces at the SSA. In addition to our new faculty member in the MLA Program, **Meg Studer**, we welcome **Loralyn Cropper** as our Director of Advancement and Assistant Professor **Nilda Sanchez-Rodriguez** as the Chief of the Architecture Library.

Lastly, our students are embarking on an important effort to improve the lives of school children in Kenya. Students in an Advanced Option Studio, led by Prof. **Robin Osler**, and in partnership with the Africa Foundation, are working on an expansion and master plan of the existing primary school in the Masai Mara in Kenya. I hope you share my passion for helping our students as well as those in Kenya. Please [click here](#) to learn more about the project, donate what you can, and share it with as many people as you can.

Gordon Gebert

Acting Dean
Spitzer School of Architecture

AWARDS

4th-year BArch student **Sarwat Yunus** was awarded the AIA NY Chapter's annual Heritage Ball Scholarship. In October, Acting Dean **Gordon Gebert** was in attendance along side Sarwat at the Heritage Ball at Chelesea Piers/Pier Sixty.

3rd-year MLA students **Damon Arrington, James Carroll, Jonathan Crocca, Ivy Harrison, and Andrew Joseph** have received a **2015 National Honor Award** from the American Society of Landscape Architects for the student-edited journal, *PLOT*.

TRAVELS AND TRIPS

In October, graduate students in Prof. **Catherine Seavitt Nordenson's** Landscape Restoration seminar took the A train to Broad Channel, Queens, in the middle of Jamaica Bay, to board the research vessel the Jamaica Bay Guardian with the president of the northeast chapter of the American Littoral Society **Don Riepe**. Riepe, a former park ranger at the bay's Wildlife Refuge, took the students on a three-hour tour of the bay in his motorboat.

In January, **Sarah Bloomquist, Benjamin Leer** (MS Urban Sustainability 2016) and **Carry Filles-Aime** (Colin Powell School 2015) visited the remote site of Professor **Hillary Brown's** spring 2015 class project, Salt Works and Eco-Industrial Park for Anse-Rouge, Haiti, proposed for the Haitian Ministry of Commerce and Industry. They also met with the Ministry Chief of Staff in Port-au-Prince.

In January, students in the MUD program travelled to London. They visited the **Forensic Architecture** group at Goldsmith's University and met with **Eyal Weizman** and his team. Students also participated



ABOVE: Students in Prof. Robin Osler's Advanced Option Studio working on the design of a school in Kenya

in a three-day workshop with students from a Westminster University MArch studio taught by architects **Nasser Golzari** and **Yara Sharif** looking at Gaza as a site. The workshop began with a presentation and conversation with **Salem Al Qudwa**, an architect, professor of architecture at the Islamic University of Gaza, and a PhD candidate at Oxford Brookes University in the UK.

1st-year MArch students in Profs. **Bradley Horn** and **Elisabetta Terragni's** studios visited CUNY's Brooklyn College in March where they met with faculty and administrators, and surveyed a site that is being considered for a new art gallery, the subject of the studio.



ABOVE: Prof. Hilary Brown and students in Haiti

MILESTONES

Projects from Prof. **June Williamson's** Fall 2014 4th-year studio are on view at the exhibition **Affordable Housing in New York: The People, Places, and Politics That Transformed a City at CUNY's Hunter East Harlem Gallery** on view through 15 May.

Students in Prof. **June Williamson's** Advanced Studio "ParkingPLUS" presented their design ideas for infilling surface parking lots at LIRR stations in Nassau County to members of the Long Island division of the APA in December.

The MLA program sponsored a series of lunchtime lectures in October 2015, featuring the environmental and performance artists **Agnes Denes, Pat Oleszko, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles**. An exhibit of four years of *PLOT* publications was featured at the SSA's East Gallery in Fall 2015.

The CCNY's ASLA Chapter held a kickoff event in September featuring Pecha Kucha presentations moderated by alumna **Sara Malmkvist-Stantec** (MLA 2014) and, in March, held an MLA portfolio review session

FACULTY NEWS

We welcome Visiting Professors **Carla Juaçaba** of **Carla Juaçaba Arquiteta** as well as **Holger Schulze-Ehring** of **Simpson, Gumpertz & Heger** for the spring 2016 semester.

Professor **Hillary Brown** was a distinguished speaker at the UBC, Vancouver, in September. In the spring she was the keynote speaker at the “Wallace Stegner Symposium” in Salt Lake City and spoke at three Urban Land Institute events in Portland, Seattle, and Olympia, WA. In April, she participated in the LaFargeHolcim Foundation’s International Forum on Sustainable Infrastructure in Detroit.

Professor **Lance Jay Brown**, FAIA, DPACSA, was appointed a 2015-2018 member of the Board of the Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation and served on its 2015 Host Committee. UN-Habitat has selected him as one of 200 Policy Panel experts participating in the New Urban Agenda. In October, he gave the keynote address at CannonDesign’s Environmental



ABOVE: Prof. Alberto Foyo’s Reef restaurant in Kiev, Ukraine. SOURCE: Alberto Foyo

Awareness Week and, following, he moderated a panel at World Habitat Day at the UN. As the founding co-chair of the AIANY Design for Risk and Reconstruction Committee, he opened and moderated the closing panel of the “Extreme Heat: Hot Cities” symposium at the Center for Architecture in December and, this March, he moderated the panel “VisioNYC

2080: Is New York City Prepared for Serious Sea Level Rise.” As Faculty Councilor he represented the SSA at the ACSA Conference in Seattle and introduced the 2016 Topaz Medallion recipient, his former student, **Douglas Kelbaugh**.

Adjunct Assistant Professor **Timothy Collins** participated in a panel discussion at the MoMA to inaugurate the book *Open*

City: Existential Urbanity by **Diane Lewis**, which includes a project from when he was a student at the Cooper Union.

Adjunct Professor **Alberto Foyo** has recently completed a new interior design project for Reef restaurant in the city of Kiev in the Ukraine. In recent months, he has lectured on his new master plan for Gaza in London, Madrid, Barcelona, and Auckland. An installation of the project will be exhibited this summer in La Caja Negra gallery in Madrid. The project will also be included in the upcoming Venice Biennale, as will his master plan in the Amazon for the Munduruku people. He has been commissioned to design, in collaboration with the Finnish architect **Juhani Pallasmaa**, a community center in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Professor **Marta Gutman**’s book, *A City for Children*, has been awarded the 2015 Kenneth Jackson Award from the Urban History Association for the best North American book published in 2014. She has been elected to the board of directors of the Society for American City and Regional Planning History. She participated in the panel, “**Is This for Everyone? Design**

BELOW: AC Höcek Architecture’s design for a culinary center and restaurant in Brownsville
SOURCE: AC Höcek Architecture.



AC Höcek Architecture LLC

and the Common Good,” at the MoMA; she delivered the keynote address at “Suffragette City: Gender, Politics, and the Built Environment: A Symposium in Art & Architectural History” at the College of Charleston, South Carolina; and she presented at the Rewald Seminar at the PhD Program in Art History at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Adjunct Professor **Ali Höcek** will present at the International Psychohistorical Association’s conference in June at NYU. His firm AC Höcek Architecture is currently designing a culinary center and restaurant in Brownsville. The center, headed by restaurateur **Claus Meyer**, will provide culinary education and healthy, affordable food in an area of food poverty.

Adjunct Lecturer **Quilian Riano** is an Urban Design Fellow at the Design Trust for

Public Space for the El-Space Pilot project located beneath the Gowanus Expressway in Sunset Park. He is also participating in the “Living Histories Workshops: Imaging the Future of National Parks” sponsored by the National Parks Service and the Van Alen Institute. In April, he spoke at the student-led event, “Design Justice: Race, Space, and Design,” at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design.

Associate Professor **Catherine Seavitt Nordenson** has presented lectures on her work on coastal resiliency for Jamaica Bay at the US Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters in Washington, DC; Urbana-Champaign, IL; Amherst MA; Eugene, OR; and Baton Rouge, LA. Her work was exhibited at the AIA Center for Architecture, New York, as part of the exhibition *Designing for Climate Change*. She has recently

published essays in *Social Research: An International Quarterly*; **Forty-Five: A Journal of Outside Research**; and **Values in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design Finding Center in Theory and Practice**. She co-edited, with Associate Professor **Denise Hoffman Brandt**, the book **Waterproofing New York**.

Adjunct Associate Professor **Barbara Wilks** of **W Architecture and Landscape Architecture** has won two awards, both for Plaza 33, a temporary pop-up park in NYC. The first is an NY AIA Honor Award for Urban Design, and the second is an NY ASLA Design Award.

Associate Professor **June Williamson**’s team project, **“Great Falls, Great Food, Great Stories,”** for Paterson, NJ, won the National Parks Now competition, co-sponsored by

Van Alen and the National Parks Service, to design the 21st-century national park experience.

I-Beam Design, Adjunct Associate Professor **Suzan Wines**’s firm, is working on their largest project to date: A 250,000 sq. ft. Headquarters for Stellae International Inc. USA, a logistics and distribution company. I-Beam’s winning proposal for Lt. Petrosino Park was published in **CODAmagazine: Suspended in Space II**. A number of restaurants designed **Suzan** and her father **James Wines** are scheduled to open this spring in South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina.



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