Drink. The Geographies of Agrarian Capital, 1914-2014

_A Traveling Course in the Rural Adriatic Sea and California’s AVAs_

Instructor

Christian Stayner

_Assistant Professor, 2014–_

Travel Dates

_Note: Schedule revised to allow students to attend Rob|Arch 2014 Workshop: Robotic Fabrication in Architecture, Art and Design at Taubman College_

May 6-9: Michigan (Visits to agricultural areas along Lake Michigan Shore)

[May 13-18: No course: _Rob|Arch 2014 Conference at TCAUP_]

May 18 or 19: Flight, Detroit to Rome – Course resumes in Rome, Italy

Travel in Rome, Puglia and the Salento, ITALY

Ferry to Albania and Croatia

Site Visits and Case Studies in the Berat, Korçë, and Durrës regions, ALBANIA

Travel to Primorska, CROATIA for Site Visit; Trip to Korčula Island

June 7 or 8 (tentative): Flight, Zagreb to San Francisco – Course continues in California

Travel through Northern, Central, and Southern California agricultural zones

June 30: Course ends in Los Angeles
Course Summary

“Only 2% of the earth’s surface is occupied by cities,” Koolhaas told an audience at the RIBA in November [2012], as he received the Charles Jencks award for Theory in Practice. “As architects, if we don’t look at the countryside, we are ignoring 98% of the world – which seems a bit irresponsible.”

As reported in The Guardian (2012)

This traveling course to agricultural regions of the Adriatic Sea (Italy, Croatia and Albania) and rural California employs the topics of viticulture and enology to address two issues central to contemporary disciplinary discussions: 1 The lingering question of architecture’s engagement with geography, especially marginalized rural and productive landscapes and 2 Architecture’s increasing engagement with non-visual forms of spatial information, such as temperature, terrior, radiation, taste and smell. The reading requirement for this course is significant and will include selections from Philippe Rahm, Sylvia Lavin, Neil Brenner, Amy Trubek, and Charles L. Sullivan (see below). The course builds on the Fall 2013 Experimental Seminar, Eat. Architectures of Food, 1914-2014, in which students are developing a 400-page encyclopedia of architecture’s relationship to the production, distribution, preparation, and disposal of food. This publication also includes interviews and other field data developed through a series of workshops introducing architecture students to site-based research methodologies (such as photographic documentation, audio recordings, cartography, and sensory ethnography).

This course will begin in Central Michigan, with an intensive workshop and visit to the local productive landscape of the Lake Michigan Shore Viticultural Area (known as an “AVA”). We will then travel to Europe, spending most of the time Puglia, the part of southern Italy that forms the “heel” of the Italian peninsula. Here we will develop a series of case studies analyzing the spatial dynamics of traditional agricultural production, spaces of labor, and local ecologies in relation to global concerns such as distribution, the legal boundaries of import-export, and conservation zones. From the Italian port city of Bari we will take a ferry to Albania and Croatia, continuing this research in two very different cultural contexts. By effectively encircling the Adriatic Sea we will encounter a consistency of ecological biome but vastly different agricultural traditions and spatial responses. From Europe we will travel to California for the second half of the course. By examining AVAs and natural preserves in Northern California, industrial-scale production the booming agricultural Central Valley, and small-scale viticulture operations in Southern California, we will develop a cross-cultural atlas placing the parallel biomes of the Adriatic and California in conversation.
Issue 1 Agriculture and Geography as Architecture and Planning Questions

Through an analysis of the geographic conditions of viticulture, both contemporary and historical, we will examine the role of architecture and urban planning on the question of the rural. We will examine issues such as commodity production, questions of labor, and the negotiation between traditional practices and global forces. Additionally, the course will address topics such as resource use, geographic distribution and networks, and the geographic question of terrior—all of which are topics central to the operations of these landscapes. During our travels, we will look at the emerging trend in which owners and managers of vineyards are seeking World Heritage Status for an enormous functioning landscape. The implications for preservation and conservation are immense. In California, we will look at a parallel example of the Point Reyes National Seashore, an ecological preserve in which an agricultural landscape continues to operate. Viticulture provides a lens for considering architecture’s geographic scale through an examination of experiments in architectural, geographic, and spatial history as put forward by theorists such as David Gissen, Trevor Paglen, and the Aggregate Architectural History Collaborative.

Issue 2 Architecture and Non-Visual Forms of Spatial Knowledge

In response to the proliferation of easy visual imagery in contemporary architecture (from computer visualizations to real-time dissemination through blogs, Twitter, and Instagram), the discipline is increasingly turning to the long-maligned question of the non-visual. How does architecture engage, much less document, the ephemeral and the fleeting? How can architecture engage with the non-visual and non-allographic—but nonetheless spatial—potentials of olfaction, taste (among them aesthetic, gustatory, and physiological, as defined by philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer, “Perspectives on Taste,” in Korsmeyer, ed., The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink), atmospheres, humidity and radiation, and pleasure (among others). This topic is central to enology, developed around a sophisticated language to describe non-visual phenomena. Combined with our research of the geographic as a new potential for architectural practice, we will develop experimental mappings and new methods for visually representing non-visual information such as smell, taste, and origin.

Output Eat & Drink, Gastronomic Constructions, 1914-2014

Students will contribute research and design proposals to a forthcoming book, tentatively titled Eat and Drink, Gastronomic Constructions, 1914–2014.
Sample Course Readings

*Note: There will be a significant reading load for this course. Readers will be distributed prior to the beginning of the course.*


Proposed Guests (Initial List – to be confirmed/adjusted closer to course start)

Ivette Perfecto, Professor of Agriculture, SNRE, UM, MICHIGAN

David Gissen, California College of the Arts, San Francisco, CALIFORNIA

Kermit Lynch, Wine Importer, Berkeley, CALIFORNIA

Movimento Turismo del Vino Puglia, ITALY

Silvestro Silvestori, Wine Production Expert, ITALY

Fabrizia Lanza, Art Historian, ITALY

Nicola Twilley, Edible Geography, NEW YORK

Nathan Sayre, Chair of Geography and Agriculture Expert, UC Berkeley, CALIFORNIA

Dr. Linda F. Bisson, Department of Viticulture and Enology, UC Davis, CALIFORNIA

Christopher Campbell, Esq., Agriculture Lawyer, Fresno, CALIFORNIA

Konrad Miller, Chemical Engineer, Gallo Winery, CALIFORNIA

Jennifer Dunlop Fletcher, Assistant Curator of Architecture and Design, San Francisco MoMA, CALIFORNIA

Brian E. Gray, Professor of Water Rights Law, UC Hastings, San Francisco, CALIFORNIA

Anticipated Cost to Students

$3,500-3,800 per student (not including food)

*Pending grants and sufficient enrollment may reduce this cost.*