There are, in principle, at least three fundamental dimensions to any MLA design thesis:

First, what is the subject matter or thematic topic that motivates your research in the thesis?

Second, what is the landscape design project that you could devise to best illuminate that topic or theme?

Third, what critical position or perennial question in landscape will be advanced through this work?
Introduction to MLA Design Thesis

Overview

This manual serves as a guide for students who are undertaking a design thesis in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. The thesis provides an opportunity for candidates in the Master in Landscape Architecture program to pursue graduate-level research and explore a topic of their interest through design research. The design thesis builds upon the core curriculum in landscape architecture at the GSD. This manual provides a summary of key design thesis requirements and offers an overview of the design thesis process, from selection of a suitable topic to submission of the final thesis.

For landscape architecture students interested in completing a thesis, the planning process begins in their penultimate year of the MLA Program. The thesis project itself begins in earnest in their final year, through thesis prep and design thesis courses, offered in Fall and Spring terms, respectively. In the Spring term of their penultimate year of study (fourth semester for MLA I students, second semester for MLA I AP and MLA II students), candidates must formally state their intention to complete thesis. Interested candidates are also encouraged to begin consideration of a thesis topic and potential thesis advisor at this time. In the Fall term of their final year of study candidates enroll in ADV 9341 and prepare a design thesis proposal and secure a design thesis advisor. In the Spring term of their final year of study candidates enroll in ADV 9342 Design Thesis and complete, present, and submit their design thesis. Each of these stages of work, and their associated requirements, are described in greater detail below.
a. Declaring Intention to Pursue MLA Design Thesis

While the design thesis is pursued during the final year of the MLA at the GSD, planning for design thesis begins in the Spring term of the penultimate year of study. Students considering pursuing an MLA design thesis are invited to attend midterm and final reviews of MLA thesis candidates in the year ahead of them, as well as meetings with potential faculty advisors and the MLA design thesis coordinator, in the Spring term prior to their final year of study. These reviews, discussions, and informational sessions survey the potentials and limits of the MLA design thesis process, as well as the support offered by the department for the design thesis.

Students who opt to pursue a design thesis are required to declare their intentions in the Spring term of their penultimate year, on or before a date published by the department office, typically before the end of May. This deadline, as well as the MLA thesis declaration form, and other relevant information can be found on the GSD website under resources at: https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/resources/mla-thesis-guidelines/

MLA candidates electing to pursue design thesis are not required to declare a thesis topic or faculty advisor until the Fall term of their final year of study; however, they are encouraged to begin reaching out to faculty before the Fall during the Spring term of their penultimate year and over the summer months. In selecting topics for their design thesis, MLA candidates are encouraged to build upon their previous academic and professional formation, and to use the summer months to articulate their individual interests, appetites, and attitudes. These are most effectively articulated in dialogue with a faculty advisor and the design thesis coordinator.

MLA candidates in the professional degree program (MLA I and MLA I AP) who pursue a design thesis are required to complete an option studio offered by the Department of Landscape Architecture in the Fall term of their final year of study. Candidates in the post-professional degree program (MLA II) are not subject to this requirement.
a. Thesis Prep Overview

During the Fall term of their final year of study, students begin a formal process of thesis preparation. Over the semester, students complete the department’s four-unit thesis preparation lecture/workshop course, ADV 9341: Preparation of Design Thesis Proposal for Master in Landscape Architecture. This research lecture/workshop course is intended for Master in Landscape Architecture candidates electing to pursue a design thesis in their final year of study. The course defines the parameters of a design thesis and assists candidates in the development of their own individual design thesis proposals. The course addresses a series of broad themes essential to developing a cogent thesis proposal including design research, projective practices, discursive agendas, site contexts, programmatic drivers, and representational strategies. The lecture/workshop course examines the role of precedent projects and design methods in thesis, as well as the status of design and design research as forms of knowledge production in the research university.
b. Thesis Prep Course Structure (ADV 9341)

i. Course Structure
The lecture/workshop course meets weekly for the purpose of reviewing assignments and proposals in progress. In addition to the regularly scheduled workshop presentations and formal reviews, individual meetings with faculty advisors are an important aspect of the course. Students will be invited to identify and recruit a faculty thesis advisor during the first half of the term. By the end of the term candidates will have prepared a proposal for their individual design thesis through word and image.

FORMAT
A series of thematic lectures on a range of topics is offered as videos on demand. The hour-and-a-half weekly group sessions are devoted to individual student presentations in a workshop format.

VIDEO SEMINARS ON DEMAND
The series of video seminars presents a range of perennial topics associated with the design thesis. These include presentation of key conceptual and disciplinary forms of knowledge, precedent projects, and selected aspects of recent MLA Design Theses. These conclude with a presentation and discussion of the next weekly thematic assignment and the format and schedule for upcoming review sessions.

WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS
The class meets as a group on a weekly basis. During this session, a small set of individual students are invited to make brief seminar presentations (5-10 mins) on the status of their design thesis proposal to date. These sessions enable the broader group discussion and feedback to each of the individual thesis proposals prior to the midterm review.
TEACHING ASSISTANTS
The thesis prep course engages one or more TAs to contribute to a number of aspects of course preparation, organization, and facilitation. TAs will assist the faculty in preparing course materials, syllabi, readings, presentations, and other materials in support of course conception and delivery. TAs will manage the course CANVAS site, course folders, and related contents on the GSD network. TAs will communicate with students, faculty, and invited guest critics; organize midterm and final review sessions. TAs will collect weekly assignments as well as review presentations and misc. deliverables from the students and will be available to support students and faculty in the organization of their materials for presentation.

The first half of the semester introduces the thesis as a conceptual frame and identifies key elements common to all design theses. Students are required to begin drafting a thesis statement, develop a specific topic for their proposed thesis, and simultaneously explore and collect a body of precedent research to help define the form and type of project they intend to produce. A thorough examination of precedent material and simultaneous iterative development of the thesis statement is emphasized, with the intention of allowing students to develop broad ideas and concept of what a thesis is, as well as specific direction for their individual work. The analysis of precedent work is an iterative process that leads to the definition of the thesis.

iii. Precedents
Students are required to review and critically evaluate relevant literature and projects that will inform their anticipated thesis project. By considering a range of project types and format, students will amass a body of work to draw from when defining the parameters to which their design thesis will respond. This body of work should define a genre within which the individual thesis project will fall, in this way placing the student’s work within a larger professional and academic
context at an early stage. The selected precedents should demonstrate stylistic qualities, conceptual approaches, and presentation structure intended for the final thesis. This literature and project review serves as a resource to students moving forward through the thesis prep and into the final thesis semester. Students are expected to explain their choice of selected precedents, and communicate their analysis and critique of each project to the seminar class. Precedents are critically evaluated through verbal explanation and analytical drawings exploring a range of key elements including design, representation, and site.

iv. Advisor
Students are required to confirm a GSD faculty member as thesis advisor before the end of August in the Fall semester. Typically, students will list their preferred advisors in order of preference. These are then validated with the advisors, in concert with their individual teaching roles and responsibilities. While the student-advisor choices are confirmed in August, often these discussions begin much sooner. Students are encouraged to choose an advisor they might work well with.

v. Site + Subject
The thesis topic is addressed following the precedent studies. Students iteratively refine both their thesis statements and precedent analyses during this section of the seminar. Students begin to articulate an idea of site through both the precedent analysis and thesis topic development. At this point in the thesis prep semester, the site may remain an abstract concept, defining parameters that will inform the selection of a specific project site, or if the site is fundamental the topic of the thesis, students may identify a more specific, physical site for their work. After identifying a site, students continue through the remainder of the semester to hone in on specific site selection and study through mapping and analytical drawing. This section of the seminar concludes with the Mid-Term Review, where students present the conceptual framework of the design thesis, through their precedent analysis,
thesis statement, preliminary site definition, and beginnings of a design project.

vi. Articulation of Design Thesis Project
The second half of the semester focuses on developing the design project, and producing an outline of the work to be completed in the final thesis semester for the final design project. At this stage, the regular thesis prep lecture/workshop sessions are followed by individual meetings with the TA(s) rather than the meetings of small groups. By the end of thesis prep, students are required to have defined the design project of their thesis, as well as the methods of research, production, and representation they intend to use to complete the final project. This work provides the basic structural framework for the design project, preparing students to continue directly into the final design project in the following semester.

vii. Design Project
Students are required to launch directly from feedback of the Mid-Term Review toward a more refined definition of a design project for the design thesis. The design project will be refined through iteration over the course of thesis prep, but the idea of site, program, and scope must all be addressed.

viii. Representation
Students are required to review and discuss the main representational techniques they intend to use in their final thesis project. Representation methods must be analyzed to explain their effectiveness and appropriateness to each proposed thesis. A number of lecture/workshop sessions will be dedicated to exploring various representational techniques through tutorial and workshop.

ix. Methodology
Students are required to review and discuss their intended methodology(ies) for research and design work. The selected methodology should reflect the anticipated topic and program of the final thesis. Defining the method simplifies the design process for students later by defining the manner of making fundamental decisions and moving forward...
throughout the final thesis project. This basic decision-making is fundamental to successful progress of the final thesis.

x. Schedule and Deliverables
Throughout the second half of thesis prep, students are required to refine a list of media and deliverables to be produced for the final thesis project, as well as a draft schedule for the completion of thesis. The media and deliverables should reflect, and be heavily informed by the precedents selected by each student. The draft schedule will inform the progression of work for the final semester.
C. Reviews

i. Thesis Prep Reviews
For the Review, students present their work and receive feedback from a panel including their thesis advisor, other MLA thesis advisors, thesis prep TAs, and additional reviewers from within the Landscape Architecture Department faculty. Students are expected to have articulated a thesis statement, and present precedent projects, site description and the beginnings of a design proposal at the Mid-Term Review.

MID TERM REVIEWS
Monday 08 November
12:00-18:00 EST

Each student is invited to prepare and present a 7.5-minute presentation of their in-progress design thesis proposal to date. Feedback is provided by faculty, teaching assistants, and the class as a whole.

FINAL THESIS PREP REVIEWS
Monday 13 December
12:00-18:00 EST

Each student is invited to prepare and present a 7.5-minute presentation of their in-progress design thesis proposal to date. Feedback is provided by faculty, teaching assistants, and invited thesis advisors.
ii. December Presentation of Design Thesis Proposals
For the Final Presentation of Design Proposals in December, students will present work to a panel of advisors mostly from within the faculty of the GSD. Students are expected to present their work from the semester, encompassing precedents, topic, method, site, and focusing on the proposed design project.

iii. Advisor-Advisee Meetings
A regular meeting schedule is encouraged between advisor and thesis candidate. Once advisors are selected, students are encouraged to meet regularly throughout the semester with their advisor and develop a working relationship and progress the thesis.

To track progress, students should stay in close contact with their thesis advisor over the thesis preparation term. Regular meeting and feedback will also allow the student to iteratively develop a final proposal that meets the requirements and expectations of the department. This semester is the time for students to work closely with advisors, whether through office hour appointments or other meetings, and develop the core ideas underpinning a student’s thesis.
The thesis prep course is evaluated by the faculty member leading the course on a standard GSD pass/fail system, with no more than the top 25% of the class being considered for marks of HIGH PASS/DISTINCTION. Course requirements include class discussion and workshop presentations (25%); weekly class assignments (50%); and final review (25%). All weekly assignments and review presentations should be uploaded as PDF to canvas site by 11:59pm (midnight) the day prior to the due date/review. Work submitted weekly will be evaluated by four equally weighted terms of evaluation:

1. Representation: demonstrating a clear argument visually as well as verbally;
2. Research: consistent inquiry and engagement with the topic throughout the term;
3. Proposition: the intellectual and cultural arguments supporting your project; and
4. Proposal: potential of the project as both an intervention in the world and a contribution to the field.
During the Spring term of their final year of study, MLA candidates pursuing thesis complete the final design thesis for defense in May. Following the successful completion of Thesis Prep (ADV 9341) in the Fall term, each student articulates a specific topic for their design thesis as advised by a member of GSD faculty. Students must be enrolled in the 8-unit course, Independent Thesis in Satisfaction of the Degree Master in Landscape Architecture (ADV 9342).

Throughout the thesis process, student work closely with their faculty advisors, participate in organized peer and external reviews, and demonstrate significant self-directed independent work on the development and completion of a final design thesis project. By the end of the Spring term, students will have developed rigorous design proposals and be able to present and defend these proposals both verbally and through a range of representational media including but not limited to drawings, models, and diagrams. Completion of the final design thesis project requires public presentation of the project and its successful defense, as well as the submission of the thesis book, documenting the final thesis for Harvard University’s own record. This document will be made available to future years of thesis students in the Frances Loeb Library.

The evaluation of the design thesis is the primary responsibility of the faculty advisor, in consultation with the thesis coordinator, other thesis advisors, and the program director.
b. Independent Thesis in satisfaction of the Degree in Landscape Architecture (ADV 9342)

Structure of Semester
Building upon the research and work done in the Fall term, students focus in their final term on the articulation of a design research project to satisfy the thesis framework set out by the department, and outlined by the individual student during Thesis Prep. Design thesis work is advised by a member of GSD faculty, yet is largely pursued independently. Students meet regularly with their advisors on a mutually agreed schedule, and participate in reviews of their work arranged throughout the term by the thesis coordinator.
c. Reviews

PRELIMINARY DESIGN THESIS REVIEWS
Monday 24 January
10:00-18:00 EST
[Individual presentations of up to 15 mins MAX]

ONE-QUARTER CHECK-IN MEETING
Monday 28 February
13:00-14:00 EST

MID-TERM DESIGN THESIS REVIEWS
Monday 21 March
08:30-18:00 EDT
[Individual presentations of up to 20 mins MAX]

THREE-QUARTER CHECK-IN MEETING
Monday 18 April
13:00-14:00 EDT

FINAL DESIGN THESIS REVIEWS
09-13 May SCHEDULES and VENUES TBC
09:00-18:00 EDT
[Individual presentations of up to 25 mins MAX]
A thesis grading meeting will be held shortly after the date of final thesis reviews and prior to the Department degree vote and awards discussion. Each candidate having successfully defended their thesis project shall be presented at this thesis grading meeting by their advisor for discussion and comparative evaluation with the cohort. Successful candidates completing their design thesis will be presumed to have earned a grade of PASS. This meeting will convene faculty advisors, thesis director, program director, and department chair in a discussion and evaluation of the thesis projects successfully defended. This group will vote to nominate approximately 25% of the students for the mark of HIGH PASS or DISTINCTION (following the grading system outlined in the GSD’s Guidelines for Instruction). The group will similarly vote to nominate a single student or project from amongst this group to be recognized with the MLA Thesis Prize. The recommendation for THESIS PRIZE will be presented at the Department degree vote and awards meeting for ratification by the voting faculty of the Department. These grades will be informed by:

1. Representation: demonstrating a clear argument graphically as well as visually;
2. Engagement: showing consistent inquiry throughout the semester;
3. Proposal: the potential of the design research project; and
4. Excellence: quality of overall design research project.

Submission requirements
PDFs of all final boards and presentation materials are required for final submission. A final digital PDF thesis book is required for completion of the final design thesis. In addition to the design project, this book should document the precedent and site research begun in the fall semester, as well as clearly outline the thesis site and subject.

A signed statement of permission allowing Harvard University’s libraries to archive the thesis work is
required at the time of submission of the thesis book for grading, and should also be included as a page in the printed hard copy. In general, this statement is included on the thesis internal cover page. Please see attached addenda with specific instructions from the library on PDF creation guidelines and cover page with permission statement template. Supplemental materials such as video or additional photos are permitted, and should be submitted according to library guidelines included in the appendices of this document.
“The natural sciences are concerned with how things are . . . . Design, on the other hand, is concerned with how things ought to be.”

—Herbert Simon

The Sciences of the Artificial, 1969
ADV 9341
Preparation of MLA Design Thesis

FALL 2021
Seok Min Yeo, TA
Charles Waldheim

VIDEO LECTURES via CANVAS

VIDEO CAMEO PRESENTATIONS
by MLA ALUMNI, GSD FACULTY, PEER REVIEWERS
via CANVAS

WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS via ZOOM
MONDAYS 16:00-18:00 EDT/EST
VIDEO LECTURES via CANVAS

This series of ten video lectures presents a range of perennial topics associated with the design thesis. These sessions include presentation of key conceptual and disciplinary forms of knowledge, precedent projects, and selected aspects of recent MLA Design Theses. These sessions conclude with a presentation and discussion of the next weekly thematic assignment and the format and schedule for upcoming review sessions.

VIDEO CAMEO PRESENTATIONS
by MLA ALUMNI, GSD FACULTY, PEER REVIEWERS via CANVAS

In this series of video cameo presentations, select MLA alumni, GSD faculty, and external peer reviewers share their perspectives and experience on the topic of the design thesis in general, and the MLA design thesis in particular.

WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS
MONDAYS 16:00-18:00 EDT/EST

During this session, a small set of individual students are invited to make brief workshop presentations (5-7 mins.) on the status of their design thesis proposal to date. These sessions enable the broader group discussion and feedback to each of the individual thesis proposals prior to the midterm review.
A thesis is a thematic proposition offered for discussion and debate. A thesis is typically developed through a piece of original research specific to an academic discipline, often at the culmination of a program of study. Theses are produced through various methods as appropriate to the disciplinary commitments of academic fields across the research university. Design theses are pursued through the methods and media specific to the design disciplines, through design research. Design research most often refers to the process and products of knowledge produced through design, as distinct from knowledge produced by research methods associated with the humanities or the sciences. Design research can be characterized by its means and methods, as well as by its sites and subjects for work, as well as the dissemination and reception of its propositions.

Design research is propositional and projective rather than simply empirical or descriptive. It is most often predicated on intervention in the world rather than simply describing the world as found. Design research is characterized by its capacity to propose alternative and better futures while simultaneously producing disciplinary knowledge in design. Thesis projects pursued through design research exhibit a dual valance, standing as a form of disciplinary knowledge and as propositions for intervention in the world. Candidates in the Master in Landscape Architecture Program elect to pursue independent design theses at the culmination of their graduate work. The projects presented here represent original thematic propositions put forward through design research to stimulate discussion and debate. In this sense, they are as much about design discourse and disciplinary formation as they are propositions for how things ought to be.
This research seminar is intended for Master in Landscape Architecture candidates electing to pursue a design thesis in their final year of study. The course defines the parameters of a design thesis and assists candidates in the development of their own individual design thesis proposals. The course addresses a series of broad themes essential to developing a cogent thesis proposal including design research, projective practices, discursive agendas, site contexts, programmatic drivers, and representational strategies. The seminar examines the role of precedent projects and design methods in thesis, as well as the status of design and design research as forms of knowledge production in the research university.

The seminar meets weekly for four and a half hours, with 90-minute lecture sessions with the entire class between a pair of 90-minute workshop sections for small individual feedback. In addition to the regularly scheduled class lectures, tutorial workshop sections, and formal reviews, individual meetings with faculty advisors are an important aspect of the course. Students will be invited to identify and secure a GSD faculty thesis advisor during the first half of the term. By the end of the term candidates will have prepared a proposal for their individual design thesis through word and image.
## Fall 2021 Schedule

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<td>Design Thesis</td>
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<td>Design Contexts</td>
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<td>Modes + Measures</td>
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13 SEPTEMBER

**Design Thesis**
+ Course Introduction 16:00-18:00 ET LIVE via ZOOM:
  https://harvard.zoom.us/j/93833854431?pwd=akFWU2oySmsxVkSzQ3pzZ2pNODBOZz09

  > introduction to the design thesis
  > three modes of MLA design thesis
  > elements, aspects, advisors, etc.
  > criteria for evaluation of quality
  > overview and structure of course

  **response #1 (DUE: Sunday 19 September by 11:59pm):**
  > three questions (revised + refined)
  > What do you want to do?
  > How do you want to do it?
  > How would you like it to be received?
  > self-assessment (revised + refined)

Readings:


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  Structures of Creativity:
  Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt, Oblique Strategies (Eno & Schmidt, 1975).

  --

  Recent Thesis Projects:
  Emily Hicks and Melody Stein, “Wild Rice Waters” (advised by Rosetta Elkin, 2019).

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  Advice on Thesis:
  GSD Faculty: Craig Douglas, GSD; Jon Lott, GSD
  MLA Thesis Alumni: Alexandra Mei, MLA ’17; Seok Min Yeo, MLA ’18
  External Peer Reviewers: Julia Czerniak, Syracuse; Jason Young, Tennessee
ALEXANDER AGNEW (MLA '17)
“GOD FROM THE ISLAND: Realizing Mythological Space”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2017
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ALEXANDER AGNEW (MLA '17)
“GOD FROM THE ISLAND: Realizing Mythological Space”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2017
Page 23 (detail)

Advised by:
Francesca Benedetto

CARLOS ESPINOZA BARDALES (MLA ’18)
“LATENT MARGINS: Eroding the static city”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2018
Page 5 (detail)

Advised by:
Belinda Tato
Week 02

20 SEPTEMBER

**Design Research**

> Introduction to design as a form of research

+ Individual Workshop Presentations 1:3 [5 mins. MAX] 16:00-18:00 ET LIVE via ZOOM:
https://harvard.zoom.us/j/93833854431?pwd=akFWU2oySmsxVkszQ3pzZ29pNODBO209

**response #2 (DUE: Sunday 26 September by 11:59pm):**

brief notes on five individual ingredients:

- What body of design precedent or projective practice will your project join?
- What discourse or debate in design will your project contribute to?
- What is the site or sites for your design thesis project?
- What is the programmatic agenda shaping intervention upon that site(s)?
- What representational/methodological strategies will you use?

Readings:


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Structures of Creativity:


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Recent Thesis Projects:


Sonny Meng Qi Xu, “Borderhood” (advised by Sergio Lopez-Pineiro, 2018).


~

Advice on Thesis:

GSD Faculty: Sergio Lopez-Pineiro, GSD; Rosalea Monacella, GSD

MLA Thesis Alumni: Sara Zewde, MLA ’15; Sonny Meng Qi Xu, MLA ’18

External Peer Reviewers: Albert Pope, Rice; Karen M’Closkey, Pennsylvania

MLA / Department of Landscape Architecture Manual
KENT HIPP (MLA ’17)
“COASTAL RETREAT: Staging Inundation in Provincetown”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2017
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Advised by:
Gary Hilderbrand

KELLY CLIFFORD (MLA ’18)
“Waste / Wealth Accumulations: Labor Ecologies + the Remaking of the Public Realm”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2018
Page 5 (detail)

Advised by:
Rosalea Monacella
27 SEPTEMBER

Design Projection
> Introduction to design as proposition through precedent
+ Individual Workshop Presentations 1:3 [5 mins. MAX] 16:00-18:00 ET LIVE via ZOOM:
https://harvard.zoom.us/j/93833854431?pwd=akFWU2oySmxVkJzQ3pzZ2pNODBOZz09

response #3 (DUE: Sunday 03 October by 11:59pm):
facsimile of spring 2022 option studio brief

Readings:


~
Structures of Creativity:
Charles and Ray Eames, House of Cards (Venice, California: Eames Office, 1952).

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Recent Thesis Projects:
Alison Malouf, “Ghostworlds” (advised by Silvia Benedito, 2018).

~
Advice on Thesis:
GSD Faculty: Silvia Benedito, GSD; Alex Wall, GSD
MLA Thesis Alumni: Andy Lee, MLA ‘20; Alison Malouf, MLA ‘18
External Peer Reviewers: Luis Callejas, AHO Oslo; Jonathan Solomon, ARTIC Chicago
WILLIAM S. BAUMGARDNER (MLA '18)
“TIRANA FREESCAPE: Reconstructing Socialist Space”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2018
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Advised by:
Anita Berrizbeitia

ANNIE LIANG (MLA ’18)
“KNOWLEDGE GROUNDS, A LANDSCAPE BASED ART SCHOOL ON Haida Gwaii”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2018
Page 74 (detail)

Advised by:
Robert Pietrusko
Week 04

04 OCTOBER

**Design Contexts**
> introduction to design contexts, sites, situations
+ Individual Workshop Presentations 1:3 [5 mins. MAX] 16:00-18:00 ET LIVE via ZOOM:

**response #4 (DUE: Sunday 10 October @11:59pm):**
word + image dossier on site

Readings:


Miwon Kwon, “One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity,” *October*, no. 80 (Spring 1997), 85–110.


- Structures of Creativity:

- Recent Thesis Projects:
  Carlo Urmy, “Dry Bones” (advised by Fionn Byrne, 2017).
  Ann Lynch, “Inveterate Scars” (advised by Danielle Choi, 2019).

- Advice on Thesis:
  GSD Faculty: Danielle Choi, GSD
  MLA Thesis Alumni: William Baumgardner, MLA ’18; Ann Lynch, MLA ’19
  External Peer Reviewers: Conor O’Shea, Illinois; Mason White, Toronto
SONNY MENG QI XU (MLA ’18)
“Borderhood, Re-imagining the Canada-US Borderlands”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2018
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Advised by:
Sergio Lopez-Pineiro

RAYANA HOSSAIN (MLA ’17)
“Projecting Upazilas: A New Town Ecology For Economic Growth and Environmental Sustainability in Bangladesh”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture,
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2017
Page 1 (detail)

Advised by:
Anita Berrizbeitia
18 OCTOBER

Design Drivers
> introduction to design drivers, programs, publics
+ Individual Workshop Presentations 2:3 [5 mins. MAX] 16:00-18:00 ET LIVE via ZOOM:
https://harvard.zoom.us/j/93833854431?pwd=akFWU2oySmxVkJ5zQ5pZ2pNODBOZz09

response #5 (DUE: Sunday 24 October @11:59pm):
word + image dossier on program

Readings:


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Structures of Creativity:
Arup, Drivers of Change (Gustavo Gili, 2006).

~
Recent Thesis Projects:
Annie Liang, “Knowledge Grounds” (advised by Robert Pietrusko, 2018).

~
Advice on Thesis:
GSD Faculty: Gary Hilderbrand, GSD; Eve Blau, GSD
MLA Thesis Alumni: Michael Ahn, MLA ’20; Camila Huber Horta Barbosa, MLA ’20
External Peer Reviewers: Neeraj Bhatia, CCA; Michael Ezban, Virginia
TIFFANY KAEWEN DANG (MLA ‘17)
“BEWILDERED IN BANFF: Displacing the Contours of Colonization in Canada’s National Parks System”
Master's Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2017
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Advised by:
Pierre Bélanger

SEOY MIN YEO (MLA ‘18)
“Manhattanism Unhinged”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2018
Pages 130-131 (detail)

Advised by:
Craig Douglas
Rosalea Monacella
Week 06

25 OCTOBER

Design Methods
> introduction to methods and strategies of design
+ Individual Workshop Presentations 2:3 [5 mins. MAX] 16:00-18:00 ET LIVE via ZOOM:
https://harvard.zoom.us/j/93833854431?pwd=akFWU2oySmxVksQ3pZw2pNODBOZz09

response #6 (DUE: Sunday 31 October @11:59pm):
word + image dossier on design methods

Readings:


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Structures of Creativity:
IDEO, Method Cards (William Stout, 2003).

~
Recent Thesis Projects:
Lex Agnew, “God from the Island” (advised by Francesca Benedetto, 2017).
Emily Drury, “How to do Things with Plants” (advised by Silvia Beneditto, 2018).

~
Advice on Thesis:
GSD Faculty: Chris Reed, GSD
MLA Thesis Alumni: Lex Agnew, MLA ’17; Emily Drury, MLA ’18
External Peer Reviewers: Marshall Brown, Princeton; Ashley Schafer, Ohio State

MLA / Department of Landscape Architecture Manual
MARIA DE LA LUZ LOBOS MARTINEZ (MLA '19)
“DESIGN WITH DISTURBANCE: Atlas of Shape, time, and perception in the volcanic landscape”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2019
Page 14 (detail)
Advised by:
Jill Desimini

ISABEL PRECIADO ARIAS (MLA '19)
“Airscapes: Rendering the materiality of Air”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2019
Page 13 (detail)
Advised by:
Craig Douglas
Danielle Choi
Week 07

01 NOVEMBER

Design Media
> introduction to design as media
+ Individual Workshop Presentations 2:3 [5 mins. MAX] 16:00-18:00 ET LIVE via ZOOM:
https://harvard.zoom.us/j/93833854431?pwd=akFWU2oySmxvKsOz3pzZ3pNOBOZ3o9

response #7 (DUE: Sunday 07 November @11:59pm):
word + image dossier on design media

Readings:

- Structures of Creativity:

- Recent Thesis Projects:
  Hannah Gaengler, “Rigged New World” (advised by Bradley Cantrell, 2017).
  Ernest Haines, “Turnpike Metabolism” (advised by Robert Pietrusko, 2018).
  Sarah Diamond, “Her Home,” (advised by Emily Wettstein, 2019).

- Advice on Thesis:
  GSD Faculty: Robert Pietrusko, GSD; Emily Wettstein, GSD
  MLA Thesis Alumni: Hannah Gaengler, MLA ’17; Ernest Haines, MLA ’18
  External Peer Reviewers: Bradley Cantrell, Virginia

*NOTE on DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME CHANGE:
Cambridge is on Eastern Daylight Savings Time [EDT] through October 31, 2021
Cambridge shifts one hour later to Eastern Standard Time [EST] on November 1, 2021
08 NOVEMBER
MIDTERM REVIEWS

+ Individual Project Reviews [7-1/2 mins MAX] 12:00-18:00 ET LIVE via ZOOM:
https://harvard.zoom.us/j/93833854431?pwd=akFWU2oySmsxVk5zQ3pz22pNODBO2z09

+ presentation uploaded to Canvas by Sunday 07 November @11:59pm
Filename: ADV 9341_Midterm Review_LastName_FirstName_Fall 2021.pdf

12:00
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Week 08

15 NOVEMBER

Sites + Subjects
> introduction to scales and themes associated with sites
+ Individual Workshop Presentations 3:3 [5 mins. MAX] 16:00-18:00 ET LIVE via ZOOM:
https://harvard.zoom.us/j/93833854431?pwd=akFWU2oySmshVkszQ3pzZ2pNODBO2z09

response #8 (DUE: Sunday 21 November @11:59pm):
title: subtitle
one sentence thesis statement
single frontispiece image
precedent projects for sites + subjects
word + image dossier on sites + subjects

Readings:


~ Structures of Creativity:
Chris Raschka, Circus Mixies (eeBoo Corp., 2003).

~ Recent Thesis Projects:

~ Advice on Thesis:
GSD Faculty: Rahul Mehrotra, GSD; Pablo Perez-Ramos, GSD
MLA Thesis Alumni: Rhea Shah, MLA ’18; Danica Liongson, MLA ’19
External Peer Reviewers: Nina-Marie Lister, Ryerson
Week 09

22 NOVEMBER

**Programs + Publics**

> introduction to public audiences and programmatic agendas

+ Individual Workshop Presentations 3:3 [5 mins. MAX] 16:00-18:00 ET LIVE via ZOOM:

https://harvard.zoom.us/j/93833854431?pwd=akFWU2oySmsxVk5zQ3pzZ2pNODBOZz09

response #9 (DUE: Sunday 28 November @11:59pm):

- title: subtitle
- one sentence thesis statement
- single frontispiece image
- precedent projects for programs + publics
- word + image dossier on programs + publics

Readings:


- Structures of Creativity:
  - a+t, 50 Urban Blocks (a+t publishers, 2017).

- Recent Thesis Projects:
  - Ting Liang, “People’s Agri-topia” (advised by Sergio Lopez-Pineiro, 2019).

- Advice on Thesis:
  - GSD Faculty: Jill Desimini, GSD
  - MLA Thesis Alumni: Chelsea Kilburn, MLA ’20; Andreea Vasile Hoxha, MLA ’20
  - External Peer Reviewers: Clare Lyster, UIC; Fadi Masoud, Toronto
Week 10

29 NOVEMBER

**Modes + Measures**
> introduction to modes of production and measures of reception
+ Individual Workshop Presentations 3:3 [5 mins. MAX] 16:00-18:00 ET LIVE via ZOOM:
https://harvard.zoom.us/j/93833854431?pwd=akFWU2oySmxvK6zQ3pzZ2pNODBOZz09

**response #10 (DUE: Sunday 05 December @11:59pm):**
  - title: subtitle
  - one sentence thesis statement
  - single frontispiece image
  - precedent projects for modes + measures
  - word + image dossier on modes + measures

Readings:


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Structures of Creativity:

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Recent Thesis Projects:
Jonah Susskind, “Forward from Woodward” (advised by Fionn Byrne, 2017).

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Advice on Thesis:
GSD Faculty: Paola Sturla, GSD; Sara Zewde, GSD
MLA Thesis Alumni: Tami Bahn, MLA ’18; Mark Heller, MLA ’19
External Peer Reviewers: Ed Wall, Greenwich
DANICA LIONGSON (MLA ’19)
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2019
Page 26 (detail)

Advised by:
Montserrat Bonhevi Rosich

ISABEL BROSTELLA (MLA ’19)
“THE MULTIPlicity OF A LINE”
Master’s Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2019
Page 50 (detail)

Advised by:
Montserrat Bonhevi Rosich
13 DECEMBER

FINAL THESIS PREP REVIEWS

+ Individual Project Reviews [7-1/2 mins MAX] 12:00-18:00 ET LIVE via ZOOM:
https://harvard.zoom.us/j/93863562696?pwd=aU1WUU1XTXdxb3B3S3H0lOTduQT09

+ presentation uploaded to Canvas by Sunday 12 December @11:59pm
Filename: ADV 9341_Final Review_LastName_FirstName_Fall 2021.pdf

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The Ambushoo interpretation of the laws we had signed with the U.S. government is contained in an 1837 Treaty and includes this passage: "...they are not to be interrupted in their occupation of the land, and they are to be allowed the use of the land..." The Indians, however, that they have not thus far been accustomd to the use of the land.

---

Article VI of the 1837 Treaty states: "The rights of hunting, fishing, and gathering the wild rice upon the lands, the residue and the lands within the territory reserved to the Indians, shall be included in the territory included in the Treaty of 1808..." Likewise, Article II of the 1837 Treaty reads through the treaty: "The Indians stipulate for the right of hunting, fishing, and gathering the wild rice upon the lands within the territory reserved to the President of the United States, and that the laws of the United States shall be construed in force, to protect the trade and commerce with the Indians, until otherwise ordered by Congress..."

---

"Wild Rice Waters"

Master's Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2019
Page 50 (detail)

Advised by:
Rosetta S. Elkin, John Koepke

EMILY HICKS AND MELODY STEIN (MLA '19)

"Emphiful. Changing the paradigm in a post-oil landscape"

Master's Thesis in Landscape Architecture
Harvard University Graduate School of Design
2019
Page 64 (detail)

Advised by:
Montserrat Bonhevi Rosich

AIYSHA ALSANE (MLA '19)
“Interdisciplinarity is not the calm of an easy security; it begins effectively when the solidarity of the old disciplines breaks down—perhaps even violently, via the jolts of fashion—in the interests of a new object and a new language.”

—Roland Barthes, 1971
ADV 9342
Design Thesis

SPRING 2022
Schedules TBC with individual primary thesis advisors

Seok Min Yeo, TA
Charles Waldheim
Spring 2022 Schedule

24 JANUARY
Preliminary Design Thesis Reviews
10:00-18:00 EST

28 FEBRUARY
One Quarter Check-In Meeting
13:00-14:00 EST

21 MARCH
Midterm Design Thesis Reviews
08:30-18:00 EDT

18 APRIL
Three Quarter Check-In Meeting
13:00-14:00 EDT

09-13 MAY
Final Design Thesis Reviews
09:00-18:00 EDT
Recent Precedents

Selected MLA Thesis Projects

2020-21

Echo Chen, “Extending Material Preservation” (Alex Wall)
https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_lFIDBB0=/

Kara Gadecki, “Materializing Access” (Jill Desimini)
https://materializingaccess.cargo.site

Brittany Giunchigliani, “To cast a line in the San Jacinto River” (Emily Wettstein)
www.tocastaline.cargo.site

Alana Godner-Abravanel, “Playing with Fire” (Emily Wettstein)
https://agodnerabravanel.wixsite.com/playingwithfire

Joanne Li, “Ovis Versatilis” (Sergio Lopez-Pineiro) *
https://www.avis-versatilis.com/

Chloe Soltis, “The Ecological Pulse of Electric Flows” (Jill Desimini)

Ciara Stein, “Throwing Shade” (Jill Desimini)

Dominic Riolo, “Landscape Intagloss” (Paola Sturla)

Maxwell Smith-Holmes, “Aqua Firma/Incognita/Communi” (Rosalea Monacella)
aquaincognitacommuni.com

Gracie Villa, “City | Forest” (Gary Hilderbrand) *

* MLA thesis prize
2019-20

Michael Ahn, “A Benthic Agriculture” (Montserrat Bonvehi)

Yoni Angelo Carnice, “Vulgar” (Alex Wall)
https://vulgar.cargo.site/

Camila Huber Horta Barbosa, “High-Low” (Pablo Perez-Ramos)

Chelsea Kilburn, “That Sinking Feeling” (Danielle Choi) *

Andy Lee, “INTERIOR” (Robert Pietrusko)
doi.cargo.site

Zhaodi Wang, “Mutual Dependence” (Craig Douglas)

Carson Fisk-Vittori, “SHIFTING KIND” (Emily Wettstein)
https://fiskvittori.cargo.site/Shiftiing-Kind

Benjamin Hackenberger, “The Collective Garden” (Rosalea Monacella)

Andreea Vasile Hoxha, “After Plastics” (Rosalea Monacella)
https://after-plastics.com

Colin Chadderton, “Reveal | Transform | Respond” (Craig Douglas)
https://revealtransformrespond.myportfolio.com/

* MLA thesis prize
2018-19

Isabel Brostella, “The Multiplicity of a Line,” (Montserrat Bonvehi)
Sarah Diamond, “Her Home,” (Emily Wettstein)
Mark Heller, “No Service,” (Robert Pietrusko)
Emily Hicks and Melody Stein, “Wild Rice Waters” (Rosetta Elkin) *
Ting Liang, “People’s Agri-topia,” (Sergio Lopez-Pineiro)
Danica Liongson, “Eulogy for the Olive,” (Montserrat Bonvehi)
Ann Lynch, “Inveterate Scars,” (Danielle Choi)
Isabel Preciado, “Airscapes,” (Danielle Choi)
Isaac Stein and Maggie Tsang, “Lines in the Sand,” (Rosetta Elkin)
Joshua Stevens, “The Tropical Arboretum of Vegetal Dwelling,” (Rosalea Monacella)

2017-18

Tami Banh, “Water Assemblage” (Robert Pietrusko)
William Baumgardner, “Tirana Freescape” (Anita Berrizbeitia)
Emily Drury, “How to do Things with Plants” (Silvia Benedito)
Ernest Haines, “Turnpike Metabolism” (Robert Pietrusko) *
Annie Liang, “Knowledge Grounds” (Robert Pietrusko)
Alison Malouf, “Ghostworlds” (Silvia Benedito)
Greta Ruedisueli, “L’Enfant’s Leftovers” (Jill Desimini)
Rhea Shah, “Decolonizing the Forest” (Dilip daCunha)
Sonny Meng Qi Xu, “Borderhood” (Sergio Lopez-Pineiro)
Min Yeo, “Wild” (Craig Douglas) *

2016-17

Lex Agnew, “God from the Island” (Francesca Benedetto)
Rawan Alsaffar, “Oil and Salt” (Robert Pietrusko)
Tiffany Dang, “Bewildered in Banff” (Pierre Belanger)
Hannah Gaengler, “Rigged New World”
Kent Hipp, “Coastal Retreat” (Gary Hilderbrand)
Alexandra Mei, “Accessing the Past” (Robert Pietrusko) *
Chris Reznich, “Solar Frameworks” (Charles Waldheim)
Jonah Susskind, “Forward from Woodward” (Fionn Byrne)
Carlo Urmy, “Dry Bones” (Fionn Byrne)
David Zielnicki, “Gradually, Fiercely” (Sergio Lopez-Pineiro)

* MLA thesis prize
General Readings

On Thesis

Additional resources:

On Design

Additional resources:
Word + Image


Additional resources:


Design Thesis


Design Research


Design Projection


Design Contexts


Miwon Kwon, “One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity;” October, no. 80 (Spring 1997), 85–110.


Design Drivers


Design Methods


Design Media


Arup, *Drivers of Change* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2006).

*a+t*, *50 Urban Blocks* (Bilbao: a+t publishers, 2017).


Nigel Cross, *Designerly Ways of Knowing* (Springer, 2006).


Charles and Ray Eames, House of Cards (Venice, California: Eames Office, 1952).


IDEO, Method Cards (San Francisco: William Stout, 2003).


Rem Koolhaas, editor, Wired (June 2003).
Miwon Kwon, “One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity,” *October*, no. 80 (Spring 1997), 85–110.


Peter Rowe, *Design Thinking* (MIT Press, 1987).


The course is evaluated on a standard GSD pass/fail system. Course requirements include ten weekly response assignments (5% each or 50% total); two interim reviews (12.5% each or 25% total) and a final term review (25%).
Learning Objectives and Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to...

. . . describe, develop, and defend an original design thesis in landscape architecture;
. . . identify, interpret, and analyze a thematic topic or subject of their design research;
. . . propose, program, and perform a specific landscape design project; as well as
. . . assess, articulate, advocate for the relevance and reception of their work in the discipline.

Through reading of the weekly course readings, students will be able to recognize and rehearse a range of positions found in the literature across topics and associated with the making of original design research projects in landscape architecture.

Through participation in the weekly discussion sections, students will be able to survey and summarize a range of perennial topics relevant to the making of an original design research project in landscape architecture.

Through comprehension of the weekly class lectures, students will be able to compare and contrast the subject and specific aspects of various design project precedents as they relate to the formulation of their own individual design thesis projects.

Through completion of the weekly assignments, students will be able to conceive and communicate the various constituent elements informing the design research, precedent study, and disciplinary contribution of their own individual design thesis projects.

Through the development and presentation of their design thesis proposal, students will be able to recruit and retain a suitable faculty thesis advisor and to develop and defend those design thesis projects through peer review evaluation.
All weekly assignments and review presentations should be uploaded as PDF to canvas site by midnight Sunday the day prior to the class meeting/review.

Work submitted weekly will be evaluated by four equally weighted terms of evaluation:
1. Representation: demonstrating a clear argument visually as well as verbally;
2. Research: showing consistent inquiry and engagement with the topic throughout the semester;
3. Proposal: the potential of the project as an intervention in the world and a contribution to the field; and
4. Proposition: the intellectual and cultural arguments supporting your project.

Students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the school’s standards for academic honesty and conduct. Cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration or paid assistance, deliberate interference with the integrity of the work of others, fabrication or falsification of data, and other forms of academic dishonesty are considered serious offenses for which disciplinary penalties will be imposed. A work is understood as the original expression of an author; a copy of the work is a physical manifestation of the expression. Copies of work submitted by a student in satisfaction of admission, course, or degree requirements, such as papers, drawings, models, digital images and other materials, become the property of the school. The GSD may use such copies for GSD non-commercial, academic or research purposes such as in exhibitions of GSD student work, GSD publications, reports to sponsors of studios and other forms of GSD outreach, provided that each student must be appropriately credited as the creator of the student’s work. Any other use of student work, for example, by faculty in their own publications, requires the written consent of each student contributor, in addition to appropriate credit. The school, faculty, and staff assume no responsibility for the physical safeguarding of such copies of student work and may, at their discretion, retain such copies, return them to their creators, or discard them.
Contact Information

Charles Waldheim
John E. Irving Professor of Landscape Architecture
Director of the Office for Urbanization

Charles Waldheim is an American-Canadian architect and urbanist. Waldheim’s research examines the relations between landscape, ecology, and contemporary urbanism. He is author, editor, or co-editor of numerous books on these subjects, and his writing has been published and translated internationally. Waldheim is John E. Irving Professor at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design where he directs the School’s Office for Urbanization. Waldheim is recipient of the Rome Prize Fellowship from the American Academy in Rome; the Visiting Scholar Research Fellowship at the Study Centre of the Canadian Centre for Architecture; the Cullinan Chair at Rice University; and the Sanders Fellowship at the University of Michigan.

waldheim@harvard.edu
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office hours Wednesdays 15:00-17:00 EDT/EST; by appointment at waldheim@harvard.edu

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MLA Thesis Manual
2021/2022

ADV 9341
Preparation of MLA Design Thesis

ADV 9342
MLA Design Thesis

DEPARTMENT OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN
Anita Berrizbeitia, LA Department Chair
Gareth Doherty, MLA Program Director
Charles Waldheim, MLA Thesis Director
Sarah Hutchinson, MLA Program Coordinator
Seok Min Yeo, TA