

My research investigates the cultural and environmental contexts for architecture design and construction. I am interested generally how this subject relates to teaching, thinking, and making within both cultural landscape and material culture. Within this broad field of study, I have focused on three specific areas of research: place-making, redefining contemporary space, and climatic approaches to architecture.

My initial phase of research came out of doctoral work at the University of Florida and focused on camps as critical sites for understanding how we live within impermanent environments – places that are sometimes temporary and homes that are increasingly mobile. My first book *Campsite: Architectures of Duration and Place* (LSU Press, 2008) explored the history of North American campsites and studied camping as a way of making new places and homes. Moreover, this research investigated the cultural significance and inherently paradoxical nature of camping in American society. It offered a new understanding of the complex relationship between place, time and architecture in an increasingly mobile culture through the analysis of campsites as places that necessitate a unique combination of contrasting qualities, such as locality and foreignness, temporality and permanence, and public domesticity. I conducted multiple case study research, which included sites in Florida, California, and Louisiana. I found that camping practices and the process of camping (siting, clearing, making, and breaking) resonated with how places, built environments, and homes are constantly being made and remade. *Campsite* contributed to current studies of place and vernacular architecture while also reconfiguring methods of research in cultural studies, architectural theory, and geography.

The second phase of this research shifted to the study of camps as contemporary spaces of freedom, emergency, and reform. My second book *Camps: A Guide to 21st-century Space* (MIT Press, 2009) developed a global perspective to understand the broader implications of camps conditioned by autonomy (such as summer camp), necessity (for example, refugee camps), and control (including military camps). The first phase of research (*Campsite*) had examined the a priori conditions of occupying a particular site – processes preceding and leading up to more permanent settlement – and concluded that the practice of camping approximates a unique kind of place-making. In this second phase, I sought to find patterns among the diverse permutations of camp spaces – the a posteriori realities of sites that register global transformations at their earliest stages. Here, the relations between camps proved incisive for understanding recent shifts in ideas about residency, mobility, and identity.

In the third phase of research, I have continued with this contemporary and interdisciplinary concentration – what one reviewer saw in my work as “the new trans-disciplinary ideal.” I am currently focusing on the relation between climate and architecture, seeking to understand how built environments, particularly dwellings, engage fresh air and light. A significant part of this research looks at the influences of climatic imperatives and vernacular precedents on modernist architects’ translation of the porch and the sleeping porch. Recently published in *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, my first paper on this topic examines how the meaning of a particular tradition – sleeping in the open-air – changed over time. Research focuses on the sleeping porch and related constructs from the end of the nineteenth century to the start of World War II. During this time, arguments related to nature, health, and modernity reframed the sleeping porch’s traditions, which in turn recast knowledge of the body’s relation to fresh air and nature. As a result, this study finds that the sleeping porch indicates a transition from an experientially and empirically-defined tradition to one that is more conceptual and epistemologically-driven – setting up modernist and mid-century arguments for conditioned relationships with fresh air and between the inside and outside of the American house. Titled “Places Built of Air,” the graduate seminar that I taught during the 2009 Spring semester advanced this research through a pedagogical framework in which students conducted field research, developed critical arguments, and carried out independent research for a final paper. And a grant from the White House Historical Association supported research at the Library of Congress and the National Archives during the Summer of 2009. The research explores how imperatives of fresh air shaped renovations of a national monument, in particular its roofscape and a sleeping porch installed above the South Portico in 1912.

In the past two years, I have begun to develop an additional research path to reinforce my commitment to combine scholarship with teaching and practicing reflectively. I believe that historical research of the built environment can provide a critical context for service-learning research projects that involve students with the community. Both trajectories seek to understand *how* we construct our environment. With this in mind, I have begun to explore design-build as a method of place-making – an educational process that puts into practice the concept of “building places.” How do architects, as professionals, not only design but also actually build? How do climate, community, and construction unite in a meaningful way? To answer these questions, I have developed a design-build framework for teaching and research. In Spring 2008, I led a seminar titled “Reflective Building” in which graduate students designed and constructed a community garden and outdoor classroom for the Woodland Park unit of east Gainesville’s Boys and Girls Club. The project combined my research of design-build as a service-learning methodology with research about the cultural and environmental context for reflective practice. We worked with the Club’s children, its staff, and area residents to develop the project; and the construction remains an important addition to the Club’s daily mission of enrichment and learning. Along with pursuing the paths outlined above, my objectives for future research include this type of design-build project and its service learning opportunities.

Paralleling these main lines of research, I have also carried out field research and made presentations related to historic preservation. This vein of research approaches my interest in cultural landscapes from the angle of material culture. I have completed field research in Havana, Cuba, where I looked at the clinic-home (*casa del médico de la familia*) as a traditional practice reinterpreted in post-modernist architectural constructions within the urban fabric of Old Havana. My related research of traditional building materials and methods led me to a presentation and a workshop in Aberdeen, Scotland, where I discussed opportunities for meshing traditional crafts training with design approaches in a design-build format. I found that these projects complemented the methods and topics that have been my focus for the past six years.