

SYNCRETIC SPACE

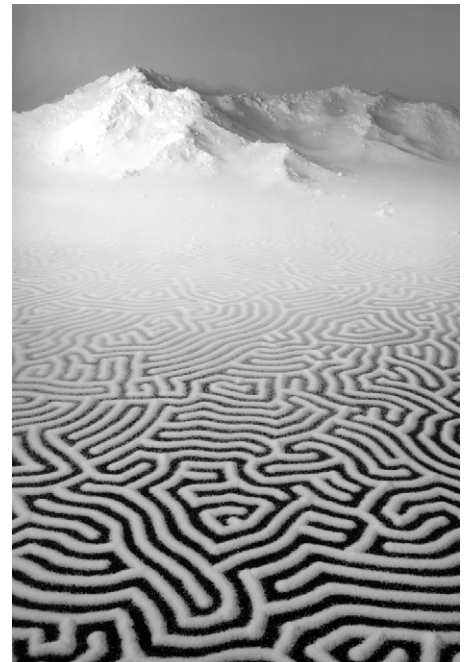
DESIGNING THE SECULAR SACRED

The studio will explore interfaces of inquiry across fields of ecology, theology and philosophy, in dialogue with space, material, light, procession and experience. The program re-envision a teaching monastery for the 21st century metropolis, redefining religion in terms of contemporary values of justice and human dignity and responding to the urgency of present societal and environmental conditions.

Monastic orders and their spaces of work and reflection date back to 4th century Egypt. Centuries of evolution have witnessed changes in the structures and agendas of monks, friars and nuns, including differing degrees of isolation from and engagement with society. Monastic schools were the precursors to modern, scholastic universities. Within this evolution, the nature of learning evolved from dogma to dialectical reasoning and critical thought, maintaining a core aspect of rigor that will be honored by the studio. Designing for contemporary and future urban life, students will determine the appropriate degrees of departure from tradition, reinterpreting the medieval almonry (repository and distribution of resources), the refectory (dining hall), the dormitory, the infirmary, and the cloisters (reflection and exercise), to shape the nature and spaces of learning and exchange.

Our era and context of pluralism require comfort with uncertainty. To explore the immediate and intertwined challenges of society and climate we will search for core questions and possible answers through material potency, temporal flux, spatial consequence, and phenomenal experience. Projects will broaden and re-frame definitions of sanctuary, exploring the humanist potential of "secular-sacred" space. Proposals will aim to enhance intellectual and spiritual engagement, supporting the profound responsibility that we share toward the ecological fortification of our urban future. Indeed, the architectures we envision should aim to elevate a conviction that physical place is instrumental in our collective stewardship of the planet.

Syncretic: *adj. Characterized or brought about by a combination of different forms of belief or practice*



Motoi Yamamoto, Labyrinth, 2011.

"...in the era of quantum entanglement and relativity, everything looks emergent and interconnected. Life looks less like a machine and more like endlessly complex patterns of waves and particles. Vast social engineering projects look less promising, because of the complexity, but webs of... meaningful relationships can do amazing good."

David Brooks (on Christopher Nolan's "Interstellar")

RESEARCH

Students will select models of practice, tectonics, buildings, ecologies, etc. that they deem relevant to the specific conceptual bearing of the work. All forms of research will be critically analyzed, strategically diagrammed, distilled and abstracted to instigate innovative potential. We are committed to the vibrant work and reward of inquiry and demonstration of consequence at all scales. Conscious inward search and cognition will exist in dialogue with the physical world, manifesting outward material expression in attentive form, organization, measurable consequences and relationships.

Individual understandings of ‘spirituality’¹ may be informed by a Sunday morning “temple training” visit to the Zen Center of New York City. Students may also be interested in an immersive weekend retreat at the Zen Mountain Monastery², one of the West’s most respected Zen Buddhist working monasteries and training centers – and just a 3-hour bus ride from NYC.

Other relevant research excursions—coordinated with and shared to enhance the studio’s collective awareness of potential—are encouraged.

SITE(S)

We will be working at the edge and engaging temporal change.

While sites could be anywhere reasonably accessed by public transportation - where city meets water—the studio will focus on a swath of the Rockaways in Queens, NY, where both Jamaica Bay and the Atlantic Ocean are equally accessible by the A train.

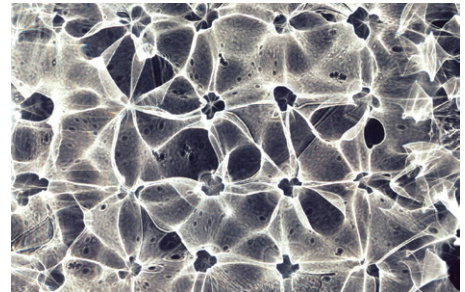
Rockaway Community Park is a 253 acre former-landfill peninsula off of Beach 51st Street on Jamaica Bay’s vast wetland estuary. Considered “the longest continuously operating dump in the United States and perhaps the oldest,” it swelled to a 70’ tall garbage mound before being declared a Superfund site. Projects will be instrumental in transforming this polluted landfill into a civic-sanctuary, with links to the nearby Dubos³ wildlife refuge, urban everyday, and natural regeneration.

Rockaway Beach stretches from Beach 3rd to Beach 153rd Street, between the Boardwalk and the Atlantic Ocean and possesses the city’s only legal surfing beaches.⁴ In dialogue with the bayside site, projects may be located within the proposed 80+ acre FAR ROC [For a Resilient Rockaway] resilient development at Arverne East.⁵

ALLIANCES

Students in this section will be encouraged to work in potent teams to intensify the capacity of their work – collaborations may include: research, field experiments, mock-ups, analyses of amplified sites and scopes, and design engaging the global significance of education and tolerance — the need for which is perhaps most glaringly exhibited in the Taliban’s ongoing ferocious attacks against secular schools and students.

The limits of the semester will be defined by you.



Alan Jaras, *Twisting Light #11*, 2006.



Rockaways, largest urban beach in USA.

“Like art, revolutions come from combining what exists into what has never existed before.”

Gloria Steinem

¹<http://zcnyc.mro.org/visiting/>

Zen Center of New York City: Fire Lotus Temple.
500 State Street, Brooklyn, NY 11217

²<http://goo.gl/u2kiye>

Zen Mountain Monastery (ZMM), the main house of the Mountains and Rivers Buddhist Order (MRO), is in New York’s Catskill Mountains. Retreat participants take part in Zen training, stepping into the monastic schedule and cloistered community for a weekend.

³Environmentalist Dr. Rene Dubos is commonly recognized as the primary developer of modern antibiotics. As advisor to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (1972), Dubos coined the phrase “Think Globally, Act Locally.”

⁴<http://goo.gl/ck13yZ>

Rockaway surfing beaches are located between 67-69 Street and 87-92 Street.

⁵<http://www.farroc.com/>

<http://www.farroc.com/solutions/#white>

Entities with which you may 'partner' to provoke programming:

Union of Concerned Scientists

<http://www.ucsusa.org/>

Our scientists and engineers develop and implement innovative, practical solutions to some of our planet's most pressing problems—from combating global warming and developing sustainable ways to feed, power, and transport ourselves, to fighting misinformation and reducing the threat of nuclear war.

Center for Courage and Renewal

<http://www.couragerenewal.org>

Our mission is to create a more just, compassionate and healthy world by nurturing personal and professional integrity and the courage to act on it. Responsibility can no longer rest solely with designated leaders. It requires all of us to claim our leadership roles and responsibilities.

Rockaway Beach Surf Club

<http://www.rockawaybeachsurfclub.com/>

Rockaway Beach Surf Club is a cultural event space, restaurant and bar devoted to promoting the love of surfing, conserving the environment and supporting its local neighborhood. Unique to Rockaway Beach is the convergence of surf and urban culture.

The American Humanist Association

<http://americanhumanist.org/>

The American Humanist Association has stood as the voice of humanism in the United States for over 70 years, striving to bring about a progressive society where being good without a god is an accepted and respected way to live life. We are accomplishing this through defense of Civil liberties and secular governance, outreach to the growing number of people without traditional religious faith, and refinement and advancement of the humanist worldview.

New York State Marine Education Association.

<http://www.seagrant.sunysb.edu/nysmea/>

NYSMEA exists to promote marine awareness and encourage the growth and exchange of instructional resources within the scientific, commercial, and educational communities.

Openly Secular

<http://www.openlysecular.org/#/resources>

The mission of Openly Secular is to eliminate discrimination and increase acceptance by getting secular people - including atheists, freethinkers, agnostics, humanists and nonreligious people - to be open about their beliefs.

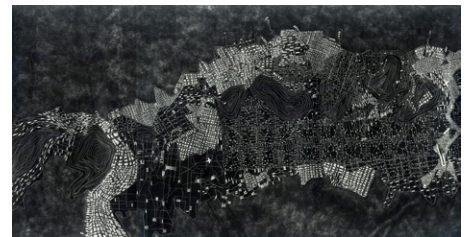
The Clergy Project.

<http://clergyproject.org/>

Support | Community | Hope – for current and former religious professionals without supernatural beliefs. “Moving Beyond Faith”



Ann Hamilton, The Event of a Thread, 2013.



Fabio Alessandro Fusco, La città Peninsulare, 2011.

RESOURCES

Life After Faith: The Case for Secular Humanism, Philip Kitcher. 2014

The Honor Code, and *The Ethics of Identity*, Kwame Anthony Appiah. 2011 + 2005

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate, Naomi Klein. 2014

After God, Mark C Taylor. 2007

Religion for Atheists, Alain de Botton. 2012

The World Without Us, Alan Weisman. 2007

Entropy and Art: an Essay on Disorder and Order, Rudolf Arnheim, 1971

Emergence: the Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities and Software, Steven Johnson. 2001

On Being

<http://goo.gl/IvQLRF>

Peabody Award-winning radio show hosted by Krista Tippett, author of the books *Speaking of Faith: Why Religion Matters—and How to Talk About It* and the New York Times Best Seller *Einstein's God: Conversations About Science and the Human Spirit*.

Egon Schiele

See the current exhibition at the Neue Galerie (through 19.Jan'15).

The level of search, focus, hierarchy and struggle in his portraits, made 100 years ago when he was in his teens and twenties, is inspirational.

The New York Earth Room.

141 Wooster Street, NYC. Wednesday-Sunday, 12-6 pm

Walter De Maria, 1977. Long-term installation of 250 cubic yards of earth (197 cubic meters) weighing 280,000 lbs. (127,300 kilos)

Park Avenue Armory

<http://goo.gl/dP1b8T>

Art, music, and architecture converge in the latest work by artist Douglas Gordon and pianist Hélène Grimaud. This site-specific installation features an immense field of water that harnesses light, reflection, music, and sound to amplify and transform the Wade Thompson Drill Hall - breathtaking. (through 04.Jan'15)

Motoi Yamamoto's "Return to the Sea: Saltworks"

<http://goo.gl/MKvf4I>, <http://goo.gl/cXnZHd>

Motoi is known for working with salt, often in the form of temporary, intricate, large-scale installations.

"Nones" on the Rise, Pew Research, Religion and Public Life Project.

<http://goo.gl/v9uc59>

The number of Americans who do not identify with any religion continues to grow at a rapid pace. One-fifth of the U.S. public – and a third of adults under 30 – are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling.

Intertwingularity

<http://goo.gl/73EMPq>

Post by Jason Silva.



Veiled women recite Quran

"The physical is inherently entropic, giving off energy in ever more disorderly ways. The metaphysical is anti-entropic, methodically marshaling energy. Life is anti-entropic."

R. Buckminster Fuller

"A field is endless – it goes on, and on, and on, and on. And as the water collects, the space it inhabits will never be the same again."

Douglas Gordon

Religion Without God

<http://goo.gl/j4YhA6>

T. M. Luhrmann, NYTimes OP ED, Christmas Day 2014

Tapestry of Faith

<http://goo.gl/Df993z>

A series of programs and resources for all ages that nurture Unitarian Universalist identity, spiritual growth, a transforming faith, and vital communities of justice and love.

The Sunday Assembly

<http://goo.gl/eWF30w>

A global movement for wonder and good; a godless congregation (and Pod Cast) whose motto is, "Live Better, Help Often & Wonder More." the SUNDAY ASSEMBLY was included on the 2014 New Radicals list, compiled by Nesta, the UK's innovation foundation, and The Observer

British Humanist Association

<https://humanism.org.uk/>

Work on behalf of non-religious people who seek to live ethical lives on the basis of reason and humanity. We promote Humanism, a secular state, and equal treatment of everyone regardless of religion or belief. Our celebrants provide non-religious funeral, wedding, and naming ceremonies.

The Case for 'Soft Atheism'

<http://goo.gl/eIUfh3>

New York Times, Gary Gutting, May 15, 2014. Interview with Philip Kitcher, professor of philosophy at Columbia University and the author of "Life After Faith: The Case for Secular Humanism."

After Year Of Atheism, Former Pastor: 'I Don't Think God Exists'

<http://goo.gl/fKfvE3>

NPR 27.Dec., 2014

NYC Planning Approved Re-zoning

<http://goo.gl/Ug9TWY>

Contextual info surrounding recent re-development efforts in and around the Rockaways

Reports from the Rockaway Redevelopment Corporation

<http://www.rdrcc.org/home/reports/>

NY State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I)

<http://goo.gl/Bcp5Zt>

A statewide research and technology transfer center providing a comprehensive and integrated program of research, technology development and diffusion, outreach, training and education aimed at making New York State more sustainable for workers, the public, the environment and the economy.

The Center for Urban Research at the CUNY Graduate Center

<http://www.oasisnyc.net/map.aspx>

Updated & enhanced OASIS's interactive maps

KARLA MARIA ROTHSTEIN

Karla Maria Rothstein is an architect and an educator. Founder and Director of Columbia University's trans-disciplinary DeathLAB, Rothstein is adjunct Associate Professor at Columbia GSAPP where she has taught graduate design studios for eighteen years. Her areas of research and design focus span the intimate spaces of urban life, death and memory, to intersections of social justice and the built environment. In 2013, Rothstein was honored as a finalist for Columbia University's Presidential Teaching Award.

Rothstein is an active member of the Columbia University Interdisciplinary Faculty Seminar on Death. In 2013, her essay 'Reconfiguring Urban Spaces of Disposal, Sanctuary and Remembrance' was published in ABC-CLIO Praeger's two volume anthology Our Changing Journey to the End: The New Realities and Controversies of Dying in America. Rothstein's essay 'Civic-Sanctuary' will be featured in the 2015 edition of *Zawia* on the Sacred.

Her architecture practice, LATENT Productions, was founded with Salvatore Perry to liberate the specific potential embedded within every design project, celebrating innovative spatial and material quality. Rigorously conceived and executed, each project LATENT produces is an alchemical celebration of concept, context, and opportunity. A house on Ballston Lake, comprised of 150,000 pounds of precast concrete, Rothstein's first built work, has been featured in multiple international publications. It is the only US house included in the book In DETAIL: Single Family Houses (Birkhäuser, 2000) and is included in Kenneth Frampton's anthology of American Masterworks (Rizzoli, 2008). 20+22 Renwick, a proposal for an 11-story building challenging NYC zoning interpretation, received a Progressive Architecture Award Citation in 2001. In 2014, LATENT Productions received an AIANY Honor Award for Runner&Stone, a bakery-bar-restaurant in Gowanus, NY; LATENT's concrete Belly Blocks, cast into flour sacks emptied by the baker, were a finalist in Architizer's A+ Awards, Architecture + Materials; and 285 Third Avenue was selected as NYC Archtober's Building of the Day in 2014. Most recently, Latent's Constellation Park project placed 3rd in an international competition on new ways of memorializing the dead. A model of the project was sold by Christie's at a charity auction and is currently on display at Sir John Soane's Museum in London.

In 2015 Rothstein will be honored by Built by Women New York City (BxW NYC) celebrating the leadership and achievements of women working in the building professions. Supported as a Jacob Javits Fellow in Fine Arts from 1988–1992, a William Kinne Traveling Fellow in 1992, and a NYFA recipient in 2000, Rothstein's professional and academic work has been featured and/or exhibited at Storefront for Art and Architecture, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Barnard College, Columbia University, Van Alen Institute, Max Protetch Gallery, the Center for Architecture, architizer.com, Gizmodo, Architecture magazine, Casabella, The New York Times, London Financial Times, OZY.com, Wallpaper City Guide NYC, and WIRED Japan.

YVONNE-DEMITRA KONSTANTINIDIS

Yvonne-Demitra Konstantinidis graduated with a Master of Architecture from Columbia University in 2013, and a BSc. in General Architectural Studies from the University of Bath, U.K. in 2007. Her interests lay at the intersections of spirituality and space, and in the potential of enabling a greater collective consciousness through their union. Yvonne-Demitra is currently working on a 6,000 sqf. non-profit co-working space in Hell's Kitchen, and a 4,500 sqf. Yoga and Healing Center in DUMBO. Her previous projects include the Masterplan for the 2012 London Olympics and Legacy (AECOM).

