HAIDA GWAI ARCHITECTURES AND LANDSCAPES OF MYTH AND MEMORY

The Islands of the People, At the Edge of the World

Few landscapes in North America are as remote and isolated as these mythical islands of the Pacific Northwest. Inhabited by the Haida Indigenous Peoples for more than 12,500 years, this archipelago of more than 150 islands, stretching hundreds of kilometres west of the British Columbia coast, is an extraordinary and breathtaking array of varied natural processes and ecologies. Not surprisingly, human settlement includes landscape and architectural traditions rich in history, myth and memory — highlighted, perhaps, by the UNESCO World Heritage site at SGaang Gwaii.

Haida Gwaii is, in fact, a nation within a nation, formally administered and represented by the Council of the Haida Nation, along with the Governments of Canada and British Columbia. Of the more than one hundred estimated thriving Haida settlements that existed pre-contact -- as recently as the mid-nineteenth century -- only two major ones remain, at Old Massett and Skidegate, on Graham Island. Still, these villages are thriving Indigenous communities, rich with art, culture, and tradition, with simultaneous connections to the past and to the future.

OBJECTIVES

This research and design course will focus on themes of Architectures and Landscapes of Memory -- particularly how the Haida have transferred traditional knowledge and culture through discreet yet powerful interventions and alterations to their natural environments. At the architectural scale, the vast repertoire of living memorials and cultural modifications, will be studied through case studies and formal critical analyses. At the scale of the artifact, we will study the relationship of domestic and everyday items to larger ideas of language, community and self-determination. To conclude, we will produce a series of speculative mappings, implicating potential futures for the islands, within a dynamically shifting physical environment, and challenging world.

OUTCOMES

Contemporary discourse in the design professions includes issues related to cultural appropriation, contested Indigenous Peoples’ territories, climate change, forest and natural resource management, sea-level rise, natural disaster preparedness, to name a few. Such issues have been confronted throughout the islands of Haida Gwaii for thousands of years. It is this imbedded knowledge that the course ultimately aspires to access and to understand, through first-hand contact with this unique land and its peoples.

DELIVERABLES

On-Island: Liaison, Meetings with Council of Haida Nation, Old Massett Artist Studios, Heritage Centre Curators, Taan Forest, Queen Charlotte City Municipality, Parks Canada, Haida Watchmen, etc. Photographic Journal, Personal Mappings and Documentations.


Analog/Digital mapping investigations appropriate for public exhibition, see below.
Significant areas of architectural / landscape interest include:

Old Massett / Tow Hill / Rose Spit
Massett
Port Clements

Tlell
Skidegate
Queen Charlotte

Rennell Sound
Sandspit
Moresby Camp

Significant areas of environmental / cultural interest include:

Gwaii Haanas National Park
Naikoon Provincial Park

SGaang Gwaai UNESCO World Heritage Site

Significant institutions include:

Haida Cultural Centre_Skidegate
Dixon Entrance Maritime Museum_Masset / Artists’ Studios_Old Massett
Port Clements Museum_Port Clements

Logistics, Research, Liaison:

1 May 2018   Research, Itinerary Complete/Available
14 May 2018 - 30 May 2018  Proposed Course Travel Window (tbd)
1 Jun 2018 - 21 Jun 2018 Deliverables Consolidation

Anticipated Costs:

Estimated Course Fee  $500 - $600 CDN
INCLUDES ALL Ground/Ferry transportation, group meals, digital archive

Students’ Anticipated Costs:

Return Airfare
YVR-ZMT Massett (Pacific Air) or Sandspit YVR-YZP (Air Canada)
$500 - $600 CDN  (several daily flights available)

Nightly Accommodation (shared double to quadruple occupancy)
$25-$40 daily, based on a 10-day +/- on-island travel period / 15 places

Students’ Discretionary Costs:

Food (other than group meals)
Museums (other than limited access to Haida Heritage Centre, Skidegate)
Entertainment / Add’l seaplane flights, Zodiac travel and unique excursions
Extended MSP Health Insurance  (recommended)

Contemporary Art/Design Practices, with connections to Haida Gwaii:

Jim Hart, Internationally-Acclaimed Haida Artist, Carver
Perkins & Will / David Nairne Associates / Acton (Johnson) Ostry
Nick Milkovich (w/ Arthur Erickson) Architects / Nika Collison HHC Curator
Robert Davidson, Haida Artist / Terri-Lynn Williams-Davidson, Haida Singer

A Propos:


Constructions of Memory. Harvard Design Magazine No.9 Fall 1999.


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TAdSWII'
THIS IS Haida Gwaii
KaaTs'il hLa

https://indd.adobe.com/view/24612fc6-f702-491a-b363-47d242215eaa

GAAW_OLD MASSETT AND MASSET AREA
Latitude:N 54° 1.912343'
Longitude:W 132° 9.694748'

http://www.copperbeechhouse.com

TAAW K’YUU_TOW HILL ROAD AREA
Latitude:N 54° 4.22113'
Longitude:W 131° 50.135651'

https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Attraction_Review-g183816-d2281649-Reviews-Tow_Hill_Provincial_Park-Haida_Gwaii_Queen_Charlotte_Islands_British_Columbia.html

ING GIIDS_Queen Charlotte area
Latitude:N 53° 15.24429'
Longitude:W 132° 5.755119'


MORESBY CAMP
Latitude:N53° 3.0'
Longitude:W132° 3.0

https://tools.wmflabs.org/geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Moresby_Camp&params=53_03_00_N_132_03_00_W_region:NO

KUNXALAS_CUMSHEWA
Latitude:N 53° 2.39847'
Longitude:W 131° 41.216125'

http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=3625220

K’UUNA LLNAGAAY_SKEDANS
Latitude:N 52° 57.873802'
Longitude:W 131° 36.395874'

http://resolve.library.ubc.ca/cgi-bin/catsearch?bid=1348678

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SGANG GWAIi_NINSTINTS
Latitude: N 52° 5.881018’
Longitude: W 131° 13.020744’


GWAIi HAANAS
Latitude: N 52° 28.163811’
Longitude: W 131° 33.017578’


TAdSWII’
THIS IS HAIDA GWAIi
KaaTs’il hLa

https://indd.adobe.com/view/24612fc6-f702-491a-b363-47d242215eaa

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Haida Art, History & Culture; Haida Gwaii, etc.


Reid, Bill. Solitary Raven: The Essential Writings of Bill Reid. Douglas & McIntyre.


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The agency of mapping…

Mappings have agency because of the double-sided characteristic of all maps. Firstly, their surfaces are directly analogous to actual ground conditions, as horizontal planes, they record the surface of the earth as direct impressions. As in the casting of shadows, walks and sightings across land may be literally projected onto paper through a geometrical graticule of points and lines drawn by ruler and pen. Conversely, one can put one’s finger on a map and trace out a particular route or itinerary, the map projecting a mental image into the spatial imagination. Because of this directness, maps are taken to be ‘true’ and ‘objective’ measures of the world, and are accorded a kind of benign neutrality. By contrast, the other side of this analogous characteristic is the inevitable abstractness of maps, the result of selection, omission, isolation, distance and codification. Map devices, such as frame, scale, orientation, projection, indexing and naming, reveal artificial geographies that remain unavailable to human eyes.

James Corner

Contemporary (post-contact, circa 1870) representations of the geography of Haida Gwaii, ‘The Islands of the People’, of the Pacific Northwest Coast, preference measurable, or ‘objectively’ constructed land surveys and physically verifiable evidence. These include official documents such as maps, historical photographs, scientific text and related drawings (Google Earth, Geographical Information Systems, Canadian Nautical Charts, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, etc). Less tangible and far more ephemeral, are the oral histories, and related cultural artifacts underlying the stories, myths and knowledge of place passed on from generation to generation in the Haida language and tradition.

This SALA Study Abroad course, a logical and purposeful extension of LARC 582 Mapping_The Invisible and LARC 504/505 Haida Gwaii, Mannahatta and Other Remote Islands, seeks to investigate, critically, the conceptualization, agency and production of mapping as it concentrates on specific routes and locations in Haida Gwaii.

In contradistinction to the aforementioned courses, research will be based principally on personal, first-hand experience in the field. The resulting observations, documentations and syntheses will form the basis for a series of class representations (analog and digital) investigating the nature of time and change, in a place where ecological metrics are measured in tens of thousands, if not millions of years.

No travel itinerary is capable of charting a comprehensive chronological journey through the more than 150 small islands comprising the archipelago, and their geomorphological, ecological and/or cultural history. The northern Graham Island, the most populated of the two principal islands, has a single thoroughfare, Highway 16, which traverses between the major settlements of Queen Charlotte City, Skidegate, Tlell, Port Clements, Massett, and Old Massett. The southern Moresby Island, the location of National Park Reserve of Gwaii Haanas, the settlements of Sandspit, Moresby Camp, Cumshewa Inlet and several ancient Haida sacred sites, has locations on the Pacific Coast that are so remote, and prone to such extraordinarily shifting weather events, as to render fixed land and sea navigation schedules virtually impossible.

The course will rely heavily on a survey of historical documents – from the logs of Juan Josef Pérez Hernández, claiming an initial sighting in 1774, to G. E. Swanton’s linguistic mappings of Old Massett and Skidegate, to Emily Carr’s sketches and paintings of Cumshewa Inlet in the early 20th century, to Google Maps’ aerial surveys of the late 20th and early 21st century, exposing, perhaps for the first time for some, the extent of the environmental impact of 20th century forestry and resource management practices on the islands.

Against the backdrop of recent critical texts by James Corner, Laura Kurgan and Charles Waldheim, we will attempt to find appropriate ways of describing a world which defies simple description.

All course material will be complete and due by 21 June 2018.

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