

Ph.D. in Architecture + Design Research

School of Architecture + Design
College of Architecture and Urban Studies
Virginia Tech

Representation and Education Stream

Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center
Northern Capitol Region

Proposal by Paul Emmons, Ph.D., R.A.
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Disegno, Cesare Ripa, Iconologia (Padua, 1624)

Focus: Representation

Founded by Dr. Marco Frascari in 1999 as a new stream of the older EDP program, Ph.D. studies in Architecture and related design fields (currently Landscape Architecture) based at the Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center revolve around the topic of representation understood in its broadest sense. Representation, unlike other fields where it is usually understood as mimesis, for architecture and the design arts is not a question of imitation, rather a projective and edifying foresight. Architectural treatises, from Vitruvius to the present day, comprise the core resources for understanding and developing theories within the field of architecture and are augmented by artifacts such as drawings, models and buildings. These historical materials are used to illuminate issues of contemporary architectural practice.

The aim of the Ph.D. stream in architectural representation is to provide an intellectual and reflective force in the body of the architectural profession and education. Rather than turning to outside fields, the stream emphasizes architectural knowledge, studying in many ways how architects develop a set of analogical structures to address societal concerns through the built world. This knowledge derives from the concert of theory and practice, a merging of homo faber with homo sapiens that generates the domain of the architectural discipline. Moving away from the creation of specialties borrowed from contributing disciplines, the cultivation of Architecture is again seen as having its own form of knowing and scholarly traditions. Concentrating on the study of theory and history, the program is for those individuals wishing to contribute to a comprehension of the intersection between the theory and practice of architecture.

The Ph.D. stream in architecture is for those students who desire to pursue careers in the research fields of advanced professional and academic practice and teaching. The stream draws from the architecture faculty's diverse experiences and backgrounds to establish a climate in which scholarship and creativity can flourish. Students most qualified for application are those with professional degrees and/or practice experience in Architecture and Landscape Architecture or other design areas with a professor's support. Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the director, stream coordinator or college faculty with questions related to the program after reviewing the information available on the website.

Location

Based in Old Town Alexandria as an historic and vital part of the District of Columbia area, research facilities are available to the students that equal or exceed those anywhere in the world, including the Library of Congress, Smithsonian Collections, Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts (The National Gallery) and special collections such as the American Institute of Architects Archive and the Folger Shakespeare Library along with four schools of architecture in the immediate region. The program will also strive to build closer ties to the main Blacksburg campus faculty and resources.

Faculty

Primary faculty

Dr. Paul Emmons, R.A.
Dr. Marcia Feuerstein, A.I.A.
Dr. Paul Kelsch, A.S.L.A.
Dr. Caren Yglesias, A.I.A.
Dr. David Lever, R.A., D.A.
Dr. Fred Krimgold
Dr. Charles Steger

Associated Faculties:

CAUS, Blacksburg (particularly Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Art History)
CAUS, Planning (NCR)
History of Science (NCR)

Selected examples of current external committee members:

Dr. Marco Frascari
Dr. Alberto Pérez-Gómez
Dr. Donald Kunze
Dr. Henry Mellon (Director emeritus, CASVA)

Program size

Presently, there are thirteen active students in the program at all levels.

Long-term planning suggests growing to two-three new students each year for a minimum total of six funded students at any one time. Each student receives three years of funding at 20 hours. Since students usually take about five to six years to complete the dissertation, the total number of active students would be in the range of fifteen to twenty. Expanding the Master of Science in Architecture program, where practicing architects return for advanced studies that has a large potential market in the NCR, could allow more students to fill out the program courses with less faculty burden since they won't write a dissertation. While on site, Ph.D. students train in teaching design studios and courses as fitting their experience and abilities.

Program Structure

First Year (Coursework)

First Semester

Word & Image 1 (Reading Architectural Treatises, ancient to renaissance) 3 credits (PE).

Epistemology (VTel), 3 credits (DK).

Ph.D. Seminar (Critical readings in research methods) 3 credits (PE/MF).

Elective or Independent Study, 3 credits (PE/MF)

Second Semester

Word & Image 2 (Reading Architectural Treatises, enlightenment to modern) 3 credits (MF).

Philosophy (VTel), 3 credits (HR).

Ph.D. Colloquium (Current research topics) (PE/MF).

Elective or Independent Study, 3 credits (PE/MF)

Exams at the end of the first year:

Theory (general) Exam. Each committee member selected by the student writes a question based on the student's prepared bibliography of 22 books (11 required treatises and 11 selected by the student). The student selects one question and has two hours to write a closed book outline response. Then the student has 48 hours to write a scholarly paper based on the outline with reference material.

First language exam for reading ability in a language other than English and the native language of the student to fulfill the first half of the two language requirement.

Second Year (Coursework)

First Semester

Body and Building (Topical course) 3 credits (MF).

Ph.D. Seminar (Critical readings in research methods) 3 credits (PE/MF).

Dissertation Proposal, 3 credits.

Elective or Independent Study, 3 credits.

Second Semester

Mirror of Drafting (Topical course) 3 credits (PE).

Ph.D. Colloquium (Research topics) (PE/MF).

Visual Atlas ("Making" aspect of dissertation proposal), 3 credits.

Elective or Independent Study, 3 credits.

Exams at the end of the second year:

Field (qualifying) Exam. Each committee member selected by student writes a question based on the submitted bibliography of the dissertation proposal and visual atlas. Student selects one question and has two hours to write a closed book outline response. Then the student has 48 hours to write a scholarly paper based on the outline with reference material. An oral exam by the committee follows about two weeks after the completed written exam.

Take second language exam.

Third Year (Dissertation)

Oral defense before the committee after the final draft of the dissertation as approved by the committee. A public lecture by the candidate on the dissertation completes the requirements.

Recent external academic achievements of students in the program:

The first program graduate is now an Associate Professor with tenure at Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA and is working toward publishing her dissertation.

Assistant Professorships (tenure track): RISD and Carleton University.

Visiting Instructorships: Catholic University, Maryland University, Howard University, University of Minnesota, NOVA, Pennsylvania State University, and Corcoran School of Art.

Invited Lectures and Studio Reviews: ETH Zürich, Cooper Union, Boston Architectural Center, Pennsylvania State University, Morgan State University.

Semester Study Abroad Programs developed, organized and taught by student:
Bern, Switzerland for Carleton University in association with ETH
Paris, France for Catholic University

Architectural Practice: All but one of the students is practicing or has practiced architecture.

Selected student publications and presentations at regional, national and international conferences:
Renaissance Society of America Conference, Chicago (Forthcoming 2008 and 2006)
Role of Humanities in Design Creativity Conference, University of Lincoln, UK (Forthcoming 2007)
From Models to Drawings: On Representation in Architecture (Routledge), forthcoming.
Architecture, Urbanism & Curatorship, 4th Annual AHRA International Conference, Kingston University, London (upcoming, 2007).
Architecture Research Quarterly, Volume 10, Nos. ¾ (2007).
Fresh Air, ACSA National Conference Proceedings, Philadelphia PA, 2007.
Quality Conference, Cardiff, Wales, 2007.
A.I.A Virginia Conference, 2007.
The Politics of Making: Theory, Practice, Product, 3rd Annual AHRA International Conference, Oxford, England, 2006.
ACSA NE Regional Conference, Québec, CANADA, 2006.
National American Culture Association/ Popular Culture Association, 2006 and 2005.
Drawings and Models, Architecture Humanities Research Association, Nottingham University, England, 2005.
Graduate Student Conference, University of Pennsylvania, 2005.
Southeast College Art Conference (SECAC), 2005.
Material Matters, University of East London, 2004.
University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School, 2004.
Conference Proceedings, ACSA, NE Conference, Syracuse University, 2004.
Catholic University Journal of the School of Architecture: SIAJ, 2004.
Morgan Magazine, 2004.
Conference Proceedings, Bridges: Mathematical connections in Art, Music and Science, Southwestern College, Winfield Kansas, 2003.
Synaesthesia Conference, Pennsylvania State University, School of Architecture, 2003.
Plus, Korean Architecture plus Interior Design, 2003.
Potential Architectural Journal (on-line), 2001.
East Meets West Conference, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, 2000.