Architecture International Traveling Studios

Barry Perlus, Associate Dean
College of Architecture, Art, and Planning

International traveling studios in one form or another have been a part of the undergraduate architecture curriculum for more than 30 years. The current curriculum, which offers traveling studios each semester, took shape concurrently with the establishing of a 3 ½ year Masters of Architecture Program some 10 years ago. International experience is a vital component of an architect’s education. The field of architecture is more than ever engaged across cultures, in practice and in theory. Enrollment in Architecture at Cornell is one of the most diverse in terms of international students, and the valuation of international experience is reflected in the curriculum and faculty.

International traveling studios are offered as part of the Option Studio track in the curriculum. Option studios generally include both undergraduate and graduate students for a total enrollment of 13-15. Undergraduates typically take an option studio after completing the design core, in their 4th year or the first semester of their 5th year. Graduate students take the option studio in their 3rd year. There are usually 8-10 option studios offered each semester, with anywhere from 4-6 traveling to international venues. They focus on a theme or project specific to a particular locale and culture, and each class is led by faculty with relevant knowledge and expertise. Typically, students research the site in advance and then spend a week to 10 days on site to meet with local representatives and experience the site in its cultural context. All of this usually happens before the midpoint of the semester, and the remainder of the semester focuses on designing projects for the site. This semester, venues included Madrid, Hong Kong, and sites in Portugal, Puerto Rico, and Brazil.