

Designing for the African Context: Integrating the Study of Architecture in Africa into the Curriculum

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American schools of architecture have historically relied on Western tradition and assumptions that the constructed infrastructure of the developed world was sustainable. As universities across the United States expand their global reach, interest in study of African architectural history, cultural interactions, and the design of contemporary buildings in the African context of limited resources has become essential to the education of this generation of architects.

As a teacher and practitioner, support from the Center for African Studies has allowed me to offer an annual graduate seminar which focuses on historic and contemporary architecture in East Africa, to travel to Moshi, Tanzania for my work on the tunaHAKI Center, and to begin the collaborative effort of the Architecture| Africa Initiative at the University of Florida.

Over the past year, several celebrated architects practicing across Africa visited and presented to architecture students and the campus community. Students were inspired and informed, and both faculty and students have formed partnerships that are resulting in new collaborative efforts. Architect Francis Kere, winner of the Aga Khan Award for the design of a primary school in Gando, Burkina Faso, presented his work and reviewed our student's designs for a clinic in East Africa. Architect Fasil Ghiorghis, from Ethiopia, lectured about his contemporary projects and his efforts to preserve the cultural heritage site of Axum, and architect Joe Addo of Accra, Ghana, lectured and led a design workshop on housing in developing countries.

I have a particular interest in the design of contemporary architecture in cultural heritage sites, and am currently collaborating with architects from Finland, Tanzania, and Ethiopia who share this interest.

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