

ARCHITECTURE WORKSHOP EXCHANGE 2018: GAINESVILLE | ACCRA “TRASH CASTLE”

DONNA COHEN

The School of Architecture and the College of Design Construction and Planning looks forward to an annual on-campus event featuring an African architect, jointly sponsored with CAS. The visiting architect engages students and faculty with a public lecture, and works closely with students and faculty over the week-long visit as they build a work together.

In 2018, DK Osseo-Asare served as the Architect-in-Residence, one of a group of Ghanaian artists and architects involved with the current creative scene in Accra who have recently worked with us in Gainesville. Undergraduate Architecture students, graduate students in Anthropology, and faculty Donna Cohen, Charlie Hailey, Elizabeth Cronin, and Brenda Chalfin, collaborated on the design and construction of a mobile maker space. The project was conceived by the Repurpose Project of Gainesville, a community-based organization dedicated to minimizing waste in the landfill, and was dubbed the “Trash Castle.”

Osseo-Asare’s experience in scrap yards and expertise with recycled material, based on his work in the Agbogbloshie community in Accra, Ghana, was critical to the success of the project. The mobile maker-space was fabricated from recycled and repurposed materials that were supplied by the Repurpose Project; it made a small but significant contribution to material conservation efforts. Osseo-Asare’s lecture tied this local conservation effort to his work in Ghana, and demonstrated that, despite vast differences in scales, both experimental projects have great potential to impact global conservation.

In summer 2018 I traveled to Accra, Ghana with Brenda Chalfin, and visited Osseo-Asare on his worksite in Agbogbloshie. The scale of the site is immense, the ground is certainly toxic, the entire place is inhabited by makers and vendors, industrious people, grazing animals. There we met with Asare and his



construction team, to view his work on site and consider how to develop an experiential learning course for UF students. During this visit to Accra I gave a public presentation of the “Trash Castle” to professionals, students, and community members at the Jamestown Café Cultural Center, and led one group of Ghanaian students in a 2 day community design charrette that studied possibilities for the re-development of the Jamestown market.

In addition to the visit with Osseo-Asare, we met with architect Joe Addo and artist Elisabeth Efua Sutherland, who have also worked with us in Gainesville. Addo is recognized as a leader in the movement to support and nurture new voices in African architecture, and has created a cultural, social, and educational hub in Jamestown that is a vibrant space for meeting and making. Sutherland is co-founder of Ghana’s Accra Theatre Workshop, which supports youth artists through free workshops and events throughout the year, focusing on contemporary, experimental theatre and performance. Our visit solidified

our relationship with these creative leaders and will lead to further studies and projects for faculty and students here and in Ghana.

Donna Cohen is associate professor in the School of Architecture, College of Design Construction Planning. Funding support for travel: UF International Center and College of Design Construction Planning. Funding for Architect-in-Residence: Center for African Studies, College of Design Construction Planning, School of Architecture.