

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Landscape Architecture 11:550:332 | 11:550:432 | 16:550:536 (graduate)

Transition DESIGN for Art, Ecology, & Local History

Spring 2026

Tuesday 2:00 – 7:00 | Thursday 2:00 – 5:00

Anita Bakshi

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Course Description

This Spring 2026 Praxis Design Studio is part of an ongoing collaboration between Rutgers Department of Landscape Architecture and coLAB Arts. The main goal for the 2026 studio will be to work with coLAB on the preparation for the Heartbeat of the City – a new arts corridor and associated arts festival to take place in fall 2026. This festival strives to create new economic and cultural connections between New Brunswick’s professional and financial Downtown community and the Esperanza Neighborhood.

Students will create maps, drawings, and renderings that support the creation of site-specific art installations. They will also identify locations and create site-specific designs for a microforest strategy that connects environmental and social goals for New Brunswick’s communities, looking for opportunities to improve 5 underpasses in the city.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. Gain training and experience with community engagement practices, including the importance of considering positionality, identity, and power relations in community work.
2. Interrogate and document experiences in the field using methods that bring together sociological and architectural knowledges and tools (SOCIOARC).
3. Create maps, drawings, and renderings that support the creation of site-specific installations for a major public arts festival in New Brunswick in fall 2026.
4. Identify locations and design ideas for a microforest strategy that connect environmental and social goals for New Brunswick’s diverse communities.
5. Develop design proposals that address the needs of community partners and build off of the work from last year’s Civic Engagement Education placements with coLAB, Irise, and the New Brunswick Public Library.

Project Partner:

CoLAB Arts' vision is to create more livable, sustainable, and exciting environments through art. coLAB Arts engages artists, social advocates, and communities to create transformative new work. coLAB Arts facilitates creative conversation through innovative programs and artist infrastructure, connects artists with community partners and mentors, and executes productions that challenge perceptions and inspire action. coLAB Arts generates community-powered projects and seeks to create an art scene using new and established spaces. Its work takes place in community rooms, houses of worship, parking lots, schools, bars, and backyards. A "let's get it done" work ethic and flair for mischief colors coLAB Arts' aesthetic and an emphasis on community engagement and professional development defines its commitment to the arts. coLAB Arts believes that artistic expression is civic engagement and that collaboration is an active and creative process. coLAB Arts draws energy and inspiration from working with emerging artists and finding new platforms and audiences for established creative voices. coLAB Arts engages communities to ask questions, develop relationships, and come together to create new work across socio-economic, ethnic, and generational lines.

Assignments and Grading

Project 1 (Artistic Response) 2.5%

Project 2 (NB History) 5%

Project 3 (MF Site ID) 7.5%

- Mapping
- Field Work Site ID
- Readings & Discussion Posts

Project 4 (MF Site Design) 15%

- Design Deliverables
- Readings & Discussion Posts
- Precedent Study
- Diorama

Project 5 (Festival Corridor Analysis & Design) 25%

- Design Deliverables
- Bloustein Report Analysis
- Precedent Study
- Diorama

Project 6 (Pop-up Forest Design) 10%

- Design Deliverables
- Precedent Study

FINAL PROJECT - P7 or P8 35%

- Concept Board
- Design Boards

Policies

Except for circumstances truly beyond the student's control, all projects and homework are due on the dates and at the times specified throughout the semester. No late homework will be accepted. Midterm and Final Projects that are incomplete on the due date should still be submitted on the date it is due to receive at least partial credit. Turning in no work for an assignment or a project will result in a grade of zero [0]. *Any final or midterm project submitted late will lose a letter grade for each day past due.* Working beyond a due date is both unrealistic in a professional setting and unfair to your classmates in this course. If you encounter any personal circumstances that inhibit your ability to fulfill the requirements of this course, you should immediately contact the instructor. In addition, any student with a special need, circumstance, or disability, should make an appointment to see the instructor during the first week of classes.

If a circumstance arises beyond your control, please notify the Instructor *prior* to the class meeting, and other arrangements will be made. *Documented* medical and family emergencies are, of course, excused. Attendance will be taken at the start of class. Late arrivals greater than 10 minutes will be marked as a full absence by the Instructor. Content missed due to an excused absence will be made available however, an excused absence does not automatically prolong an assigned due date for any exercise or project.

Homework

Project statements outline the final expectations for each project. In addition, new assignments may be given during the studio and lectures as a way to direct your work. Reading assignments are required homework. Please check Canvas assignments for the particulars on submission details and deadlines. Except for circumstances truly beyond a student's control, all assignments are due at the dates and times specified. Any work submitted late will be penalized a letter grade for each day past due. Submitted drawings, models, photographs, or written papers for any project assigned in Landscape Architecture courses are considered the property of the department.

Contact

It is important that all students are given the same updates and information. Most of this will occur during class, but the instructor will also rely on email and Canvas announcements to students. You are expected to check your email regularly regarding postings made to Canvas for specific assignments.

Attendance

More than 3 unexcused absences will result in a one-step reduction in your semester grade. If you encounter any personal circumstances that inhibit your ability to fulfill the requirements of this course, please let the department know as soon as possible. The Department of Landscape Architecture requires attendance in all of its classes.

Readings

Bakshi, A., Dinzey-Flores, Z., 2026. *Collaborations in Architecture and Sociology*. Routledge.
[Various SOCIOARC Exercises]

Lewis, H., 2022. *Mini-Forest Revolution: Using the Miyawaki Method to Rapidly Rewild the World*, 1st ed. ed. Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, Vermont.
[Introduction & Precedent Studies]

Miyawaki, A., 1999. Creative Ecology: Restoration of Native Forests by Native Trees. *Plant Biotechnology* 16, 15–25.

Simard, S., 2017. The Mother Tree, in: Springer, A.-S., Turpin, E., Einfeldt, K., Wolf, D. (Eds.), *The Word for World Is Still Forest*. pp. 66–71.

Tsing, A.L., 2021. *The mushroom at the end of the world: on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*, Princeton University Press, Princeton Oxford.
[Prologue & Chapter 18]