

Course proposal for the Sam Fox Commons, April 2011:

## FLORENCE Summer Program Sam Fox COMMONS



Superonda modular sofa, Archizoom Associati Architecture Collaborative for the Poltronova Furniture Company, Florence. Superarchitettura show, Pistoia, 1966

### **Florence Architecture Studio (6 Credits, 200- or 300-level)**

#### ***Disegno: Encounters in Public Space***

Instructor: Igor Marjanovic  
marjanovic@samfox.wustl.edu

### **Florence Art Studio (6 Credits, 200- or 300-level)**

#### **Drawing and Re-drawing Conclusions**

Instructor: Regan Wheat  
wheat@samfox.wustl.edu

### **Art and Architectural History (3 Credits, 300-level)**

#### **Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Florence, Rome, and Venice: Rethinking Renaissance Visual Culture**

Instructor: Liliana Leopardi, PhD  
ll348@nyu.edu

While these three courses have been offered in the past, they have been substantially redeveloped for the purposes of this submission, enhancing their shared scope of critical inquiry in line with the Sam Fox Commons mandate.

## Art | Architecture | Theory

# FLORENCE

## Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts

# COMMONS

## PRELUDE

### Angeli del fango | Angels of Mud

In 1966, a devastating flood of the Arno River engulfed the city of Florence. The city was covered in mud, its iconic artwork damaged, destroyed, or buried in indescribable sludge. As these events unfolded, young volunteers from around the world descended upon Florence aiding in recovery efforts. Working around the clock and known as *Angeli del fango* or *Angels of Mud*, these volunteers witnessed a surprising turn – from what many saw as a devastating blow to the city’s past and present, a new future emerged. The neo avant-garde groups such as *Superstudio* and *Archizoom Associati* launched a series of radical projects that tackled the very foundations of modern art, architecture and design with which Italian culture became synonymous after World War II, primarily through the production of buildings, furniture, cars, garments, computers and other designed objects and visual media. From flying megastructures, to space-age garments and plastic furniture, their projects provided a critical social commentary, which was disseminated through a truly global discourse that initially started in small galleries of Florence, Pistoia and other Tuscan cities, and soon reached the Museum of Modern Art and a number of international journals. Again, Florence was at the forefront of *change*; like at the beginning of the twentieth century when its artists, architects and poets seeded the avant-garde trajectory of Futurism; or like in the Renaissance, when an entire society sought to redefine itself – including its visual culture – in the face of rapid socio-economic, scientific and cultural change. For many modern thinkers, it was precisely the revolutionary impulse of the Renaissance that sparked the modern age – an age marked by technological advances, social transformations, and ever-changing geographies of people, ideas and capital flows; an age in which we still live today.

**The Sam Fox School Florence Commons is an interdisciplinary learning environment that *critically* examines visual culture as a social, political, and aesthetic construct. Each student takes an art history course and either an architecture or art studio. Through common field trips, discussions, and creative work, these three courses converge into a shared pedagogy that expands the spectrum of critical inquiry of individual disciplines. The program encourages the students to cross the boundaries – both literally and conceptually – and experiment with interdisciplinary work, engaging the city’s full cultural landscape: from museums, cloisters and local markets, to its contemporary art and architecture. The program draws from both past and present: from the Renaissance Florence where art and architecture was produced outside the strict disciplinary boundaries; and from the modern city of Florence – a truly international city shaped by numerous global issues, including migration, identity politics, and social mobility.**

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## Florence Architecture Studio (6 Credits)

### **Disegno: Encounters in Public Space**

Professor: Igor Marjanovic

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#### Course description

One of the origins of the term “design” is the Italian word *disegno*, a form of visual inquiry rooted in the idea of drawing both as a mark-making process and as a form of critical inquiry. Building upon this dual trajectory, this design studio focuses on a series of site-specific projects that explore public space both as a visual and conceptual phenomenon – a space of social encounter that is drawn, re-drawn and ultimately (re)designed through a multiplicity of drawing strategies, including freehand drawing, drafting, and making. The projects are informed by various discourses in architecture, culture and identity, using modern metropolitan Florence as their laboratory for visual experimentation. By embracing the complexities of contemporary Italian society – including its evolving ethnic, racial and social dynamic – the projects explore the critical dichotomies of past-present and global-local. The course is a dynamic learning environment that encourages students to develop a unique way of working by building upon their intellectual curiosity and diverse educational backgrounds. Course requirements include studio work, presentations, and field trips.

#### Connections between art and architecture

In addition to their shared emphasis on drawing – both as a visual and critical tool – the architecture studio and the art studio are developed in close collaboration, with students benefiting from critical input from both faculty members. The class sessions often include shared projects and critiques– such as the Sketchbook Project or the Afterimage Project – where students work together inside and outside of studio. Through the making of the sketchbook and shared field trips, the student in art and architecture are introduced to the canonical concepts of image and perspective. In the Afterimage project – often occurring after a visit to the Venice Biennale – they are asked to question that construct and engage a contemporary worldview shaped by emerging issues and concepts.

#### Sample assignment 1

##### Mapping Public Space

In his famous optical experiments, Filippo Brunelleschi demonstrated his “invention” of perspective through a form of public spectacle that involved buildings, people and mirrors. Through his image-based study, he implicitly reinforced the emerging “Dominion of the Eye” – a supremacy of visual imagery that continues to dominate our culture even today. This project takes Brunelleschi’s visual experiments – namely the concept of public space as *vision* – back to their original site: the public space of Piazza del Duomo. Yet, to Brunelleschi’s spectacle, we also add a contemporary twist: instead of grand churches, princes and merchants, the project challenges the students to think of public space in its contemporary dynamics shaped by the tourists, locals, immigrants and the humble everyday spaces that they inhabit: a bench, a sidewalk, a bus stop – a concept of public space as a series of *events*.

Each student is asked to document the user experience of three different social groups: illegal vendors from North Africa, tourists and locals in Piazza del Duomo. Through their visual and textual observations, as well as on-site interviews, the students develop a map of public space that is both accurate and polemical. All maps must be layered, documenting the use of public space by various social groups at three different times of the day: 9am, 3pm, and 9pm. By developing a composite map that integrates different times of the day and different user groups, the students are asked to tackle broader questions about privacy and publicity: what is the dynamic of public space? Who controls it and when? The project also focuses on visual and textual skills that engage the discourse around public space by means of design, namely through drawing, measurement and spatial narrative. Through their evidence-based research, the students are also asked to focus on an aspect of public space that is both beautiful and contested. By studying this dichotomy, the students question their pre-conceived notions about site and culture, developing observational mechanisms that are sensitive to the nuanced complexities of foreign cultures. Ultimately, this study will be used both as a basis for the siting of their final project and the writing of its building program.

### [Sample assignment 2: Shared with Art](#)

#### **Afterimage, or Drawing the Unseen**

Choose one or more sites to explore what is seen and what is unseen. How does the architecture of the place frame the space? What does the space contain? What is seen, what is sensed, heard, felt? Make a series of drawings as evidence of a reciprocal exchange between yourself and the place/space. This is not about making “finished drawings,” this is more about immersing yourself in the atmosphere of a place and allowing it to guide you in the drawings. Maintain your approach of curiosity and wonder throughout.

Consider issues of  
time and mood  
seen to unseen  
sight and sound  
site and place  
named and unnamed  
entirety and detail  
bigness and smallness  
mark and trace

Your drawings:

explore line as it relates to the qualities of the place, mood, etc.  
are from direct observation/perception & have evidence of use of perspective  
can be made inside and/or outside your sketchbooks,  
on found or prepared paper,  
original drawings, and/or photocopy transfer,  
pencil, water-soluble pencil, pen

## Florence Architecture Studio I Weekly schedule

NOTE: All field trips are common for art, architecture and theory, with all three faculty members leading the tours, lectures, and discussions.

### Week 1: Drawing (The Sketchbook Project) | SHARED W/ ART

Historical city: study of architectural and urban spaces, as well as landscapes and hybrid public spaces through free-hand drawings and site visits.

### Week 2: Mapping

Modern city: Study of public space and its users, from Italians to *extracomunitarios*, and tourists.

Field trip: Siena – public space / public display

### Week 3: Image

Questioning the past: The canonical principles of **spatial presence** are studied through orthographic projections and measured representation, playing upon Brunelleschi's controversial visual experiments that occurred in the streets of Florence, often credited with the "invention" of modern perspective.

### Week 4: Afterimage | SHARED WITH ART

Questioning the present: *Afterimage* challenges the students to see the unseen, to hear the voices that are unheard – to study **spatial absence** through drawing, collage, or another hybrid media.

Field trip: Venice or Rome – history vs. contemporary experimentations (Venice Biennale or MAXXI, Rome)

### Week 5: Events

Questioning the future: The students write a new program for the site – a script of spatial inhibition derived from *events* (both scripted and unscripted), as well as past and present use of space.

### Week 6: Making

Making and re-making of architectural space three dimensionally (paper, wire, egg shells).

Field trip: Bologna – encounters between art, architecture and sciences (Natural History Museum, Ducati Motorcycle Factory, Museo Giorgio Morandi)

### Week 7: *Disegno*

A design intervention is articulated through image and text, integrating past/present, seen/unseen.

### Week 8: Discourse | SHARED WITH ART

The projects are finalized and presented in a public format, with students in art and architecture visiting each other's reviews. The semester culminates in the production of a well-organized, clearly structured and engaging portfolio.

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## Florence Art Studio (6 Credits)

### Drawing and Re-drawing Conclusions

Professor: Regan Wheat

wheat@samfox.wustl.edu

#### Course description

In this course, students broaden their knowledge of the principle elements of drawing and explore their relevance to contemporary art practice. Through a series of structured exercises, they begin to locate themselves within an art historical context and to use this rich history as a field from which to draw inspiration for contemporary works. They conduct research in the museums, churches, piazzas, and markets of Florence, and their sketchbooks serve as visual documentation of their experiences, providing a resource for current and future works. Students investigate the practice of drawing as both a medium and a form of critical inquiry that can engage broader questions, from identity politics to social issues. Course requirements include drawing on-site, in class, and independently; slide lectures and readings contextualize this work. Students are also required to complete a midterm project and a final project.

#### Connections between art and architecture

In addition to their shared emphasis on drawing – both as a visual and critical tool – the architecture studio and the art studio are developed in close collaboration, with students benefiting from critical input from both faculty members. The class sessions often include shared projects and critiques– such as the Sketchbook Project or the Afterimage Project – where students work together inside and outside of studio. Through the making of the sketchbook and shared field trips, the student in art and architecture are introduced to the canonical concepts of image and perspective. In the Afterimage project – often occurring after a visit to the Venice Biennale – they are asked to question that construct and engage a contemporary worldview shaped by emerging issues and concepts.

#### Sample assignment 1

**a master work  
intervention. response.**  
*final drawing project*

Choose one or more “master” art works to respond to and/or intervene upon.

How would you rewrite the narrative?

How would you contemporize the subject matter?

Consider point of view (conceptual, physical), time period, contemporary issues (personal/political).

How much is included/ translated/ interpreted/ erased/ left out?

For this project, you can work directly on postcards, images from books, original drawings, photocopies, or transfers. Consider issues of scale and how your drawings related to space- both on and off the page. Your work will draw from the principles and elements of drawing that we have been exploring up to this point, and may expand to include drawing through video, sculpture, and/or performance.

If you choose a masterwork that you have studied this summer in Art History, you will write an art historical analysis and artist statement addressing why & how you intervened.

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## Sample assignment 2: Shared with [Architecture](#)

### **Afterimage, or Drawing the Unseen**

Choose one or more sites to explore what is seen and what is unseen. How does the architecture of the place frame the space? What does the space contain? What is seen, what is sensed, heard, felt? Make a series of drawings as evidence of a reciprocal exchange between yourself and the place/space. This is not about making “finished drawings,” this is more about immersing yourself in the atmosphere of a place and allowing it to guide you in the drawings. Maintain your approach of curiosity and wonder throughout.

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Your drawings:

explore line as it relates to the qualities of the place, mood, etc.  
are from direct observation/perception & have evidence of use of perspective  
can be made inside and/or outside your sketchbooks,  
on found or prepared paper,  
original drawings, and/or photocopy transfer,  
pencil, water-soluble pencil, pen

## Florence Art Studio I Weekly schedule

NOTE: All field trips are common for art, architecture and theory, with all three faculty members leading the tours, lectures, and discussions.

Week 1: Measurement & Proportion. Perspective.

Figure in Context **SHARED W/ ARCHITECTURE**

Site visits to Brunelleschi's Church of San Lorenzo, San Lorenzo market, Piazza Signoria, Loggia dei Lanzi, Piazza Signoria.

Week 2: Tone. Introduction to Placement. Anatomy & Contour.

Site visits to the Pitti Palace, Uffizi, Bargello, Orsanmichele, Chiostro dello Scalzo.

Field trip: Siena – public space / public display

Week 3: Mark making. Scribble, Wobble, Sticks & stones.

Site visits to Boboli & Bardini Gardens, hike through Tuscan hills, Anthropology Museum, La Specola Museum.

Week 4: Afterimage I **SHARED WITH ARCHITECTURE**

Questioning the present: *Afterimage* challenges the students to see the unseen, to hear the voices that are unheard – to study **spatial absence** through drawing, collage, or another hybrid media.

Field trip: Venice or Rome – history vs. contemporary experimentations (Venice Biennale or MAXXI, Rome)

Week 5: Drawing Workshop. Drawing Responses.

Extending the principle elements of drawing into real space and time (video, sculpture, installation, performance).

Week 6: Final Project Work Week.

Individual meetings / studio work.

Field trip: Bologna – encounters between art, architecture and sciences (Natural History Museum, Ducati Motorcycle Factory, Museo Giorgio Morandi)

Week 7: Final Project Work Week.

Project refinements / studio work.

Week 8: Discourse I **SHARED WITH ARCHITECTURE**

The projects are finalized, with students in art and architecture visiting each other's reviews, and culminating in a public exhibition.

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## Art and Architectural History (3 Credits)

### Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Florence, Rome, and Venice: Rethinking Renaissance Visual Culture

Professor: Liliana Leopardi, PhD  
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#### Course description

In this course students will come to evaluate the intellectual and studio practice of Renaissance artists by exploring the complexities, innovations, and magnificence of two centuries of visual production in architecture, painting, sculpture, costume, ornaments, etc. Michael Baxandall first introduced the concept of the “Period Eye” to Renaissance studies to draw attention to the intellectual schemata through which the Renaissance artists produced works and the viewer saw them. Students will, thus, be lead on a path aimed at reconstructing the social fabric of Renaissance Florence, examining the patterns of patronage, art production and religious and civic institution. Particular attention will be paid to a number of parallel motifs: perspective as way to question and construct seeing; drawing as the preferred method through which Florentine artists explored and solved visual problems; and gender construction as way to decode works of art meant to sustain and re-affirm an homosocial society. The final aim is to challenge the established understanding of Renaissance Florence as a cohesive and homogenous phenomenon and search for and construct a more diverse notion of Florence's aesthetic language and identity. Beyond the assigned textbooks, our visual guide will be the city of Florence itself. Students will be asked to support their visual learning with readings of original sources including Petrarch, Boccaccio, Lorenzo de'Medici, Leonardo, Benvenuto Cellini (a bibliography will be available prior to departure for Italy). Students are encouraged to construct their own trajectory of study and inquiry, exploring those issues that best reflect their interests and inclinations.

#### Connections between art and architecture

The art history course is devised in such a way as to provide an historically critical framework against which students in either studio art or architecture may gain a more nuanced understanding of subjects and themes they explore in those courses. By closely examining conception of space in Medieval and Renaissance Florence students will be better able to respond to architecture assignments that ask them to intervene on the contemporary fabric of the city. By examining the Renaissance practice of *disegno* (drawing) students will have a better sense of the evolution of the concept of mark making, which they will explore in their studio art course. Art History modules on Brunelleschi, perspective, drawing, anatomical conception of the body and identity will be shared with both studio art and architecture courses.

#### Sample assignment 1: Architecture or Drawing

For students in the Architecture course: Students will be asked to closely compare and contrast the following piazzas: Piazza della Signoria, Piazza del Duomo, and Piazza della Santissima Annunziata. Their direct visual examination of the spaces will be supported by key readings on the Medieval vs. Renaissance concept of Space which will include excerpts from *Dominion of the Eye*; *Brunelleschi*, *Le Corbusier*, *Lacan: Architecture, Space and the Construction of Subjectivity*; and *Non-Science and Nonsense: The Interpretation of Brunelleschi's Perspective in Art History*. By considering

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how these spaces differs, and how they were meant to be occupied in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century, the students will be able to better site their architecture projects, understanding the spatial dynamic of public spaces from both contemporary and historical perspective (see Sample Assignment 1 for Architecture course).

For students in the Drawing Course: Students will choose a pictorial cycle or sculpture program that is still currently in situ, and on which they will carry out one of their assignments as given in the Drawing course. They will carry out in depth research on their chosen object in order to understand its function and meaning, both historical and contemporary. Students will be asked to consider a multiplicity of elements: subject matter, patron, artist, context, religious narrative, social narrative; gender construction, etc. According to the selected object, research will encompass the reading of the latest articles as available through the digital database JSTOR.

### **Sample assignment 1: Architecture AND Drawing**

All students will be asked to write a final research paper of no less than 10 pages that makes use of primary sources to closely examine a chosen work of art, artist or concept. Papers that compare features of the Florentine Renaissance to either the Venetian or the Roman Renaissance are particularly encouraged, as this approach will allow students to fully mature their direct experiences of those cities. Students will be asked to use a minimum of seven sources, two primary and five secondary, and give evidence of their grasp of the various scholarly interpretations on their chosen subject. The final goal of the project is to foster critical thinking and writing skills, enabling the students to understand art and architecture within an evolving and dynamic socio-economic context that also includes our own time.

## Weekly schedule

NOTE: All three out-of-town field trips are common for art, architecture and theory, with all three faculty members leading the tours, lectures, and discussions.

### Week 1: The Rise of the City

Perspective and Space as seen in the urban fabric of the city of Florence (What Brunelleschi saw?) *Intersects with Architecture course*

### Week 2: Perspective and Space

Development and codification of Perspective and Space as seen in fresco cycles and panel paintings. Masaccio and Alberti. *Intersects with Drawing / Architecture*  
Field trip: Siena – public space / public display

### Week 3: Public Space

From Republic to Princely Court: Florence under Cosimo I and the changes in visual language, interventions in the urban space. *Intersects with Architecture.*

### Week 4: Patronage

Private Patronage by and in Religious Institutions.

### Week 5: Sculpture

Private Patronage of sculptural programs: from Or San Michele and the Loggia dei Lanzi to the private courtyard of the Palazzo Vecchio; (Bargello included).

Midterm. *Intersects with Drawing and Architecture.*

Field trip: Venice or Rome – history vs. contemporary experimentations (Venice Biennale or MAXXI, Rome)

### Week 6: Painting and Drawing

Restoration Labs of Florence and Collection of drawings and painting in the Uffizi. *Intersects with Drawing.*

### Week 7: Museum Collections

Palazzo Pitti: Architecture, paintings and Museo degli Argenti. *Intersects with Drawing and Architecture.*

Field trip: Bologna – encounters between art, architecture and sciences (Natural History Museum, Ducati Motorcycle Factory, Museo Giorgio Morandi)

### Week 8: Research

Research Paper and Final Exam.