

Chufang Xing

Graduation Year: Senior

College: Architecture

Major(s): Architecture

Minors(s): N/A

Scholar Group Membership: N/A

Did you received other funding for this project?: School of Architecture

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: Fifth-Year Architecture Thesis Project

Project Location: San Francisco

ND Faculty Mentor: Professor Duany

Project Type: Research

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Research/experience necessary for senior thesis or capstone project

Did your funded experience help you:

[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: Very Much

[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: Yes

[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]: Very Much

[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]: Yes

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:A Little

Tell us about your experience.

Upon arriving in San Francisco, I immediately went to my project site and walked around the neighborhood. This allowed me to gauge the character of the architecture, the scale of surrounding buildings, and understand the hierarchy between the existing buildings. I was able to locate several important axes throughout the site, and figure out primary sightlines in order to best integrate my design within the urban context. I took many pictures documenting both the large-scale spaces surrounding the site, as well as the small-scale details adorning the various performance halls in the vicinity. I was allowed to look into one of the larger ballet studios in the current SF Ballet School building, and received information on the nine ballet studios currently utilized by the School. I also explored the Yerba Buena Performance Hall, used for the yearly student showcase. Although it is not within the neighborhood of the School itself, I hope to still create an architectural language connecting the two. I also looked at other public buildings in San Francisco, notably performing arts schools, to use as precedence for my building. Just being in the city itself allowed me to experience what the users of my proposed ballet school would experience daily, which will be most beneficial once I begin designing.

Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.

Although I am still in the pre-design phase of the project, this research has already allowed me to understand my project in the context that it will be designed in. Everything I've collected so far will contribute to the development of a strong parti, which involves developing an overall concept that best defends my thesis. As long as I create and maintain this parti throughout the project, I will be able to finish with a meaningful and effective design. This research has also helped me determine exactly the number, and general dimensions, of the required practice rooms, which makes up the bulk of the main spaces for my overall program.

Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.

This research has increased my experience in documenting a site, and collecting the necessary information to help develop a project to its full potential. Academically, I now know what to look for in terms of street life, vernacular architecture, fronts vs. backs of buildings, urban conditions specifically relating to how it will interact with my future design, etc. I have also experienced seeking out specific building information from a primary source. All of this will aid me in designing a building that will not only stand out as its own unique structure, but also be harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood. This experience will carry over to my professional future as well, where I will be able to utilize these skills when researching urban context and architectural requirements for real life projects.

What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?

My advice for students who pursue a similar research is to spend as much time in the site as possible, and observe the situation from every angle. Walking around and documenting, through pictures and sketches, is the best way to develop an understanding of the space and context that the design project will become a part of. Because architecture plays such a pivotal role in the lives of everyone who experiences it, the best way to understand and create good architecture is to interact with the space the way a person using it would.

