

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE PLANNING & PRESERVATION

CORE II STUDIO A400.002

Spring 2010 STATEMENT

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The Museum of the Arts of the Diaspora: Micro/Detail-to-Meso/Object-to-Macro/System

Site: 99 Bowery Street through-block to 77-79 Chrystie Street NYC

"...The configuration of cultural forms in today's world is fundamentally fractal, that is as possessing no Euclidean boundaries, structures, or regularities...these cultural forms, which we should strive to represent as fully fractal, are also overlapping. Thus we need to combine a fractal metaphor for the shape of cultures (in the plural) with a polythetic account of their overlaps and resemblances." Arjun Appadurai, Modernities at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press 1997), 46.

The *Museum of the Arts of the Diaspora* collects, exhibits, and educates the public on diasporic cultural production in the Arts: from art, to literature and music, to architecture. The study of the arts of the Diaspora parallels the study of the dissemination of culture through local and global shifts due to political and economic migrations. Consideration of diasporic flows requires the reframing of time and space as mapped in the performances between global and local contexts.

The Core II studios will work toward the design of the museum within the multi-scalar framework of Micro/MESO/Macro focusing on the *meso*: the scale or state in-between where micro and macro meet. As the interface between micro and macro, the *meso* is the measurable foundation of diversity; it scales time and structures, and it links structures to performances. In between the specificity of details and the drift of systems, the *Museum of the Arts of the Diaspora* is home to the spaces and artistic output of diasporic productions.

The studios will analyze the museum as an architectural type in three museum component studies and the museum program. The three briefs encourage the exploration of components of the Museum by exploring the effects of Diasporas at multiple scales and states, while the program quantifies the form of the Museum. Studios will select work from existing museum or institutional collections for the initial studies and independently define the collection for the *Museum of the Arts of the Diaspora*.

The museum is sited on Bowery Street. Along this corridor, the Bowery Mission and the New Museum indicate the dramatic shift in public culture along the Bowery from an infamous 'skid row' and portal to the ethnic diversity of the Lower East side, to the Bowery as the cusp of contemporary design and culture. Currently the street is in transition with sites in various stages of redevelopment: from the Cooper Union expansion at 41 Cooper Square and the Bowery Hotel beside it, across Houston Street to the relocation of Sperone Westwater Gallery to 257 Bowery and the New Museum at 235 Bowery to Canal Street.

As an architectural type, museums are repositories of culture. New York alone hosts over 100 museums of art and culture that include: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art and P.S.1, the New Museum, the Museum of the City of New York, the American Indian Museum, the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Art, the Jewish Museum, the Museum of Chinese Americans, the Japan Society, the Rubin Museum of Art, the Americas Society, Ellis Island Museum and the Lower East-side Tenement Museum.

What drives the culture of museums? How is Art qualified across cultures? What are the qualifications for the collection or display of art across cultures? Among other aspects, contemporary museums are driven by prestige, funding hierarchies, collections and spectatorship. How are the givens of collection, ownership, value, display and consumption to be considered in the design of the museum? How might a museum of art position itself to question the nature of Art and hierarchies within the art world? How can the design of the museum afford an opportunity for reflection on the acts of collection and display? ...On art and culture? ...On community?