

Cesar A. Cruz
Statement of Research Agenda

In my research agenda I am focused on applying notions of dwelling and place to both historical and contemporary contexts. I am pursuing this agenda through both near and long-term research and publication goals. My objective is to turn the fruits of my research efforts into fertile educational material for lecture courses, seminars, and design studios.

My near-term plan is to continue advancing the historical/ theoretical program that I began through my doctoral dissertation on the German-Puerto Rican architect Heinrich “Henry” Klumb (1905-1984). Klumb was a multifaceted and prolific Modern Architect whose cultural relevance and prolific *oeuvre* in Puerto Rico was on par with Luis Barragán in Mexico, Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil, Alvaro Siza in Portugal, and Mario Botta in Switzerland. Klumb was an accomplished master planner, a pioneer in modern sustainable design, a student of vernacular architecture practices in the American Southwest and Puerto Rico, a conservationist and environmental advocate, both a protégé and a devotee of Frank Lloyd Wright and to Wright’s Organic Architecture, and, a modernist who at the same time was highly critical of several of the major schools of thought and figures in the Modern Architecture movement. In terms of his design abilities, Klumb was likewise accomplished in a diverse area of projects and building types – furniture design and manufacturing, museum exhibits, residences, churches, public housing, office buildings, a variety of university buildings, and industrial facilities, among many other works.

In advancing my current historical/theoretical program, in June 2017 I presented a paper on Klumb at the Society of Architectural Historians’ annual conference. The paper was titled “Henry Klumb: Puerto Rico’s Critical Modernist.” Other potential subjects for future publications and presentations include Klumb’s experiences in master planning, his adaptation of vernacular architecture traditions, and his first-person accounts of life in Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesin. The latter includes an essay about Taliesin written by Klumb in 1933. Until now, this essay had not been translated from the original German, and neither had it been referenced on the scholarly body of work on Klumb or Wright. Finally, I am also pursuing the publication of my dissertation in a book that will feature many of these subjects.

As for my long-term research plans, I intend to transition to more contemporary applications to notions of dwelling and place. I am particularly interested in how architectural theory can help us to understand some of today’s most pressing problems. Notions of dwelling and place are not just applicable to tranquil pastoral scenes and design projects in faraway landscapes. They are also applicable in our contemporary, high-tech, fractured world. Displacement problems, for example, manifest themselves through homelessness, refugee crises, mass immigration, and disaster relief. Border tensions, globalization issues, recent increases in nationalist fervors, our own country’s urban-rural political divide, and issues of community policing and racial tensions are likewise enmeshed in both traditional and contemporary notions of place.

I am motivated to pursue this agenda and these strategies for two reasons. One reason is that I am firmly allied with the numerous architects and writers who from the 1970s through today have strongly asserted that the relationship between architecture and place is fundamental. Consequently, a work of architecture that does not acknowledge and then incorporate notions of place falls short of meeting the highest aims of architecture. A second reason that motivates me to pursue this agenda and strategies is that I have seen the applicability of these ideas across all levels of architectural education. Undergraduate and graduate students each in their own ways have a need and are capable of synthesizing notions of place into their design educations. I have seen this borne out in studios, seminars, and lectures. And so I have chosen this field in my professional career, and my ongoing work in this area influences every discussion or review that I am a part of as an architecture educator.