

## iasap.bv

illinois architecture study abroad program at barcelona-el vallès  
illinois school of architecture university of illinois at urbana-champaign

yearbook of student work  
**YB6** 2019  
2020

The **iasap-bv** (Illinois Architecture Study Abroad Program at Barcelona-El Vallès) is a year-long program of overseas studies for undergraduate students of the Illinois School of Architecture (ISoA) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It is a comprehensive international learning experience that has the unique advantage of providing, for an entire academic year, the extraordinary opportunity of living and studying in a historically, culturally and architecturally rich overseas environment. The year of studies is rigorous and demanding, and all participants—students, faculty, guests and administration—are expected to strive for excellence at all times.

The **iasap-bv** is part of an overarching agreement between the University of Illinois and the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC) that provides for a significant and long-term academic collaboration. The program is hosted at the Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura del Vallès (ETSAV) located in Sant Cugat del Vallès, a municipal district within Barcelona's metropolitan area.

The **iasap-bv's** goal is to provide students with a multicultural and cross-national approach that fosters integration in a different academic and cultural setting, enriching their educational and professional development. At the same time, the experience of living abroad for an entire year provides opportunities for personal growth and for learning from direct interaction with different peoples, environments and cultures.

Committed to a holistic, creative and open-minded approach to architecture, the program's curriculum is based on three core courses: Architectural Design, Architectural History and Structures; whereas their specific content is tailored to take full advantage of the program's location, these three courses are fully equivalent—in academic rigor and content—to the courses offered on the Illinois campus. A fourth course, titled Overseas Architectural Studies, comprises a wide range of special activities such as field-trips, seminars, and thematic workshops.

## Foreword

This year, the Illinois School of Architecture is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of its international programs, previously in Versailles and now in Barcelona. Earlier in the semester, I had the privilege of meeting our faculty and students in the Ciudad Condal, arguably one of the finest collective reservoirs of art, design culture and architecture to study, explore and experience the virtues of urban life.

I thoroughly enjoyed visiting the Lluís Nadal architecture building at ETSAV, as well as the award-winning H Arquitectes contiguous courtyard-housing facilities. We were also fortunate to stroll around the vast Eixample grid and marveling at the efficacy through which it integrated existing fabrics like Gracia, Sarrià, Sant Gervasi, or the historic Barri Gotic. Coincidentally, we traversed along two of the chosen Barcelona sites for projects in our Urbana and el Vallès studios, noticing how any architectural intervention would ultimately become a supportive actor in a collective play whose protagonist would always defer to the theatrical backdrop of the octagonal blocks.

Interestingly, both our School and the Plan Cerdà have their origins on the same decade, as the US survived a Civil War, Italy was unified as a country and Paris hosted its second International Exhibition. On this side of the Atlantic, that period witnessed how the University of Illinois hired its first alumnus, Nathan Ricker, as the inaugural Director of the School of Architecture. The Windy City was reborn from the ashes of the Great Chicago Fire through the remarkable work of stellar architects such as Louis Sullivan, Daniel Burnham and Frank Lloyd Wright. The 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition proposed a Ferris Wheel to outshine Paris' Eiffel Tower. Its lone remaining building, the current Museum of Science and Industry, is a contemporary of Antoni Gaudí's Sagrada Família, also destined to become an architectural object within the larger urban theater proposed by the grid.

One hundred and fifty years later, our School of Architecture is proud to offer an overseas program of studies in Barcelona, so it is not uncommon to find models in our desks and drawings in our walls showing those magnificent urban morphologies bordering the Mediterranean Sea. During my visit, I truly appreciated the extraordinary work, both past and present, in the studio space at Sant Cugat. The space was imbued with a distinctive aura inherited from the timeless tradition of the atelier. Moreover, I sensed an exceptional creative energy that permeated around the long tables which I found particularly engaging and inspiring, as well as a refreshing spirit of camaraderie among the students.

Later in the semester, I participated on the Final Review via Zoom and witnessed the remarkable transformation of those initial ideas, diagrams and sketches into mature proposals that celebrated their relationship to the city's memory and desire. I am delighted by the consummate quality produced in the studios, the academic rigor demonstrated by its talented team of professors, the commitment exhibited by the students during a very challenging semester and the seriousness of purpose with which Alex and Magali strive to provide an unforgettable experience. It is a privilege to offer such an outstanding program.



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Director and Clayton T. Miers Endowed Chair  
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# The Natural History of Modern Architecture

Prof. Josep Maria Garcia-Fuentes

This module challenges the historiography of modern architecture with the aim to define a natural history of modernity in the light of the inescapable and evolving relation between architecture and the concept of nature since 18th century.

The history of architecture is a story of the relation between the artificial and the natural. Indeed, the tension between nature and architecture became a core question in architectural debates of modernity, when the emergence of modern natural sciences in the 18th century became a key contributor to explorations of the supposed roots of architecture found in nature. The entangled debates on the ideas of nature and architecture run parallel since then, and variations of this same theme became recurrent and structuring of the field of architecture throughout the 19th and 20th centuries and up to the current environmental and ecological debates.

Scholars in other fields of knowledge (philosophy, geography, anthropology or history) have taken on the challenge of rewriting modernity during the last decades through suggestive and ambitious approaches aimed to cope with the most pressing challenges in the present. Our relationship with nature and the environment, and the way we deal with ecological processes, are the most important of these challenges. Thus, the aim of this module is to revisit critically the history of modern architecture since 18th century with a focus on the entangled emergence and evolution of modern debates on architecture, nature, and science. The ultimate goal, therefore, is to trace The Natural History of Modern Architecture.

Students –in groups of two or three– have developed short paper (1500 words) on a small research case-study that they analyzed based on the conceptual framework proposed in the module. This spread shows one image and a short quote from their work.



“[...] Snøhetta sought to emphasize the ecological connection between land and sea, which they highlighted when they said: “by focusing on the coexistence of life on land in the sea, **Under** proposes a new way of understanding our relationship to our surroundings – above the surface, under the water, and alongside the life of the sea.” [...]”

“[...] While retrospectively the built environment has been seen as the anti-nature, and the idea of being sustainable is associated with making sacrifices, architects such as Bjarke have pushed for a more hedonistic approach. [...] The project is a great example of Ingels’ hedonistic “Yes is More” ideology, as it showcases their ability to utilize modern technology to push forward designs that create an ideal world where something as solitary as a power plant is incorporated into the public infrastructure. [...] The power plant, a type of building previously associated with being anti-nature, is turned into a green space [...] by allowing the public to take advantage of the space through the use of a year-round ski-slope, a climbable wall, and a hiking trail.”



A• N. Athitakis + T. Lutz- B• D. Bell + B. Lun

“[...] In the case of the Maison de la Paix, several techniques are used to limit the required inputs to maintain the climatic control. One of these, similar to Kahn’s work in Dhaka, is that the building is primarily heated and cooled using water from Lake Geneva nearby. This is a passive system which lowers the external energy required to temper the space to next to nothing. [...]”



“[...] While the Zinc museum wasn’t designed around the idea of an ecological building. It was designed on an ecological scale that understood the processes of its surroundings. It captured the essence of the labour work of the mines, the essence and experience of the landscape, and it respected the boundaries of the landscape by not interfering with the ecology.”

## Four Masterpieces

Prof. Juan Carlos Sánchez Tappan

The third module of the Spring semester history course consisted of four half-day field trips to the following selected 20th century architectural landmarks located in Barcelona’s environs: Antoni Gaudí’s Cripta Guell, Ricardo Boffill’s Walden 7, Antonio Bonet’s “La Ricarda,” and Miralles & Pinós’ Cemetery of Igualada. Unfortunately, the last two were adapted by Juan C. Sanchez as a virtual tour due to the outbreak of the pandemic.

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IN SITU 2020 >  
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FOUR ARCHITECTURAL CRITICAL BUILDINGS IN BCN  
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