

English

INSITE COMMONPLACES THE SEDIMENTARY EFFECT

El Sitio: A Timeless Way of Building

Program
May 18, 19, and 20, 2023

Conversations · Commissions ·
Visits to Sites in and Around Mexicali

El Sitio

Centro Comunitario UNICOM
Av. Nueva Zelanda s/n
entre calles España y Rep. Dominicana
Col. Conjunto Urbano Orizaba,
Mexicali, Mexico



www.insiteart.org

A collaboration between INSITE and the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California: Coordinación General de Extensión de la Cultura y Divulgación de la Ciencia de la UABC; Centro Comunitario UNICOM, Facultad de Enfermería de la UABC; Facultad de Arquitectura de la UABC; Facultad de Artes de la UABC.

Olga Lorenia Urbalejo

Olga Lorenia Urbalejo has a doctorate in anthropological sciences from UAM Iztapalapa; a master's in human geography from El Colegio de Michoacán, AC; and a bachelor's in history from the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California. Her research topics include urban space and the border, migration, inequality, ethnicity, youth as political subjects, and recently the urbanization of emerging rural and urban spaces in Baja California. She currently works as a researcher at the UABC Institute of Cultural Research-Museum, where she coordinates the master's degree program in sociocultural studies and teaches at the Faculty of Human Sciences of the same university.

Veintedoce: Ángel Verduzco, Beatriz Villegas

Ángel Verduzco obtained a bachelor's in architecture from the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California. Beatriz Villegas has a master's in design and architecture from Elisava, Barcelona, and a bachelor's in architecture from UABC. They are both Professors at the Faculty of Architecture and Design at UABC (Mexicali) and are cofounders of Veintedoce, an architectural workshop established in Mexicali, BC focused on projects that consider the social environment and aim at improving people's quality of life. Their projects include ICA LAB (2022); Casa Rodríguez (2021); Semántica Espacial (2018); and Casa Rat Trap Bond (2016) that won First Place in Impact Works in the North of Mexico by the magazine Obras and an Honorable Mention in the V Sonora Regional Biennial (2018).

Pastizal Zamudio

Pastizal Zamudio is a Mexicali-based artist currently developing a commission for INSITE at El Sitio, their first home and experimental project built by architect Christopher Alexander and his colleagues in 1975–76. They obtained a bachelor's degree in arts from the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (2015). Zamudio is a cofounder of Escritorio de Procesos/Habitantes Polisimultáneos (2014–20), an artist-led space in Mexicali and minimal practices in southern Oregon, and Santuario (2015–19), a “material thinking bedroom project.” They have curated various exhibitions and projects, including interventions in landscapes and apartments. Zamudio's last individual exhibition was *-formar, hacer una curva sobre una piedra bajo la sombra; mover la hierba buscando la orientación solar hasta el mediodía-* (*-form, make a curve on a stone under the shade; move the grass looking for solar orientation until noon-*) at 121, Mexicali (2019–20).

Felipe Orensanz

Felipe Orensanz has a master's in urbanism from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, where he was awarded the Alfonso Caso Medal in 2010. He studied architecture at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (Mexicali). Orensanz works jointly with architect Rodrigo Durán in research, editorial, teaching, and curatorial projects dedicated to architecture. Their most recent book is *Ciudad Independencia (Independence City)* and their upcoming book is dedicated to El Sitio, the experimental housing project built by architect Christopher Alexander in 1975–76, in Mexicali, BC, Mexico.

Alejandro Peimbert

Alejandro Peimbert has a doctorate in sociocultural studies and architecture from the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California and a master's in architecture from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. He has been a Professor of Design, Theory, and History at the Faculty of Architecture and Design of UABC since 2002. His research projects seek to blur the boundaries between architecture, public space, landscape, and culture. His project Jardín Misión San Adrián in Mexicali was the winner in the category of built work at the IV Latin American Biennial of Landscape Architecture (2019). He is the author of the book *Paisaje intersticial: vacíos y ruinas en el arte, la arquitectura y la ciudad (Interstitial Landscape: Voids and Ruins in Art, Architecture, and the City)* (2016).

Giancarlo Reyes (Localista)

Giancarlo Reyes graduated as an architect from the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (Mexicali). He is the founder of Localista, an architecture office dedicated to studying and reinterpreting traditional construction techniques and typologies from a contemporary approach that adapts to the context. His works include Casa Rat Trap Bond, in collaboration with Veintedoce, which won the Work of the Year Award (2016) at Obras-web.mx and Work of the Month for October 2018 by ArchDaily. He has won several additional awards, including the Water Pavilion for Mextropoli (2018) in collaboration with Apaloosa Estudio de Arquitectura; Honorable Mention in the Biennial of Young Architects, FCARM (2019); and the Master Prize Architecture, in the category of Social Housing (2020). He currently develops his own projects and in collaboration in different cities throughout Baja California and Mexico.

Andrea Torreblanca

Andrea Torreblanca has a master's in curatorial studies from CCS, Bard College, New York. She is currently the Director of Curatorial Projects at INSITE, for which she conceived Commonplaces, a curatorial platform being developed in different regions around the world, including Baja California (MX)-San Diego (US), where she is the editor-curator of the five-year project *The Sedimentary Effect*. She is the founder and editor-in-chief of the *INSITE Journal*. Torreblanca has held several curatorial positions in Mexican institutions, including Associate Curator at the Museo Tamayo; Coordinator at Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros; Deputy Director for the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art; and Collection Manager at the Museo de las Californias at CECUT.

El Sitio: A Timeless Way of Building is a three-day public event that takes as a point of departure El Sitio—an experimental social housing complex built by renowned architect Christopher Alexander in Mexicali, B.C. between 1975 and 1976. The event includes Conversations with artists, architects, urban planners, and specialists from the region and beyond discussing Alexander's influential and ultimately controversial ideas. At the same time, Pastizal Zamudio, an artist who was born at El Sitio and has had access to their former house to carry out research since the beginning of 2022, presents a new Commission that reimagines the central courtyard of Alexander's project. The Conversations take place in a temporary pavilion—a Commission with local architecture offices Veintedoce and Localista.

El Sitio: A Timeless Way of Building is the first public manifestation of “A Timeless Way of Building,” one of several chapters of *The Sedimentary Effect*, the **INSITE Commonplaces** project conceived by editor-curator Andrea Torreblanca unfolding in Baja California (MX) and San Diego County (US) over the next three years.



Participants

Conversations

Rudy Argote; Gina Cebey; Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman;
CRO Studio: Adriana Cuellar + Marcel Sánchez; Alejandro D'Acosta;
Howard Davis; A J Kim; Michael Mehaffy; Felipe Orensanz;
Alejandro Peimbert; Andrea Torreblanca; Lorenia Urbalejo

Artist Commission

Pastizal Zamudio

Pavilion Commission

Giancarlo Reyes (Localista) and Beatriz Villegas & Ángel Verduzco
(Veintedoce)

Howard Davis

Howard Davis is a Professor of Architecture at the University of Oregon. As a colleague of architect Christopher Alexander, Davis was a member of the original team that carried out the experimental housing development in 1975–76 in Mexicali, BC, Mexico, and is coauthor of the book *The Production of Houses* (1985) associated with the same project. Davis is the author of three books: *The Culture of Building* (1999); *Living Over the Store: Architecture and Local Urban Life* (2012); and *Working Cities: Architecture, Place and Production* (2019), and the editor of the recently published book, *Early and Unpublished Writings of Christopher Alexander: Thinking, Building, Writing* (2022). He is a Distinguished Professor of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.

Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman

Teddy Cruz has a master's in design from Harvard University and is currently a Professor of Public Culture and Urbanization in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of California San Diego. Fonna Forman has a doctorate from the University of Chicago and is a Professor of Political Theory at the University of California San Diego. She is a founding director of the UC San Diego Center on Global Justice. Together they are principals in Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman, a research-based political and architectural practice in San Diego that investigates borders, informal urbanization, climate resilience, civic infrastructure, and public culture. They have two new monographs: *Spatializing Justice: Building Blocks and Socializing Architecture: Top-Down / Bottom-Up* (2023) and one forthcoming, *Unwalling Citizenship*.

AJ Kim

AJ Kim has a doctorate in urban planning, a master's in ethnic studies, and a bachelor's in gender and feminist studies from UCLA. Kim is an Associate Professor in the Department of City Planning and the School of Public Affairs at San Diego State University. Their research focuses on urban informality as a form of resistance that disrupts the state, as well as on tensions of regulation and policing in immigrant communities at the local (city/county) level.

Michael W. Mehaffy

Michael W. Mehaffy holds a doctorate in architecture from Delft University of Technology. Mehaffy worked and studied closely with architect Christopher Alexander. He is a researcher, educator, author, and consultant in urban development, noted for his articles on urban morphology, urban self-organization, architecture, computer science, and philosophy. Mehaffy has held teaching and/or research appointments in architecture, urban planning, and philosophy at several universities in the United States and abroad. He also operates an international consultancy, where he has consulted for governments, businesses, and NGOs.

Biographies

Alejandro D'Acosta

Alejandro D'Acosta graduated as an architect from the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City (1987) and has studied monument restoration, landscape design, and art history. He is the founder and a member of the design firm Taller de Arquitectura (TAC). He is also the founder and member of the Munzam Foundation and the La Carretilla fund, both dedicated to highly marginalized communities in Mexico. D'Acosta was responsible for the UTB-UNAM Exchange: Design research in self-sustaining economies + garbage as a means for a new vernacular equation (Germany-Mexico) (2009–10). He has built numerous self-sustaining and ecological rescue projects, including houses, hotels, wineries, and cultural centers in Mexico and abroad.

Rudy Argote

Rudy Argote is the director of RA+, an architecture and urbanism office in the Tijuana/San Diego cross-border region; director of Plankton-Ocean Plastic Upcycle, a company that produces hybrid mosaics made of cement and recycled plastic; director of SALAA, a nonprofit organization dedicated to architectural debate; an active collaborator in the Torolab collective; and a guest professor at Ibero Tijuana and Escuela Libre de Arquitectura. He is currently a co-organizer of "Mover la ciudad" ("To Move the City"), together with the Instituto Metropolitano de Planeación (IMPLAN), Consejo de Desarrollo Económico de Tijuana (CDT), and the municipal and state government, an event designed as a protest that aims to convert abandoned bus stations into exhibition spaces for cultural projects.

Georgina Cebey

Georgina Cebey has a doctorate in art history from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Alfonso Caso Medal 2017); a master's in historiography from the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (2011); and bachelor's in history from the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, UNAM (2009). Her work focuses on urban and architectural representations in art and audiovisual media. Her book, *Arquitectura del fracaso. Sobre rocas, escombros y otras derrotas espaciales (Architecture of failure: On rocks, rubble, and other spatial defeats)* (2017) won the José Vasconcelos National Essay Award.

CRO studio (Adriana Cuellar and Marcel Sánchez)

Adriana Cuellar holds a master's in design studies from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, and a bachelor's in architecture from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. She is currently an Assistant Professor and Director of the Architecture Program at the University of San Diego. Marcel Sánchez has a master's in architecture from UCLA and a bachelor's in architecture from Universidad Iberoamericana de Mexico. He is an Associate Professor at the University of San Diego. Together they are co-founders of CRO studio, a collaborative research and architecture firm established in the border region of Tijuana/San Diego that emphasizes the critical role of architecture in rethinking power relations underlying urban space production. They have received numerous distinguished awards, including the IX BIAU Ibero-American Biennial of Architecture and Urbanism in Rosario, Argentina, in recognition of their built work Modulo Prep/Casa de las Ideas in Tijuana, BC.

Thursday May 18, 2023

The Production of Houses

May 18 is dedicated to discussing forms of vernacular and "craft" architecture and their implications in the production of housing and social spaces, as well as reimagining models for communal living.

4:30 p.m. **Walk-through** of El Sitio and talk with architects **Alejandro Peimbert** (Director of the Faculty of Design and Architecture, UABC) and **Felipe Orensanz** (architect, researcher, and coeditor of a forthcoming book on El Sitio).

5:00 p.m. **Conversation** with **Alejandro D'Acosta** (architect, TAC, Taller de Arquitectura Contextual) and **CRO Studio: Adriana Cuellar + Marcel Sánchez** (collaborative research and architecture firm, Tijuana/San Diego). Moderator: **Rudy Argote** (architect, RA+, Founder of SALAA, Tijuana/San Diego).

6:15 p.m. Break with Refreshments

7:00 p.m. **Dialogue** with **Howard Davis** (writer, professor, and coauthor of *The Production of Houses* with Christopher Alexander) and **Felipe Orensanz**. Moderator: **Andrea Torreblanca** (Director of Curatorial Projects, INSITE).

8:15 p.m. Refreshments

Friday May 19, 2023

The Nature of Order

May 19 is focused on the possibility of architecture as an ecosystem, in which the liveliness and complexity of the social, political, cultural, and spiritual fabric of places define the morphology of their inhabitants and their future.

4:30 p.m. **Walk-through and talk**

Artist **Pastizal Zamudio** presents INSITE's new commissioned work at El Sitio with **Andrea Torreblanca**.

5:00 p.m. **Screening of *Life in Buildings, 2018***

Director: Michael Mehaffy
(Executive Director of Sustasis Foundation)
Duration 1hr, 23 mins

6:15 p.m. Break with Refreshments

7:00 p.m. **Dialogue**

Michael Mehaffy (urbanist, architectural theorist, urban philosopher, researcher, educator, and Executive Director of Sustasis Foundation. Former colleague of Christopher Alexander) and **Andrea Torreblanca**.

8:15 p.m. Refreshments

Saturday May 20, 2023

The City Is Not a Tree

May 20 is centered around public space as a receptacle for civic and urban life, where accelerated construction, scarcity, and the recycling of architecture affect housing policies, social justice, and the dynamics of inhabiting and circulating in the city.

4:30 p.m. **Walk-through and talk** with architects

Giancarlo Reyes (Localista) and **Beatriz Villegas & Ángel Verduzco** (Veintedoce) through Pavilion commissioned by INSITE.

5:00 p.m. **Conversation**

A J Kim (Associate Professor of City Planning in the School Public Affairs at SDSU), **Lorenia Urbalejo** (doctorate, anthropology and master's, human geography, UABC, Mexicali). **Gina Cebey** (researcher and architectural historian, UNAM). Moderator: **Alejandro Peimbert**.

6:15 p.m. Break with Refreshments

7:00 p.m. **Dialogue**

Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman (research-based political and architectural practice, SD) and **Andrea Torreblanca**.

8:15 p.m. Refreshments