Situ Studio: Finding connections without limits

Situ Studio is a self-described "research, design, and fabrication firm," and its five partners, who met while studying architecture at Cooper Union in New York City, emphasize the variety of their work. "We offer a full menu," Bradley Samuels, one of Situ Studio's partners says while sitting at the firm's light-filled studio in a Dumbo, Brooklyn, building. "We wear many hats," Wes Rozen, another partner chimes in. This approach allows the firm to work on diverse projects, such as analyzing the topography of a crater in India while fabricating a lobby installation for Kohn Pedersen Fox. But Situ Studio sometimes wonders if such a breadth of services could pose a problem when marketing itself as a firm—that, to use yet another metaphor, they could be seen as jacks of all trades, but masters of none?

Luckily that hasn't been the case. The five men, who bring international backgrounds to the practice, coalesced into an architectural "clubhouse" before calling themselves a firm in 2005. Since then, some of Situ Studio's built projects include a granite memorial in Far Rockaway, New York, for Flight 587, which crashed there in 2001, and an ongoing commission to produce eco-friendly pavilions for New York's Solar One summer festival, CitySol.

At the same time as the firm put their CNC mill to good use by building models and consulting for A-List architects, such as Polshek Partnership, SOM, Eisenman Architects, among others, they have been able to conduct less-lucrative, self-motivated research. Not just a side project, the research has proven to be a core source of inspiration for the firm. In just one example, they discovered connections between bone tomography at the microscopic scale and architectural structures. The influence of natural systems is apparent in their free-form 2007 CitySol pavilion, which, like cartilage, is lightweight and flexible. It was produced with no waste (other than dust) and was redeployed at the Miami Art Basel fair that same winter. The firm has focused on research because "it allows us to think about space outside of architectural conventions," Rozen says. Indeed, not all the research is explicitly intended for application, as a thorough historical investigation into the corporate and national sponsorships of the World's Fair in 1964–65 proves.

Situ Studio's 3Solar Pavilion 2, shown here at Scope Art Fair in Miami, 2007, is made of plywood and was produced with no waste. The installation was first deployed during Solar One's 2007 CitySol Festival.

The Flight 587 Memorial, completed in 2006, in Far Rockaway, Queens, was a collaboration with artist Freddy Rodriguez. It commemorates the hundreds of passengers who died on the flight in November 2001.

Still, as the firm's name suggests (*situ* is Latin for "place" or "site"), they are very much interested in continuing to produce site-specific, built work. As Rozen says, "We just want to be making architecture, whatever that may mean." One can only imagine what kinds of beautiful abstractions the team could come up with upon combining CNC technologies with their current examination of crystallographic scans of the SARS disease. Given the firm's unique cross-section of geography, biology, architecture, and more—who says you can't do it all? *Diana Lind*

For additional photos and projects by Situ Studio, go to **architecturalrecord.com/archrecord2/**.

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