

melisa@wustl.edu

EDUCATION

Washington University in St. Louis, MO

M.ARCH, with honors, Master of Architecture, December 2015.

Thesis (Design Thinking): "Mirroring Disparity: Polymorphic Spaces to Confront Architecture's Monolithic Design Community" Advisor: Pablo Moyano

Degree Project: "Light Gravitas"

The project explores communication and transparency between architecture institutions and the greater community. The built form provides an incubator and archival space for community-based design projects. Advisor: Adrian Luchini

Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO

M.UD, with honors, Master of Urban Design, December 2015.

Thesis: "Reef to Ridge - Freedom through Mobility, Education, and Public Health" / "Stabilizing Grounds - Productivity, Recreation, and Education to Create a Self-sufficient Community" Advisor: John Hoal

University of Missouri, Columbia, MO

BA, Human Environmental Sciences, Architectural Studies, December 2011.

Emphasis: Interior Design

INTERNATIONAL STUDY

Johannesburg, South Africa & Dubai, UAE, Global Urbanisms research focusing on rapidly growing cities. Performed public life survey in Johannesburg, South Africa. 2015.

Berlin, Germany, Public life survey and research at the largest remaining portion of the Berlin Wall. 2014.

Barcelona, Spain & Venice, Italy, Comprehensive Studio Abroad and Venice Biennale, 2013.

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Design Justice

Design as Social and Political Resistance

Trauma-Informed Design

Community-led Design

Race and Identity in Architecture and Design

Sustainable Design Practices

Historic and Future Spatial Politics

Informal and Indigenous Design Practices

Global Cities and Urbanism

Equitable Design and Design Pedagogy

PUBLICATIONS

"Mirroring Disparity: New Concepts for a Monolithic Community." The Funambulist: Politics of Space and Bodies, edited by Leopold Lambert, vol. 5, pp. 58–59. (2016) Design & Racism.

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

Divided Cities Faculty Collaborative Grant, "Leveraging Historic Assets to Transform Communities" 2020-2022

Association for Community Design Fellow, 2019-2020

Alpha Chi Rho Medal Recipient, 2016

American Planning Association (APA) Mid-MO, Outstanding Student Project: Global Urbanism[s]: Public Life Survey, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2015

AIA St. Louis Scholarship Recipient, 2013-2015

PRESENTATIONS AND FACILITATION

"Riding the Vortex", American Institute of Architects Panel Series, St. Louis, Missouri, 2024.

"Design Justice Summit," Core Organizer, New Orleans, Louisiana, 2023.

"Amplifying Community: The Ville, St. Louis," In/Justice One Day Symposium. Missouri History Museum, St. Louis, Missouri, 2023.

"Ikigai: Creating Practice Through Identity," Coming Home Speaker Series, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, 2022

"St. Louis Past, Present, and Future" Panel Discussion, Missouri History Museum, St. Louis, Missouri, 2022.

"Building an Organizational Culture and Practice of Equity," (With Brian Hurd) MKSK, Virtual, 2020.

"Cultivating Cultural Preservation as Community Development," Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) Conference, Virtual, 2020.

"Designing Fellowship: Reflections on Sisterhood & The Practice of Community Design," Association of Community Design Conference, Virtual, 2020.

"San Leandro Creek Urban Greenway Community Design Workshop," National Organization of Minority Architects Conference, 2020.

Local Day Panel, Design Futures Forum, 2020.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Lecturer, Washington University in St. Louis

Arch Design Culture, Fall 2024

Arch 486A NOMA National Design Competition, Fall 2024

Arch 212A Architectural Design II Studio, Spring 2024

Arch 486A NOMA National Design Competition, Fall 2023

Arch 112B Introduction to Design Processes II Studio, Spring 2022

Arch 144 Architecture for Non-Architects (with Catalina Freixas), Spring 2022

Arch 486A NOMA National Design Competition, Fall 2021

Arch 112B Introduction to Design Processes II Studio, Spring 2021

Arch 419, Architectural Design III, International Housing Studio, Fall 2020

Faculty Assistant, Washington University in St. Louis Building Systems Lab, Fall 2019 Master of Urban Design Studio, Spring 2018 Master of Urban Design Studio, Fall 2017 Master of Urban Design Studio, Spring 2016

Community Liaison, Washington University in St. Louis City StudioSTL - Fox Park, Summer 2019

Invited Critic, University of Detroit Mercy Architecture 3000 Studio Panel 2021

Invited Critic, University of Arizona ARC 201 Design Studio Final Reviews, 2021

SERVICE

To The Profession:

President, National Organization of Minority Architects, St. Louis Chapter, 2022-2024
Vice President, National Organization of Minority Architects, St. Louis Chapter, 2020-2021
Board Member DeSales Community Development Corporation, 2020-2024
Mentor Project Design Challenge - Vashon High School, 2019-2020
Co-Founder Landmarks' Urbanites, 2016-2018
Board Member Rise Community Housing, 2013-2014

To The University:

Professional & Faculty Advisor, National Organization of Minority Architects Students (NOMAS), 2019-Present

Faculty Advisor, Laskey Charrette, 2024 Jury Member, Fitzgibbon Charrette, 2023 Diverse Student Recruitment, Sam Fox School, 2018-2022

Task Force Member Sam Fox School Task Force on Racial Justice, 2020

Creator / Jury Member Black in Design Travel Scholarship, 2019 - 2022

Jury Member, Public Interest Design Institute Scholarship, 2017

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

BlackArc, LLC, St. Louis, MO

Founder / Principal Architect, 2019-Current

Founder and Lead Designer in a Multi-Scalar Design Agency focusing on racial, economic, and social equity as a catalyst for design via engaged practices through a "community as partner" lens. Select project experience:

West End Plan / WeCollab Neighborhood Plan, https://www.wecollabstl.com/
 Working alongside a resident-led neighborhood planning effort, provided urban design work, and neighborhood identity visualization/branding. During COVID, I facilitated interim community

- engagement and organized/implemented a Community Hub to provide pandemic resources within the community.
- Reimagining the Workhouse, https://www.aftertheworkhouse.com/
 Co-lead public effort to rethink the former Medium Security Institution (known as the Workhouse) in St. Louis. After public organization and outcry by local anti-carceral organizers, the Workhouse was closed. Our team, supported by New Orleans-based design group, Colloqate, worked with directly impacted individuals and communities to re-imagine possibilities for the site and building. Over the course of 2 months of engagement, our team conducted a public engagement process with over 2500 St. Louisians.
- 4theVille Divided Cities Grant / Heritage Walk
 Lead Community Design and fabrication of a pop-up park installation, researched and collected stories around neighborhood/cultural identity. Worked alongside community leaders and organizers to survey residents and visualize future interventions.
- Douglass Hill History
 Facilitated targeted conversations focused on amplifying existing resident concerns around equity and scale surrounding a contentious development. Provided research and analysis of the site's history of displacement and ownership to the developer and decision-makers. Planned and designed interventions at the ground level.

Counterpublic, St. Louis, MO

Director of Community Engagement, 2023-Current

Community Engagement Strategist, 2022-2023

CounterPublic Triennial 2023—Working alongside artists, curators, and communications teams, I strategized, designed, and led regional community engagement for the 2023 triennial, which brought over 120,000 visitors to the region. My participation ranged from facilitating community tours of exhibitions to artist discussions and local partnerships.

Trivers, St. Louis, MO

Project Designer / Urban Designer 2017-2019

Served as lead urban designer in large-scale master-planning and mid-scale development projects. Spearheaded company diversity, pro-bono, and community engagement projects. Also designed and led a programmatic study for major transit-oriented development in Saint Louis, MO.

I operated as a multi-disciple designer for higher education, multi-family, and historic preservation projects from schematic design to project closeout. I coordinated several RFP and competition submissions, including Transit-Oriented Development, Master Planning, and community projects.

- Skinker DeBaliviere Transit Oriented Development Plan, St. Louis, MO
- St. Louis University Chouteau Master Plan, St. Louis, MO
- January Hall, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis MO
- The Peregrine Hotel, Omaha, NE
- Hope House, St. Louis, MO
- Square Relocation Schematic Design, St. Louis, MO

SPACE Architecture + Design, St. Louis, MO

Designer, 2016-2017

Assisted with and led projects from schematic design to construction administration phases in the design-build firm. Worked directly with fabricators and constructors to design and fabricate custom furniture and artwork.

- The Grandel Theatre, St. Louis, MO
- Hotel St. Louis, St. Louis, MO
- Mission Taco, Kansas City, MO
- Ranken Jordan, St. Louis, MO

Urban Land Institute (ULI) - Previously held

• Knowlnk, St. Louis, MO

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA)

Design As Protest (DAP)

Association for Community Design (ACD)

Public Interest Design Institute (PIDI)

Social Economic Environmental Design (SEED)

American Institute of Architects (AIA) - Previously held

National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) - Previously held

American Planning Association (APA) - Previously held