• Paper / Proposal Title:
Storytellers & Outlaws: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching as Research

• Author(s) Name:
Anca Matyiku

• University or Company Affiliation:
McGill University (affiliation fluid – between current date and future publication)

• Abstract:
Cities, landscapes, places and spaces are multi-faceted organisms in which the physical manifestations of what we build is always entangled with the socio-political dynamics that are implied and taken for granted, stories that are told and histories that are remembered.

This paper reflects on the opportunities for teaching, learning and architectural design that arise from engaging those very stories and histories. I discuss the outcome of a recent beginning design studio that I conceived for CU Denver College of Architecture and Planning. Drawing from local history on the making of the American West, students worked with the stories and histories surrounding infamous cattle robber Billy the Kid. They tackled the question of what it means to be illegal or to exist on the border of the law, by writing a modern-day Billy character and by designing a parasitic space within the urban fabric of downtown Denver. The goal was to nudge students to imaginatively address delicate situations that presented themselves close at hand, in a city no stranger to gang violence and especially well acquainted with homelessness.

This interdisciplinary approach to teaching architecture is part of a broader research agenda. My twofold wager is that storytelling and literary constructions—whether chosen, found, and/or those that (future) architects write—can playfully propel the imagination in the process of design while also conscientiously engaging the complex matrix of politics, environment, human motivations, etc. that underscore every act of
design. The scope of this paper is to interrogate this twofold wager in light of the students' response to the prompt by examining the discoveries, oversights, surprises, affirmations and moments of resistance that emerged in the process. While the cross-pollination of design with storytelling is something I also explore in my design practice, nowhere are these questions more fruitfully asked—and tested—than in the context of design pedagogy.

**Author(s) Biography:**
Anca Matyiku’s research combines an interdisciplinary creative practice with academic scholarship and exploratory approaches to design pedagogy. Her academic work focuses on the design process that leads to architecture, investigating how literary language operates as a medium for thinking though questions of locality and architectural representation. With Chad Connery, she is the co-founder of a research-creation practice that that focuses on public engagement and site specific interventions, exploring how fiction, myth, and material temperaments participate to architectural inquiry. Anca’s research has been part of several exhibitions and conferences including the 2012 Venice Biennale of Architecture, and it has been most recently published in *Reading Architecture: Literary Imagination and Architectural Experience* (Routledge, 2018), *Scroope* and *Writingplace Journal*.
Anca has previously taught at CU Denver College of Architecture and Planning, Louisiana State University and McGill University. She has practiced architecture in Montreal, Hong Kong and London UK, with projects ranging from mixed-use developments, cultural and residential projects, as well as temporary installations and performances. She holds a Bachelor of Architectural Studies from University of Waterloo, a Masters of Architecture from University of Manitoba, in Canada, and is completing her Ph.D. in the History and Theory of Architecture at McGill University.