

Studio South

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Studio South started with a belief that architecture should respond to people, culture, politics, history, and territory. The studio occurs in the Clemson University School of Architecture Graduate Program. In a larger sense, the studio is located within the territory of south and chooses to connect that territory directly and physically through investigations, projects, and research that result in full-scale interventions. Studio South brings collaborative practice to the academic environment by undertaking hands-on projects with small Southern towns and communities. This year the studio formed a collaborative partnership representing three parts of a successful outreach program: the academy, the community, and a cause or client. Quickly grasping the power of the idea, the students developed the enduring Studio South motto: Design Collaborate Construct. The partnership included Studio South; the larger professional, business, and governmental community; and the Pendleton Foundation for Black History and Culture (PFHBC) as owners of the property. The President of the PFHBC, Grant Cunningham, also teaches at Clemson so he became a key mediator for the project.

Venturing into the realm of outreach, construction, and Southern culture, Studio South proposed the disassembly of a historic but condemned structure in a small African American community. The original proposal quickly became two proposals when we addressed the need for an iconic replacement for the disassembled structure. The disassembly of the Keese Barn evolved from a proposal to selectively make cuts through the building, studying and revealing space, politics, and construction. The resultant process was akin to a reverse collage, taking away in order to create new spatial compositions. We adopted strategies of cutting, stripping, and removal as negative spatial operations. This process allowed us to engage the history and social structure that gives shape to buildings. It placed the process of building within the political and cultural arena. Erasing a cultural object from the African American community became a critical activity. The Studio had as a guiding directive,

an awareness of the political implications of the act of removal. Through the process, our operations become poetic as well as physical.

Studio South's second project of the year involved working with the community to design a new structure for the site that would meet their current and future needs. Throughout the disassembly of the Keese Barn, Studio South worked with the community on design proposals. The Studio presented a Master Plan concept for the larger area to include other significant African American historical sites. The resulting plan synthesized all the ideas presented in the Community Design Workshop; it envisioned a greater interaction between these historic sites in an attempt to present a cohesive structure in which the Keese Barn is a central element. The final proposal called for a community living room. This space, made up of various built components, becomes the center for community gathering. It recalls the original use of the site, where the community would congregate.

The Hundreds is now a park to both remember some of the original structure of the Barn and also to reinvigorate the site as it relates to the town and becomes a community gathering space again. The overall design plan included a Memorial Block to recreate the space of the former café in negative, with recovered wood becoming a solid where the café was a void. The Memorial Block is built on top of a concrete foundation inscribed with narratives taken from Southern African American writing. The Block is transcribed by two axially cuts that allow access and create views to other landmarks in town. A roof and wall define the original massing of the Barn as well as the porch area. A fire pit and community table invites new occupation to the site and allows gathering to occur. Associated walls and landscape grading enable the community to have enhanced access to the site and tie many components together.

Studio South constructed the project by incorporating many of the materials and construction methods we discovered and recovered during our disassembly of the Keese Barn, as well as the research we did. Wood from the Barn forms the Memorial Block component of the project. Brick from the chimneys and foundation walls are now part of a retaining wall that helps frame the new concrete community table. The improvisational nature of the construction is revisited through the infill of the Memorial Block with the old wood and siding.

Studio South offers a pedagogical framework for exploring the overlaps between community, practice, and the academy. By addressing theoretical issues of territory and the South, it brings greater depth to a design/build process and mandates collaborative interaction with community. As one Studio South student put it: "When I first approached the project, I just kind of joked about how, as a group of mostly white, middle/upper class graduate students, we didn't exactly fit into the community, and the thought of collaborating with them was somewhat intimidating. Now I just feel like we are all friends, despite issues we have had. I feel like this experience has prepared me for working with different groups of people in the future. I would never have had any of these experiences as part of a traditional studio...now I feel like I have learned so much as part of a "design-build" studio, and also was given the opportunity to work with a group of clients that became my community."

Site: Keese Barn and The Hundreds, Pendleton, South Carolina

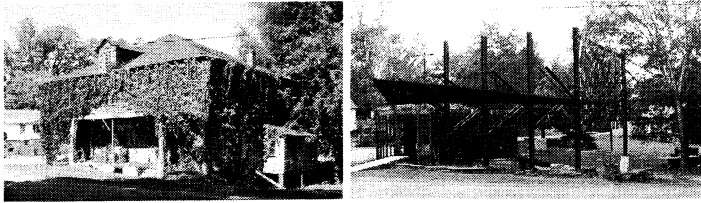
Owner: Pendleton Foundation for Black History and Culture. Grant Cunningham, President

Studio South: Virginia Agee, Hillary Andren, Yeul Ho Choi, Matt Clarkson, Amy Cole, Thomas Croft, Bo Garland, Mike Hudson, Kelley Hubbard, Greg Huddy, Jamie Huggins, Yuan Lin, Michael McKinney, Cary Perkins, Trevor Ream, Josh Selwa, Tyler Smyth, Ben Thompson, Matt Tindall, Cleve Walker, Jihu Zheng, Billy Zion. Faculty: Patricio del Real and Jori Erdman.

Consultants: Floyd Combs, PE; Timothy Drake, PhD.; Sam Y. Harris, PE, AIA, Esq; Neal Workman

Community Sponsors: Anderson County, Boral Brick, City of Clemson, Clemson University, Dewalt, Littlejohn Portable Toilets, McAbee & Company, Metromont Materials, Ole Norm's Hardware, Steamex, Town of Pendleton, Trehel Construction, United Rentals of Anderson, Waste Management, Williams Tree Service, Yeargin Metals

Additional Student Involvement: Nathan Asire, Melissa Bauld, Jeremy Chinnis, Michael Cook, Jonathan Frank, Natalie Gamill, Margaret Grambling, Natalie Gualy, Nathan Herold, Kevin Klevit, James Lee, Rebekah Morrah, Michael Rollins, Victor Schelechow, Christopher Shelley, Laura Smith, Elizabeth Sumner, Robin Timmons, JonPaul Virgo, and Justin Wallace. Faculty: Ron Rael.



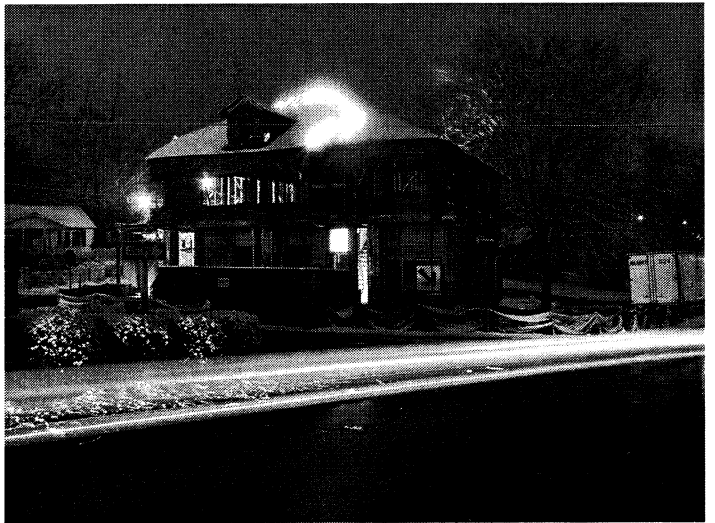
The site before and after Studio South's intervention.



Studio South carefully removes one of the windows to preserve as an artifact of the Keese Barn.



Pendleton Foundation for Black History and Culture member and longtime resident, Mrs. Salena Peppers describes events to Studio South members.



Keese Barn lit at night to emphasize the strategic cuts.



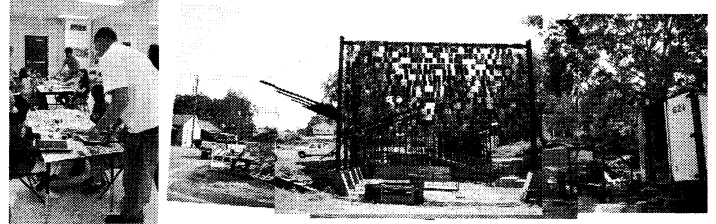
Studio South students Amy Cole and Kelley Hubbard work on the foundation of the Memorial Block.



Studio South students in one of the weekly meetings.



A view of the Memorial Block as the major structure is reaching completion. Reclaimed wood from the Keese Barn form the ribs.



Substantial completion of the "shingle wall." created from hundreds of shingles from the Keese Barn roof that were salvaged by Studio South. Pendleton Elementary School students and many local residents participated in the painting of the individual shingles for the new "wall."