Rural Studio

www.ruralstudio.com

Rural Studio, an architecture program within the School of Architecture at Auburn University, began its fourteenth academic year in August and has designed and built more than 100 community projects and charity homes in west Alabama and educated more than four hundred architecture students.
Honored for his exceptional work at Rural Studio, the late American Institute of Architects Gold Medalist, Samuel Mockbee and colleague D.K. Ruth conceived the Studio as a method to improve the living conditions in rural Alabama while educating architects utilizing the concept of "context-based learning."

The Rural Studio is a hands-on architectural pedagogy that not only teaches students to design and build charity homes and community projects, but also improves the living conditions in rural west Alabama.
The focus of the student's thesis year is a community-based project and sustainable materials research. Working in small teams, the student's experience the Arts & Crafts "hands-on" building tradition, work directly with the community, and have the added dilemma of negotiating designs and procedures with their team-mates. Typically in teams of 3 or 4, the students conceive of the project and program, raise funds, write grants, make community presentations, and, design and build the projects from foundation to roof. Projects have ranged from baseball fields, community centers to a house made of cardboard.

Andrew Freear, Director

Andrew Freear, from Yorkshire, England, is the Wiatt Professor at Auburn University Rural Studio. After the untimely death of Samuel Mockbee in 2001, Andrew became the Director of the Rural Studio in Newbern, West Alabama.
Educated at the Polytechnic of Central London and the Architectural Association, London, England, he has practiced extensively in London and Chicago, and taught design studio for 5 years at the University of Illinois at Chicago.
Having moved to Alabama eight years ago, he lives in the small rural community of Newbern, West Alabama where his main role, aside from directing the Rural Studio is thesis project advisor to fifth-year undergraduate students and their building projects.

Andrew Freear has designed, supervised and built Rural Studio exhibits in Chicago, Cincinnati, Vienna Austria, Barcelona Spain, at the 2002 Whitney Biennial in New York, and at the 2005 Bienal de São Paulo of Architecture in Brazil. The exhibition in Barcelona earned him two Chicago AIA design awards and he was finalist in the "Foment de las Arts Decorativas 2004 Architecture and Interior design awards".
In 2005 he received awards for Distinguished Service to Rural Life from the Rural Sociological Society, the Educator of Distinction Award from the American Society of Interior Designers and a Commendation Award from the Architectural Review for Emerging Architecture.

His work at the Rural Studio has been published in Architectural Record, Architectural Review, Progressive Architecture, Dwell, Domus, Abitare and Lotus magazines. His work is also covered extensively in two books by Andrea Oppenheimer Dean and Timothy Hursley: the most recent entitled "Proceed and be Bold: The Rural Studio after Samuel Mockbee".
He has lectured on the subject of the Rural Studio across the United States, and as far a field as Berlin, Sydney, Barcelona and London. In contrast to this he is a member of the Board of the Rural Heritage Foundation in Thomaston Alabama, the Perry Lakes Board Marion Alabama, and of the Newbern Volunteer Fire Department in Newbern Alabama. He was also made an honorary Citizen of Marion Alabama for his work on the Perry Lakes Park Project.

In 2006 Freear was honored with The Ruth and Ralph Erskine Nordic Foundation Award which aspires to promote urban planning and architecture which is functional, economical and beautiful, and which is to the advantage of underprivileged and deprived groups in any society. He is the first American-based architect to win this prestigious award.
Most recently he has been nominated as one of five finalists in the second edition of the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture, 2008.The purpose of this new architecture prize is to honour annually a living architect who moves towards sustainability: the result is announced in August 2008.