Indigenous Design Collaborative

Indigenous Stories and Sky Science

Location:
Arizona State University Tempe Campus
Stage of Completion:
Temporary Instillation
Faculty Lead:
Wanda Dalla Costa
Design Team:
DSC 598 Class
Date:
Spring 2019

Engaging the Indigenous Context surrounding Roden Crater.

In the fall and spring terms of the 2018-2019, the Herberger Institute piloted five academic field labs exploring themes of light and land in the US Southwest. Inspired by the expansive vision of James Turrell and his monumental earth work Roden Crater, this field lab led students in design, architecture, construction and American Indian Studies, to the volcanic fields of Northern Arizona to visit the Crater and meet the artist. They also toured neighboring sites of volcanic, geologic, cosmic and human history, including a five day journey through Navajo Nation in order to hear first-hand from local knowledge keepers, the history of the land and this place.

Deep History

The students learned from Dr Henry Fowler, a Navajo mathematics professor at Navajo Technical University, who provided a lecture on sky science and its relation to local architectural form. As they toured historic structures of Chaco Canyon, Wapaki National Monument, Hopi Reservation and Sunset Crater they expressed interest in sharing the deep history and resilience that they experienced on their journey.

Indigenous Methodologies

The course utilized the Indigenous Placekeeping Framework which focuses on four aspects toward nation building: community-led, process-based, place-based and reciprocity. Through engaging with the community, the students expressed appreciation for the holistic way of understanding and engaging with the world and the interconnectedness of all living things.

Transformation

As the students toured significant sites and heard from knowledge bearers from the region, they expressed a desire to share their journeys in the form of personal explorations. Each student found a personal way of interpreting the crater's context, seen above as the individual panels. The students also summarized the collective learnings of the trip, seen above as the large panel.