

OSKAR VON MILLER FORUM

Press Release

Design with Wetness

A lecture by Anuradha Mathur/University of Pennsylvania and Dilip da Cunha/Harvard University, Columbia University on May 9th, 2019 at 6:30 pm at the Oskar von Miller Forum

Wetness is everywhere; why do we see land and water somewhere? This question leads the design practice of Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha. Working through projects, public exhibitions, studios and writings, they expose the landcentric imagination and infrastructure that underpins the current ground of habitation and its subjugation of water; and they venture new imaginations and possibilities.

This lecture will present their current project, *Ocean of Rain*. It builds on da Cunha's new book, *The Invention of Rivers* (2019), which calls out the river as a product of design that has led the cultivation of a landcentric imagination and infrastructure with a line separating water from land. Today, with increasing floods and sea-level rise, this line is in sharp focus with proposals for walls, levees, natural defenses, and retreat. These responses raise questions on where the line is drawn; but they also raise questions on the separation that this line facilitates. Is it found in nature or does nature follow from its assertion?

Ocean of Rain presents rain as an alternative to rivers. Its embrace of ubiquitous wetness counters the landcentric imagination of rivers, encourages an infrastructure that holds rather than drains, and inspires negotiation rather than separation.

About

Anuradha Mathur, an architect and landscape architect, is Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the School of Design, University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

Dilip da Cunha, an architect and planner based in Philadelphia and Bangalore is co-director of the Risk and Resilience program at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, and Adjunct Professor in Urban Design Program at Columbia University.

Mathur and da Cunha's work is focused on how water is visualized and engaged in ways that lead to conditions of its excess and scarcity, but also opportunities that its ubiquity offers for new visualizations of terrain, and resilience through design. This focus has guided their collaborative research, practice, and teaching in diverse cultural milieus such as Mumbai, Jerusalem, Bangalore, the Western Ghats of India, Sundarbans, Coastal Virginia, the US–Mexico border.