The Summer Study Abroad Program in Colombia is a four year project. It researches and tests architectural design in its role to provoke change within the *Forms of Informal* urban development in three cities in Colombia: Bogota, Medellin and Cartagena. An important part of the program involves visits to neighborhoods, buildings, events, architecture offices, interviews to politicians, urban and community activists and architects. Last year, the first installment of the program, was invested in understanding and unpacking the overall forms of informal dynamics in the three cities in a broad level. On the next three years of the project, the program will filter the visits, interviews and tours in order to develop design strategies that focus on three major architectural elements: the roof, the wall and the ground. The objective of these next three years is to design prototypes with the potential to be built in three major Colombian cities: Bogota, Medellin and Cartagena.

We'll spend 1 week in Medellin. The city is popularly associated with the drug lord Pablo Escobar, narcotraffic, and with the high murder rate between the 70’s to the 90’. However, in 2013, Medellin was awarded by The Wall Street Journal and considered as The Most Innovative City of the Year beating world capitals like New York or Tel Aviv. The resurgence of Medellin was possible due to a fruitful collaboration between architects, planners and politicians. Medellin's administration applied a logic of urban/architectural acupuncture (strategic insertion of open and free libraries, botanic gardens, sport facilities etc.) and reinvented the city's transport infrastructure (subway and metro cable, a gondola lift system that connects the informal settlements of the city). In doing so, it achieved an exceptional impact in the city in its relation to its inhabitants. Medellin is a fascinating and unique example of the pragmatic relationship between architecture and politics. Through visits, we'll study the past, recent history and current challenges of the city; we'll interview the main local actors that have been involved in the creation of the current Medellin, like Felipe Uribe, Alejandro Echeverri and his research group URBAM, Felipe Mesa from PLAN B arquitectos and activist Jorge Blandón, just to name a few.

We will then study and have a design residency in Bogotá during 2 weeks. When imagining the city of the future, Bogotá is one of the world's most vibrant laboratories. Mysteriously located within a high plateau in the Andes Mountains, the city has grown in enigmatic ways overtaking its own physical boundaries. Bogotá is a mutant that has never stopped emerging. It has enacted ideas during the Peñalosa administration that are regarded worldwide to be costeffective, efficient and unique solutions, such as the TransMilenio 'rapid transit system'. In 2006, Bogotá won The Golden Lion Award at the Tenth International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale in recognition of "their efforts towards social inclusion, education, housing and public space". Bogotá is currently a leader in cultural offerings in South America,
and is increasingly being recognized worldwide as a regional hub for the development of the arts.

The design residency in Bogotá will take place in Centro Creativo Textura, an old textile factory converted into an art institution dedicated to the emergent Colombian art scene. Students will both live and work in Textura developing proposals for chosen case studies together with a design toolbox or dictionary of spatial tactics on the basic elements of architecture: the roof, the wall and the ground. Apart from our visits to offices such as Mazzanti, Daniel Bermudez, Felipe Gonzalez Pacheco, Daniel Bonilla or Simon Velez and their most relevant projects, we will also have architects, politicians and other urban actors visit our workshop periodically to give lectures and participate with their feedback on our design process.

We'll end our program by spending 1 week in Cartagena, also known as Cartagena de Indias, a city on the northern coast of Colombia in the Caribbean Coast Region and capital of the Bolívar Department. Cartagena is a gorgeous fishing village on Colombia's Caribbean coast, has excellent beaches, a historic old town (that's entirely walkable) and beautiful colonial architecture. In 1984 Cartagena's colonial walled city and fortress were designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Cartagena is the city most associated with pirates in the Caribbean. But Cartagena is not only a holiday paradise, outside of the historic wall, Cartagena reveals an extreme social inequality. Apart from visiting and learning from direct lived experience, we will do an exhibition of the work produced in Bogota and will participate in the International Architecture Workshop of Cartagena. A program that has been receiving students from all over Latin America and Spain for 27 years and faculty from around the world.

Each year/installment of PennDesign’s Colombia study abroad program will generate a publication and an exhibition. By the end of the 4 year project these will be edited and compiled in a complete publication.