LIVING IN A NEW LAND

dwellings for refugees and immigrants in Portland and Germany

The United Nations estimates that there are about 65 million refugees and 250 million migrants in the world today. Political turmoil, war, climate displacement and the simple search for a better life cause people to move to different countries, sometimes thousands of miles from where they started. In this studio we will look at this phenomenon from the point of view of daily life in the 'arrival city'—how can newcomers, particularly refugees, be supported by the places in which they live and may work, in their efforts to make a new life in a new place?

The studio will involve the design of prototypical housing and related facilities for immigrants and refugees.

There will be two possible sites: one in Portland, and one in Essen, Germany, the country that has made the strongest commitment in Europe to welcoming refugees from Syria and other countries.

The program will include a choice of several themes in addition to the design of dwellings:

▪ "housing as a verb"—the development of dwellings that can grow over time, allowing for minimum investment at the beginning and gradual investment as the family grows.
▪ workplaces on the same site, or connected to the dwellings, providing a means for people to start and operate their own small businesses
▪ "the sugar in the milk"—a means for the refugees to contribute in a positive way to the community and culture of the place where they have settled.
▪ a theme of the student's choice

The studio will emphasize several issues: the use and transformation of housing/site typologies, based on historic and modern precedents, that are appropriate to the program and site; the particular circumstances of refugees, their vulnerabilities, their economic needs, their aspirations, their relationships both to their home country and their new country; and the material/construction development of dwellings—including the deliberate development of architectural space, light, materials and details—that can support people's lives in humane ways.

The first term will begin with a short competition involving housing for refugees in one of three cities: Amman, Berlin and Nairobi. Following submission of the competition, we will embark on the main project for the three terms.

The studio will be conducted in an intense and professional way, including weekly pinups and clearly defined goals, incorporating design and research. A variety of scales and modes of representation will be engaged on a continual basis.