Description

Architects test limits—of structure, of materiality, of form, and of the discipline itself. In the 1980s a faltering economy propelled a select group of architects to challenge disciplinary boundaries through alternative representational methods as a means to establish a new criticality. Recently, the question of testing has taken on renewed urgency in the discipline, but today’s testing happens through different methods, means, and ends.

Most directly, testing suggests an extreme or improbable materiality, structure or form, that is, extraordinary projects realized with experimental materials and processes. This form of testing strives to produce a new or innovative solution. However, today’s testing can also imply a methodological or conceptual approach. Digital processes enable designers to “test” through multiple scenarios and iterations, furthering the tension between “process” and “product.” Testing 1, 2, 3, refers to iterative design strategies and asks how does the proto-scientific notion of testing transform when adopted for a cultural discipline? The seminar will explore the material, structural, conceptual, and intellectual possibilities of “testing” as an architectural paradigm, and its ramifications at multiple scales.

Structure

During the first half of the semester, I will begin the discussion with a slide talk, after which two students will lead a discussion of the readings, incorporating 10 examples of architectural projects relevant to the weeks’ topic. All readings will be posted on the carmen class site. Students should come to class each week having completed the readings prior to classtime and should be prepared to discuss the material. The last few weeks of the semester are reserved for student project presentations for review and feedback prior to final grading. Enrollment is limited to 15 students.

Requirements

Students will research and thoroughly document 10 projects that together construct a narrative thread of testing and innovation. Full documentation requirements to be issued in class on September 19, but will include plans, sections, images, a digital model, scans of publications, and full bibliographical information.

Grading

20% class led discussion, 20% Assignment 1, 10% class participation
50% final project (based on in-class presentation and final submission)

Schedule

- August 28: Introduction, Testing 1
- September 4: Testing 2
- September 11: Testing 3, Pin up, Assignment 1: 10 innovatons, 100 years
- September 18: Assignment 1: 10 innovatons, 100 years, Due
- September 25: No class
- October 2: Individual Meetings on presentations, time tba
- October 9: Kristy Balliet on Possible Mediums
- October 16: Formal Testing
- October 23: Structural Testing
- October 30: Architectural Narratives
- November 6: Student presentations
- November 13: Student presentations
- November 20: Student presentations
- December 4: FINAL REVIEW week, no class
- December 11: Final presentations due
READINGS

**August 28: Introduction, Testing 1**


**September 4: Testing 2: Iterations**


**September 11: Testing 3: Innovations**


**October 9: Kristy Balliet, Possible Mediums, readings tba**

**October 16: Formal Testing**


**October 23: Structural Testing**


See also:
Frei Otto, Complete Works

**October 30: Material Testing**

Peter Trummer, “Associative design: from type to population”, in Computational Design Thinking Edited by A.Menges and S. Ahlquist (Wiley AD Reader 2011).