"The thing’s hollow — it goes on forever — and — oh my God! — it’s full of stars!"
-Arthur C. Clarke, 2001: A Space Odyssey

“The Hyperobject is a liar... Hyperobjects are Tardis-like, bigger on the inside than the outside”
-Timothy Morton, Hyperobjects

“There is no outside... the outside is another inside”
-LaTour (on Slotterdijk)

This workshop will focus on the problem of near-figuration, which is a form of resolution of the polarizing discourse of form versus shape of the last ten years. Near figuration is defined as the appearance of distinct, legible objects from illegible or fluid conditions, resulting in a sense of mystery in relation to the extents, interiority, and origin of the thing.

In particular, we will focus on involuted figures, which can simultaneously create exterior depth effects but also interior spatial figuration. One of the fundamental things architecture does is characterize the threshold between exterior and interior. In this, it must take an ontological position with regards to the state of existence of “outside” and “inside”, and the degree to which they might be illusions. LaTour captures that indeterminacy so well when he says “there is no outside...the outside is just another inside.” In this workshop, we will define this threshold as elastic but not blurred. We will assume boundaries and limits to understanding rather than the illusion of a world of chatter and flows.
Rather than smooth topological holes, as in Reimann’s or Klein’s diagrams of curved space manifolds so prevalent in the relational era of the late 20th century, we will favor strange, primitive holes made from either subtracting or pushing chunky figures into crystalline containers or into one another. The interplay between figures which push out, push in, or remain hidden will be used to create mysterious formations which defy access, although they may appear to have multiple ‘doorways’.

Like black holes, these involutions may not constitute literal points of entry but rather moments of allure and lack of access. In Interstellar (2014), Chris Nolan goes to great lengths to represent the most “real” black hole possible, based on scientific calculation and state of the art rendering techniques, producing never-before seen phenomena at the event horizon. Despite how it is presented by Nolan -- as a form of knowledge and plausibility-- what resonates in the film is the mysteriousness of the object and its seeming impossibility. Stanley Kubrick, that film’s greatest influence, knew this innately, choosing not to burden his monolith from 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) with being “real” in the sense of accurate or concrete, but rather making it even more alluring as a matter of speculation on the real. When Dave Bowman, rocketing across the expanse of the monolith, utters “my God, It’s full of stars”, we are confronted with a vexing entity that is delimited in scale on its exterior, yet seems to contain the universe. Its contents are bigger than the container-- something Timothy Morton associates with “hyperobjects”, or entities that are vast yet withdrawn. In this workshop, we will speculate on new container/contained and inside/out relations in architecture, and seek to produce strange new forms of interiority.

Techniques/ Languages

Chunky figures: diamonds, crystals, jacks, ziggurats, hybrids, stepped, voxels
Mysterious holes: Boolean subtraction/polygon “squishing”
Piles of crystals and jacks with some positive and some void
The “Too-big” figure (sometimes an object, sometimes a hole)
Razor thin flaps and partially obscured holes
Liners and Poche
Complex slicing and glance-cutting
WORKSHOP | Involuted Figures and Black Holes
Tom Wiscombe with David Eskenazi

THE KNOWLTON SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE | Feb 4-7 2015

Blackness/ Involution/ Near-Figuration Studies

Schedule (It’ll be Flexible)

Wednesday
10am-12pm Workshop Introduction and Tutorials (LAB)
1:30pm- Tutorials and working session (LAB)
5:30p Lecture

Thursday
9am-10:30am Tutorials and working session (LAB)
3pm Review of work (TBD)
5pm- Tutorials and working session (LAB)

Friday
10am Review of work (TBD)
1:30pm- Working Session with Desk Crits (TBA)
Massing complete
Representation

Saturday
9am-2pm Final Production and Representation
2pm Printing
6pm FINAL PIN-UP

Background Readings
Graham Harman, “The Road to Objects”
Graham Harman, Portions of Guerrilla Metaphysics
Timothy Morton, Portions of Hyperobjects
WIRED Magazine: Chris Nolan, Guest Editor
Levi Bryant, “Mereologies and Objects”

A Child’s Story (from Hyperobjects)
Cartons are houses for crackers,
Castles are houses for kings,
The more I think about houses,
The more things are houses for things.

THE KNOWLTON SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE | Feb 4-7 2015