

LARCH 6910: DYNAMIC SYSTEMS STUDIO

Instructor name: Kristi Cheramie
Year and term: Autumn 2014
Meeting time: MWF 1:50-5:30
Meeting location: G1 Studio Space

COURSE INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Designing (and eventually building) is a physical task. Involving both intellectual and manual operations to manifest thoughts, the process of design invokes the full body. To that end, the beginning of a design education can become overwhelming given the range of necessary skills that must be carefully orchestrated. In this studio, you will be introduced to the process of design through a series of exercises that will ask you to engage the questions of our profession, first in isolation, then in combination, with each assignment adding new parameters or tasks to your current body of work.

The language in this studio will be limited to the most basic words in the design catalogue. We will deal in space, volume, assembly, line, rhythm, measure, depth, structure, solid, and void. This is a very particular choice; it is not a choice that forsakes the language of the landscape, but rather gives it due reverence. For example, you could read an allée of trees for plant and soil types, but you could also study its rhythm, structure, and spatial qualities. A grassy knoll at the edge of a forest is a void, adjacent to a solid; it is also a drumlin formation covered by a particular type of grass, near a particular glade of trees. Both readings are essential to its condition and experience as a landscape. The intent of this course is to assemble a functional base built from the fundamental and indispensable language of design, leaving you to expand and further tailor this diction in future studios and courses.

Projects

Project One begins with one of the simplest of all built forms: the box. For the first few weeks, you will pour obsessively over the making of a box that expresses a clear language of assembly and logical organization of interior volumes. The box will be gradually un-made - and eventually grounded - as transformative environmental forces are introduced. In Project Two, we will operate in reverse, devoting ourselves to the design and construction of a dynamic, responsive terrain. Here we will focus on the generative capacity of moving material and introduce a basic set of tools capable of tracking the terrain's dynamic networks. Project Three moves out of the explicitly abstract and engages an existing site. Using the skills from Projects One and Two, we will read the site's long and short history and offer a series of propositions that suggest an alternative future, one that embraces dynamic site systems and accepts continual change.

Resist the temptation to attribute familiar architectural terms to the box in Project One or view the ground exclusively as a landscape in Project Two. This will limit your ability to unlock the embedded potential of each. Ultimately, those preconceived notions have little bearing on the course trajectory and will only hinder your range as a designer. Instead, look to the relationship between space and force, look for ways to manipulate, alter, minimize, or accentuate the relationship. In short, one must make to unmake and everything that is made will eventually be unmade by the environment around it. This studio will explore the extent to which this relationship can be manifested in design