

Studio Professor

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Studio: Cowgill Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Plaza side  
MWF 1:00 – 4:50pm

Seminars: TBD

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Collage Photography: Henri T. de Hahn

**INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT**

*“...What are the relationships between ideas and architecture? Can an authentic and meaningful architecture be developed in our current pluralistic context? How can architecture help us to form an understanding of our cultural context? It is in a context of inquiry that discourse can best be carried out, a questioning before criticism, concerning ideas that establish the foundations of judgments and products in our civilization. Architecture forms a vital part of human culture, and thus we are concerned with the development of architectural ideas, by examining the relationships between architectural intentions and implementations, we may come to a more comprehensive understanding of meaning in architecture and architectural thought...”*

ARCHITECTURE AND ABSTRACTION  
Introduction to Pratt Journal of Architecture

**COURSE CONTENT**

In a five-year curriculum such as ours, semester after semester the students' knowledge of the “meaning of architecture” expands to integrate a growing number of complex issues. These issues generally revolve around a variety of architectural, site, structural, technical, philosophical and ethical positions. Building on those positions, the “design of space” or “the setting in space” of architectural themes might be the most important didactic objective in the design studio sequence. Equally important is to learn how to “conceive an architectural space” and “build it by giving it physicality;” it is a process, which involves an acute sense of creativity and discipline both at the intuitive and rational levels of design. To learn how to “conceive architecture” is part of a larger question surrounding concepts pertaining to the body of history and theory and are most critical in your journey in the *education of an architect*. To follow this approach means to understand the culture and references surrounding the discipline of architecture.

**DIDACTIC INTENTIONS**

Your first year *foundation studio* was tailored to awaken your attitude towards your creativity and offer you a set of spatial principles. Second year will build on your newly acquired skills and your ability to create and understand architectural concepts through the comprehension of new and complex issues. Three of them, which might seem different in second year, are the introduction of

a **program**, a **function**, and a **usage**, and all associated with a **site**. And while it is important to point out that the practice of these topics (program, function and usage) does not constitute the sole purpose, neither the finality of architecture, they will always exist to create and support something meaningful in architecture.

Seen as isolated events without any “sprit” is what separates architecture from building. This above approach is to provide you with tools and the necessary mean to communicate your ideas in order to set your project on solid footing for the advancement of your creativity –all this to a great extent, and beyond the didactic intentions, is a matter of taste –your sensibility concerning what seems conceptually and perceptually right!

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Second year design studio is intended to build on the introduction to design and visual studies in architecture acquired during your first year. This foundation will be supported and extended through a series of exercises and projects that will introduce notions of program, function, usage, disposition of spaces, and site context in order to develop a basic vocabulary for architectural space making. These themes will be developed around spatial ordering principles of line, plane, mass, volume, space, light, and scale with a strong interest in the physicality of our discipline such as structure, materiality, construction and detailing. Additional topics pertinent to modern thinking (collage, montage, assemblage and transparency) will be discussed in accordance to the needs of each project. To introduce these particular topics, an attempt to join analysis projects (group learning) and design projects (individual learning) will be explored in an interactive manner. The argument for such interaction is that any project gains meaning and complexity by both the analysis and the design process thus informing each other of particular discoveries which are revisited throughout the semester

During this fall semester, exercises and projects will focus on the idea of modern space - its principles, its innovations, and promises - for the purpose of understanding the legacy you are building on and how to contextualize and understand contemporary space. In this overall concept, I propose to approach this strategy as follows:

#### Interdisciplinary approach

Importance will be placed on an approach to architecture based on a inter-disciplinary connection with other design and art disciplines. This approach reaffirms both the College’s interest in the student’s humanistic education to become an architect, and the ever-evolving nature of our profession that offers rich alternative paths. Either way, it is imperative to recognize and cultivate a holistic approach to the learning of architecture as a necessary part of the student’s creativity. Each of you will be encouraged to initiate, develop and strengthen your design process by incorporating new viewpoints, reactions and circumstances to what you already know.

#### Thinking skills

The design studio will be conducted as an exploration of architectural themes through a way of looking at the world. This sense of observation, which leads ultimately toward the need for interpretation and vision, is based on the choice of your process and overall strategy.

#### Representational skills

The design process will introduce and emphasize a variety of skills in the methods of presentation. This pedagogical goal is to learn and form a cohesive set of visual documents through writing, sketching, conceptualizing, drawing, analyzing and *professional* presentation and model techniques, all which describe and express your ideas. Instruction about media techniques is to provide the student with the opportunity for a more integrated approach to the development and communication of their ideas, which include verbal presentations.

### **STUDIO PROJECTS:**

This year's studio projects will focus on one analysis problem, and three design projects –rural (lake site fictive site), suburban (new courtyard house-type in Blacksburg) and urban (apartment renovation in Lexington, KY)– with specific *functional* requirements that need your creative *programmatic* interpretations, and a strong development of your ideas regarding their *values of usage* –all important design terms that will make you at ease within creating an architectural language. Each particular project will concentrate not on the way architecture looks but on the expression of the process by which it can result, not uniquely on the beauty of the forms, but on the forces that produce them. Above all, this studio is about a balanced approach to your discoveries.

As Montesquieu, French 17<sup>th</sup> century author and philosopher so eloquently states: “*The distinguishing feature of great beauty is that first it should surprise to an indifferent degree, which, continuing and then augmenting, is finally changed to wonder and admiration.*”

### **SEMINARS/DIALOGUES CONTENT**

The above intent will be shouldered on three fundamental principles: a theory course, a design theory course, and the design project. The particularity of this pedagogical approach is to build on the acquired first year **design** fundamentals by introducing key **disciplinary** knowledge that will result in your ability to start framing architectural questions that find their legitimacy between tradition and innovation. Seminar/dialogue sessions in the theory and history of architecture will be offered intermittently during the regular studio classes and will emphasize various seminal theories on spatial concepts and their relation to the ideas and principles of modern architecture. These moments of reflection will be offered as an in-house theory course that will be led by faculty. Assigned reading material will complement each session and students are invited to request particular discussion topics of their choice.

### **STUDIO LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of the year the students will have acquired the following:

1. Awareness of the potential of an architecture in search of poetry, differentiating building from architecture;
2. Understanding of what constitutes an idea, a concept, and a design strategy;
3. Ability to distinguish between what appears to be real and its representation, between the literal and phenomenal aspects of space;
4. Be able to attribute to a project a clear set of theoretical premises and defined strategies that define the architectural composition of each of your projects;
5. Investigate the filiation of the five basic 20<sup>th</sup> century spatial configurations of architecture, and understand how they are used, as well as how they redefined the notion of architectural language;
6. Develop a common sense in design as a strong compliment to the artistic dimension of architecture –a sense, which might be the result of a general conflict between form and practicality, between what is essential and what is exceptional;
7. And an appreciation that research leads to the coherence and authenticity of any design project –YOUR project in particular.

### **NAAB STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA**

The School of Architecture + Design at Virginia Tech (A+D) is accredited since its inception and *The accredited degree program must demonstrate that each graduate possesses the knowledge and skills defined by the criteria below. The knowledge and skills defined here represent those required to move to the next stage in career development including internship.*

*The program must provide student work as evidence that its graduates have satisfied each criterion.”*

*The criteria encompass two levels of accomplishment:*

- **Understanding**—*The capacities to classify, compare, summarize, explain and/or interpret information.*
- **Ability**—*Proficiency in using specific information to accomplish a task, correctly selecting the appropriate information, and accurately applying it to the solution of a specific problem, while also distinguishing the effects of its implementation.*

*The NAAB establishes SPC to help accredited degree programs prepare students for the profession while encouraging educational practices suited to the individual degree program. The SPC are organized into realms to more easily understand the relationships between individual criteria.*

*Graduates from NAAB-accredited programs must be able to build abstract relationships and understand the impact of ideas based on the research and analysis of multiple theoretical, social, political, economic, cultural and environmental contexts. This includes using a diverse range of media to think about and convey architectural ideas including writing, investigative skills, speaking, drawing and model making.*

During the fall and spring semesters the studio context will focus on four (4) SPC's which are organized under:

#### **Realm A: Critical Thinking and Representation:**

- **A.3 Investigative Skills and Applied Research:** *Ability to gather, assess, record, and comparatively evaluate relevant information and performance in order to support conclusions related to a specific project or assignment.*
- **A.4 Architectural Design Skills:** *Ability to effectively use basic formal, organizational and environmental principles and the capacity of each to inform two- and three-dimensional design.*
- **A.6 Use of Precedents:** *Ability to examine and comprehend the fundamental principles present in relevant precedents and to make informed choices about the incorporation of such principles into architecture and urban design projects.*

#### **Realm B: Building Practices, Technical Skills, and Knowledge:**

- **B.2. Site Design:** *Ability to respond to site characteristics, including urban context and developmental patterning, historical fabric, soil, topography, ecology, climate, and building orientation, in the development of a project design.*

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