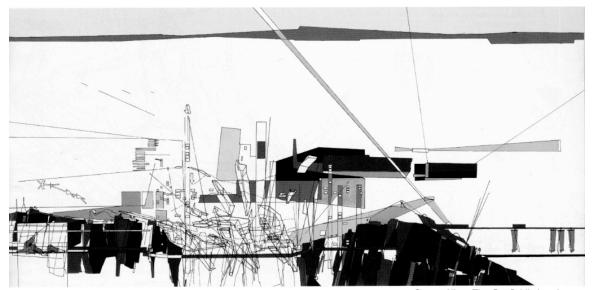CCA Master of Architecture Program
studio 1: Architecture In Situ

At CCA, architecture studio courses introduce the practice of architecture as an active inquiry. Each studio is formulated around specific questions, engaging students in making, dialog and experimentation as research into architectural potentials.

The practice of architecture is a rigorous visual, spatial, and physical exploration. It is through making - the actual production of drawings, models and many other available methods of making – that new potentials are discovered and initial ideas are transformed into multi-layered architectural propositions. In the architectural design process, initial ideas develop and transform through the knowledge gained in dialogue with media and material, and through rigorous investigation of their potentials. The quest is for an architectural construct that performs highly on multiple levels – physically, spatially, and phenomenologically.

Smout Allen, The Geofluidic Landscape

This first full studio in the Masters Sequence is structured around multiple understandings of site, ecologies, and performance. Architecture 'in situ', or 'in position', stresses the dialogue built constructs have with their surrounding contexts. Tactically, visually, and physically, the constructs we situate alter, respond to, and/or catalyze the relationships with the pre-existing conditions. How they participate, or perform, in relationship to the multiplicity of interacting influences on a site will be explored through precedents, research and mapping, and will be engaged through a sequence of design exercises.

Studio 1 will investigate these issues through sequential design exercises focused on the introduction of basic architectural processes and the development of essential methods of design thinking. These methods include a full range of visual means from 2D drawing to 3D modeling, research skills, and intermittent summary writing, as well as methods to analyze complex conditions as a generator for design criteria and ideas. Special focus is placed on conceptualization, mapping, and transforming mapping strategies into architectural explorations.

Over the course of the studio, three design explorations emphasize architectural interactions with site and its effects on delimiting the body, taking measure of the environment, and the transformation of site as a physical artifact. An initial project engages the *site as a constructed artifact* through sequential modeling, taking into account the understanding and manipulation of topography. The project addresses dialectical, spatial conditions of thresholds, interfaces and transitions as a means of controlling sequencing, scales, and orientation through a site.

The second project explores the use of critical mapping to reveal pertinent forces and elements making up a given site. It examines the *ecologies* of site as analytical and generative tools for design. Ecologies, here, are understood as the multiplicity of interacting influences that define given site conditions - including environmental, material and spatial systems. The project also includes an analysis of site strategies in selected case studies from contemporary architectural practices.

The final project focuses on re-conceptualizations of the critical mappings as generators of an architectural intervention. A visual and critical dialogue with the conditions, influences and performance on the site becomes the precondition of design. Ordering systems at site and architectural scales are developed and refined to produce a range of conditions defining interiority, exteriority, degrees of enclosure, boundary and transition. Basic tectonics are explored in terms of defining enclosure, the transmittal of forces to the ground, and the control of topography. Performance of the architectural construct is evaluated at a range of scales impacted by the architectural intervention, from the direct interaction with the body to the dialog with the larger landscape.

Learning goals for the design explorations include:

project 1 - Site Performance and Site Intervention:
- Understanding of the body's measure and perception of a site.
- Direct engagement with the tangibility of a site as a build construct.
- Modification of a site to re-construct it both physically and conceptually, and gauge what perceptual change has occurred.
- Exploration of strategies of sequencing, involving both the tracing of the body through a succession of spaces and direct contouring of ground, controlling topography for its capacity for gradual and/or abrupt change.
- Comparative and iterative testing (of different sites, strategies, conditions, events, agents, precedents, etc.) to develop a rigor of development and to deepen a topical understanding.

project 2 - Site Ecologies: Mapping as a Generative Design Method
- Unpacking the array of elements, forces, systems and conditions that together constitute the complex ecologies of a site.
- Gathering and understanding pertinent site information in a manner useful for design.
- Visualizing and interpreting this information to extract architectural potential.
- Constructing (visual and verbal) arguments for the emphasis of certain factors and/or positions above others based on the development of design intention.
- Transformation of extracted principles and supporting data into generative design strategies.
- Analysis of architectural precedents for their strategies and operations in relation to site and ground, extracting and extending strategies as generative tools for a site intervention.

project 3 - Architecture in Situ
- Preparation of site criteria and design strategies as the basis for an architectural design exploration.
- Understanding of a given program in terms of use and experience, and development of an argument for its interpretation.
- Consideration of the modulation of site forces/systems, like topography, environmental performance, culture use, etc., as areas to physically manifest design intentions.
- Re-conceptualization of site in dialogue with an architectural intervention.
- Development of a project from conceptual thinking to architectural manifestation.
- Comparative analysis of a precedent study, in support of a design proposal.

Studio Culture
The information below is important. It details class policy and constitutes a sort of contract between the faculty and the students. Read it carefully and keep it for reference.

Class Meeting Hours: Class meets from 3 pm to 7 pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. All students are to be present in the studio during the entire scheduled meeting time. Expect to work an absolute minimum of two hours outside of class for every hour in. All cell phones and beepers are to be turned off during class meeting hours.

Attendance: Attendance at all studio periods, forums, and colloquia, and field trips is required. Three unexcused absences will result in the student being asked to withdraw from the class or a non-passing grade will be issued. Absences are excused for the following documented reasons only: family or personal emergencies and illness. The instructors must be notified **in advance** by telephone, email or by note in their mailbox **prior** to class time, regarding excused absences.

Instructors' Schedules: With team taught studios, each of the two instructors will be in studio two of the three studio meeting days each week. Instructors will announced these days on the first day of class.

Readings and Reading Seminars: Readings will be assigned periodically throughout the semester. Assigned readings should be carefully prepared for reading seminars, which will be set for a future studio time.

Desk Critiques/Pin-ups: Desk crits and class pin-ups are an essential component of architectural education. Since architecture is a visual medium, this means having new and thoughtful visual work (drawings, models) each class session. If we come to your table for a desk crit and find you have no significant new visual work (a scribble in your sketch book does not count), we will move on to the next student.

Reviews: During the studio we will work on graphic, modeling, and verbal presentation skills.   These are crucial professional tools and help while you are in school as well. We expect each one of you to be present for the entire time of every pin-up and review out of support and courtesy to your classmates. A great deal is to be learned from the comments made on your classmates' projects. Unexcused absence from a scheduled review will lead to failure of the class.

Outside Lectures: The School of Architecture Lecture Series will take place on Monday nights at 7 PM in the Lecture Hall. These are marked on the schedule for the class. You are required to attend these lectures. CCA's Graduate Division and the UC Berkeley architecture program also have lively lecture series.

Other Resources: Readings will be assigned with each project and will be distributed in printed or digital form. Other resources will be posted as needed on the studio website.

Sketchbook / Personal Studio: All students are expected to keep a sketchbook and develop a personal studio space. The assimilation of knowledge and ideas stems from inquiry into surrounding data. This accumulation can range from drawings and notes in a small sketchbook to a scrapbook approach (cut and pin-up/tape or digitally within your laptop). The personal studio stresses that you surround yourself with visual information, as this promotes associations between and beyond the things present. Drawing and writing, of course, has always been an important method to translate what you see into pertinent thoughts. Working in a sketchbook should be part of your personal discipline.

Writing: Students will be given short writing assignments throughout the semester, and will be required to post these publicly on the studio website. These are intended to be helpful summaries of ongoing design work, a quasi-script for presentations, and a critical exercise in conceptual clarity and rigor.

Evaluation: Your performance will be evaluated using the following criteria: substantial new work prepared for each class meeting; sustained and thoughtful response to criticism; ability to develop a clear and workable idea and move it forward in a coherent and inspired manner; sustained quality of work from ***beginning to end*** of the exercise; completeness of work at each class meeting, pin-up, and review; constructive class participation; engagement in

critical dialog and development of non-defensive self-critical skills; attendance and promptness, ability to meet deadlines; and significant progress over the semester within your own frame of reference. Please note that these criteria are process oriented: <u>every day</u> affects your grade. If you are one of those people who tend to put things off until the last minute, you will have to change this behavior if you expect a good grade in the course.

Each project will be graded, and you will be informed of your standing in the course through the mid-semester evaluation period. As usual within architecture: an "A" is awarded to outstanding work, where the process and the work exceeds the expectation and requirements of the course. A "B" is earned through meeting these expectations in a strong and sustained way. A lower grade is given to those who do not meet the expectations of the class, in terms of rigor, comprehension of content, or projecting synthetic, architectural explorations. Please note that amount of effort does not equal quality of effort.

Grades will be based on the following points:
- Effort, motivation, and rigor to work at an intense and continuous level of involvement.
- Progress in your understanding of spatial and compositional relationships.
- A complete evaluation of your working process, production and consistency.
- A comparative evaluation of your work with respect to the best work in the class.
- An evaluation of the degree of difficulty and invention you attempt in your work.
- All work completed on the due date (no work will be accepted late).
- Participation and engagement in group discussions and lecture questions.
- Submittal of a CD of your work for the school archive.

Please note:
- Completion of the required work is a minimal studio requirement.
- Simply "doing" the assignments does not guarantee a passing mark.
- A portfolio of your semesters work is very important. Please save and document important sketches and sketch models as well as all final drawings and models.

Studio Etiquette: Students are expected to work in the studio, not at home. This will immeasurably enrich the student's learning potential and foster a stimulating studio culture program-wide. If everyone is to work in the studio, certain etiquette is necessary to ensure a civil working environment. The design studio should be a place where students make their thoughts part of a public discourse of peers and faculty. This can only happen if everyone listens, considers what is being said or proposed by everyone else, and then thoughtfully responds to what is put forward. It also requires you to cogently and carefully put your own ideas forward for discussion. This tends to happen quite well on its own when each student works in the studio.

Since space in the studio is never enough, please be considerate of your classmates, and of others in the building. Keep your table in reasonable order. Clean up after yourself after *each session* when using common work tables. Use the booths when spray painting or mounting, and the plaster room when working with plaster. Throw away rotting food, trash, and model trimmings. Music in studio must be played on personal headphones (a CCA policy).

Time Management: This is a demanding course in a demanding curriculum. We urge you to develop time-management skills so that you make the best and most efficient use of your time in the studio. You should begin to anticipate when you have to work long hours. We actively discourage staying up all night, as it is counterproductive as well as unhealthy.

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