

School of Architecture

Fall 2019

Graduate Studio

Descriptions

THE ‘F’ WORD

: FORM(s) of ARCHITECTURE

Geometry has an ambiguous reputation, associated as much with idiocy as with cleverness.

-The Projective Cast: Architecture and its Three Geometries (Introduction). Robin Evans

Given the status of our current social, political and cultural plight, there is perhaps nothing more reckless, audacious or superficial than to teach a foundational architecture studio whose title includes the word ‘form’. However, one could argue that in order to enact the new worlds we envision we need the aesthetic imagination as well as the technical skills to formalize matter into, well... forms. This studio will focus on forms of architecture and its production through the connective yet conflicting lens’ of geometry (lines) and image (pixels).

Historically, architecture as a disciplinary as well as a professional pursuit has been heavily invested in the spatial and descriptive principles of geometry. In Robin Evan’s text “The Projective Cast”, Evans ties the advancement of the discipline directly to the representational techniques of the time¹. Today, architecture finds itself buried within a literal grab bag of techniques as it has moved beyond the novelty of the digital well into the post-digital. For architecture this means that perhaps the geometry has given way to image, lines to images, the practices of orthography to the practice of pixel processing. This introductory studio situates itself at the intersection of the two, suggesting they may in fact coexist. To coax out the aesthetic of this coexistence requires us to work through design problems rooted in both projective geometry (drawing) and advanced computation (imaging).

Our loose guide for the semester, one from which we will intentionally misread, reinterpret and swerve from rather than reenact is Fumihiko Maki. In 1964, Maki’s text *Investigations in Collective Form* was published, offering a critique of the urban planning strategies of the time which tended towards structures (compositional and/or megaforms) that emerged from the top-down, buildings typically tied to the financial or political powers at large. As an alternative, Maki offers “Group Forms” as a third type of collective form. Group Form can be loosely understood as buildings united by both spatial and social terms where the space between buildings is as equally charged as the buildings themselves.

The studio will progress through three sequential projects, each guided by one of the three form types identified by Maki yet rewritten by us as a collective studio. This studio will build both a fundamental knowledge base as well as provide the technical know-how needed to exert control over its visual representation. Each exercise will find theoretical underpinnings through precedents (architectural/cultural/social) and written texts.

PROJECTS

- 01 *Compositional Form: Forms that Float*
- 02 *Image Form: Forms in Frames*
- 03 *Group Form: Collective Forms*

¹ Robin Evans, *Projective Cast: Architecture and Its Three Geometries* (The MIT Press, 2000)
ARCH551_Syllabus_F2019_Bair

Second-Year Graduate Studio Instructors: Penelope Dean, Grant Gibson

ARCH 553 Architectural Design III
Penelope Dean
Grant Gibson
Fall 2019



Three Houses in One

The term *Existenzminimum* emerged in the early twentieth century to describe acceptable floor areas, ventilation requirements, outside space, and other necessities for domestic inhabitation. From Hannes Meyer's Co-op Interior (1923–1926) to Le Corbusier's 2nd Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne's (CIAM, 1929) on minimum habitable dwellings, *Existenzminimum* was an idea born out of a production economy; a technical proposition based on principles of efficiency and standardization for “universal subjects.” While the concept still resonates today, it does so in a modified way for consumer markets; as an economic proposition focused on cost, entrepreneurship, and flexibility. This reorientation, which abandons earlier questions of inhabitation, is symptomatic of the dominant political economy's tendency to frame and measure everything in economic terms.

Against the background of these past and present conceptualizations, this comprehensive studio will revisit *existenzminimum*, but neither as a technical nor economic requirement. Instead we will conceptualize minimalism as a question of liveability: that is, a *livable minimum* over an *existenzminimum*. We will ask how small homes can offer dignified and comfortable inhabitation in excess of merely providing for “existence.” With habits and possessions of inhabitants at the center of our research, we will explore *minimum* in all its multitudes—minimum possessions, minimum space, minimum materials, minimum structures, minimum gardens, and so on—an *excess minimum*.

Located on existing, city-owned vacant lots in Chicago, our assignment will entail the design of “Three Houses in One”—a collective re-imagining of Chicago's “three-flat” typology into “three-houses.” To aid the investigation, we will analyze contemporary house precedents from Japan. Selected for their tiny sizes (average = 1,075 square feet) and programmatic compactness, each precedent is understood to embody a worldly applicability: minimalisms are generalizable; programs can exceed local contexts. Drawings, models, and triptychs will serve as mediums for both analysis and design.

Third-Year Topic Studio
Instructors: Paul Andersen and Sam Jacob

The Federal Center

UIC Architecture

Fall 2019

Paul Andersen and Sam Jacob

Introduction

Chicago's Federal Center is one of Mies's least acclaimed buildings. He had little input into the design, leaving all but the highest level decisions to Gene Summers. It was designed so late in Mies's life that two of its buildings were built five years after he died. But it has some qualities that stand out. It is a microcosm of earlier project types, combining two towers, a long span building, and a plaza. The project as a whole is a self-contained summary of Mies's oeuvre, tied together by a clear and extensive use of the grid. The grid is continuous from paving to massing to curtain wall, even appearing in the plan of the long span post office building (which has a 65' column grid) and the square elevation of the courthouse tower. While the grid unifies the project internally, it also suggests connections beyond. Horizontally, the grid structures landscapes from city to farm. Vertically, the Chicago frame links the Federal Center not only with its immediate neighbors, but with framed buildings of different types throughout the Midwest.

The studio will use new sources and combinations of grids, landscapes, and frames to propose alternative designs for the Federal Center.

The project will consist of a series of exercises before the midterm and a final project. Throughout the semester, research on the history and current experience of the Federal Center will supplement design.