

School of Architecture

Fall 2020

Graduate Studio

Descriptions

FALL 2020
First-Year Graduate Studio
Instructor: Sarah Dunn

Architecture is Everywhere



"This is kind of a funny trial to expand our ideas of architecture beyond our usual understanding."

Sou Fujimoto

For his entry to the 2015 Chicago Architecture Biennial the architect Sou Fujimoto exhibited a series of 6" x 6" plywood squares with all manner of ordinary objects atop the simple surface — an upside-down ashtray, a loofah, a stack of matchboxes, a pile of potato chips, a mass of ping pong balls — and inhabited them with small scale figures. He said about his entry:

"...[Y]ou will see — how do you say — trash-like things or daily stuff or some strange things with small people. And it means that everywhere we can imagine architectural spaces when you put the people inside or outside. It looks like some[thing]... and then it looks like architecture. And then, sometimes, it is really creating unexpected spaces, unexpected relationships. So, it is not architecture, but when you bring people, you can find some new imagination of architecture."

This seemingly casual attitude (which, by the way, it is not) actually invites us to consider architecture in a new way. And if architecture can appear almost anywhere, then the studio will go looking for it. Everywhere at first. And then more focused. In the process the studio will tease out fundamental precepts of architecture. The first is that where there are humans, there is architecture.

Looking closely at Fujimoto's models, one sees the choices that are made. The precision of exactly how the potato chips are stacked and the ping-pong balls are glued together belies the seeming casual attitude. These choices are disciplinary. They are formal and programmatic.

Within the three-year design studio curriculum, this semester's agenda dedicated to disciplinary control. We will embrace this directive. This course will endeavor to introduce you to the discipline of architectural design with an emphasis on technique and control. The studio will unfold as a series of projects that addresses issues of scale, proportion, image, and formalism. Drawing will be the primary medium for composing, as well as representing, architecture. Through drawing, architecture will be introduced, examined, created and refined. Our approach to each exercise will be iterative and exacting.

The studio's projects begin with an initial exercise in which you will find architecture in your everyday surroundings. The second project will explore what passage through the manipulation of lines. The third project will explore gathering through the manipulation of planes. And the fourth project will explore program through the manipulation of volumes.

PROJECTS

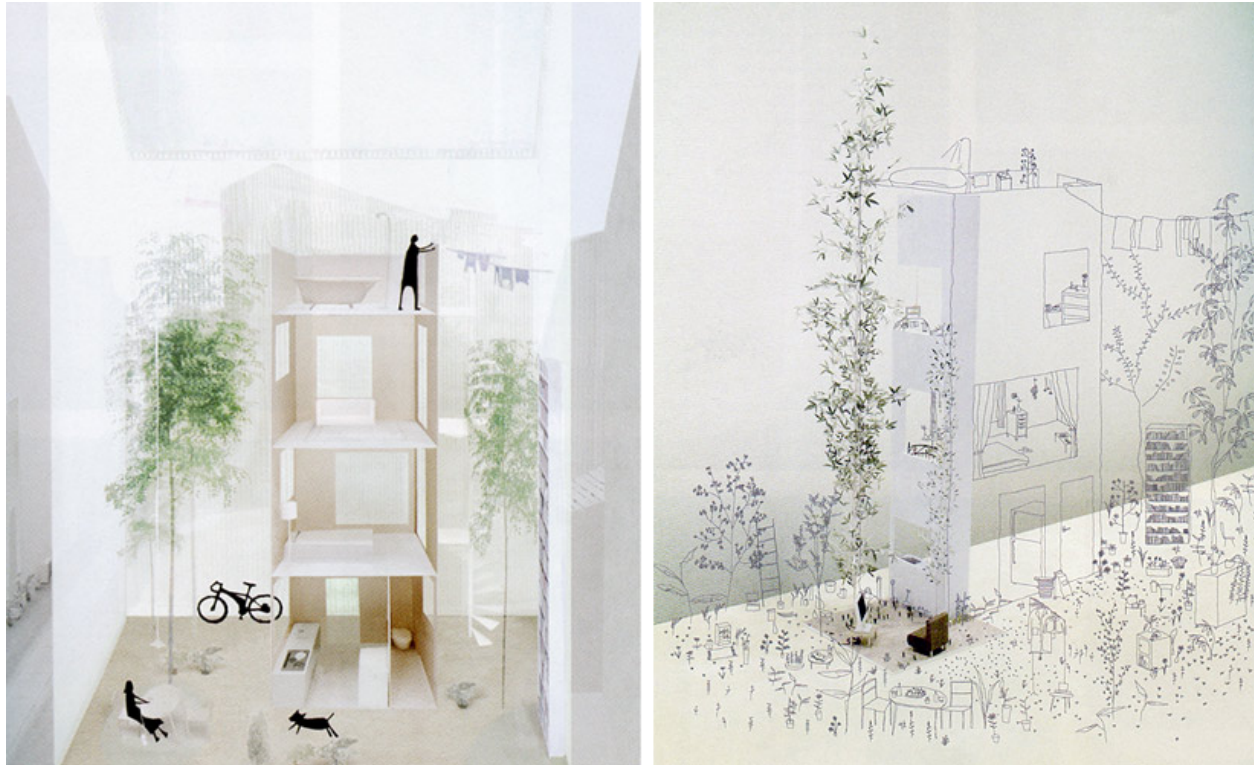
The studio will unfold as four projects. Each project builds on the projects that precede it.

Project 1: Architecture is Everywhere Project

Project 2: Line Project (A point is a position in space, a line is the extension of a point.)

Project 3: Plane Project (A surface or plane, is the extension of a line.)

Project 4: Volume Project (A volume is a plane extended.)



Three Houses in One

In the early twentieth century, the term *Existenzminimum* was used to describe the minimal acceptable floor area, ventilation requirements, and outside area 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 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 is largely underwritten by the economics that drive a consumer economy. Even the term "affordable housing," which invokes an idea about minimal costs, is also symptomatic of the dominant political economy's tendency to frame and measure everything in financial terms, often at the expense of alternative ideas about *how* to live.

Against this background, our comprehensive studio will revisit *existenzminimum* as a socio-cultural question of liveability: that is, what might be considered a *livable minimum* as opposed to merely an *existenzminimum*? We will ask how tiny homes can offer dignified and comfortable inhabitation in excess of merely providing for "existence." With the 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*.

The studio assignment entails the design of three, *physically connected* houses—i.e. Three Houses in One—in a collective re-imagining of Chicago's "three-flat" typology. City-owned vacant lots in Chicago will serve as our site, and tiny houses in Japan (approx. 1,075 square feet) will serve as our precedents. We will proceed with the assumption that precedents embody a worldly applicability, that ideas about minimalism are generalizable, and that house programs can exceed local contexts. We will work with paper models, photographs, and drawings in analysis and design throughout the semester.

FALL 2020

Third-Year MArch/MSArch Graduate Studio

Instructors: Paul Andersen, Sam Jacob

Given the unusual circumstances of this semester, we have designed a programme that is part survival guide, part hobbycraft, part manifesto. We will instead use a mixed bag of activities and experiments - crafting, thinking, getting out of the house, drawing, baking and so on to make lots of different propositions that merge the disciplinary with the domestic,

Social distancing, working from home and the other measures we are all taking right now have altered traditional relationships. We want to explore this potential. We want to know what it means for architecture when the studio is also your bedroom or your kitchen. When the personal interferes with the professional. When high theory sits side by side with your knitting or your Playstation. Could our enforced circumstances help us to see the architectural qualities of the everyday world around us? Or can we transform the everyday into a disciplinary pursuit?

Architecture has always been a very big but very weak discipline. That's to say its ambitions are to transform the world. But its means and methods are a rag bag of different forms of knowledge - part professional, part disciplinary, part historical, part social science, part politics, part ... (and so on). Architecture encompasses the world as a designed thing, but also all the designed things in that world (like Ernesto Rogers says, from the spoon to the city). It crosses scales from the individual to the collective, the private to the vastly public, the personal to the social. Or rather it occurs at the intersection of all these things. The forced intersection between our lives as designers and our lives at home will hopefully - despite all of the difficulties of finding new ways to work - also allow us to imagine another kind of architecture.