

# Studio Critique

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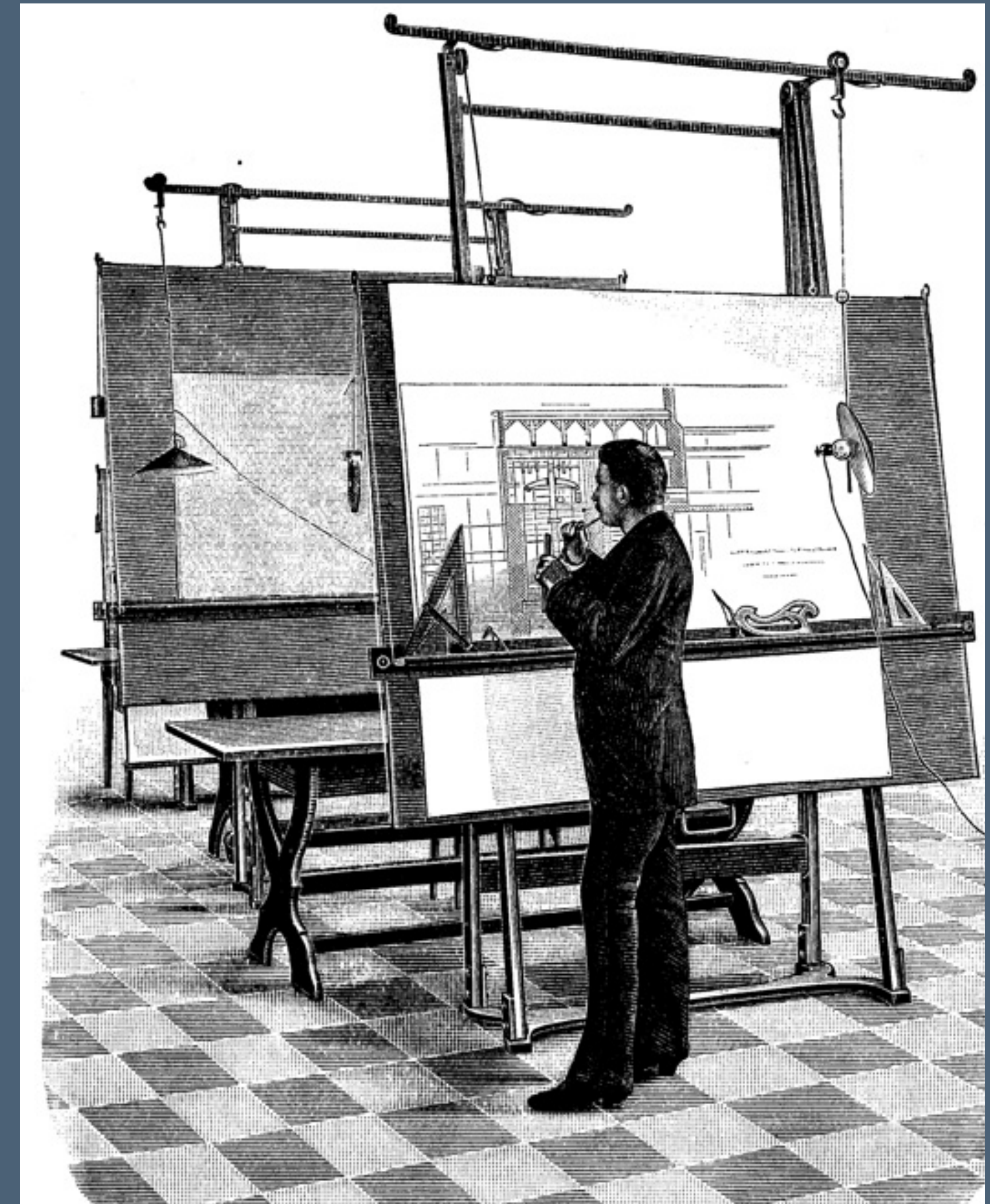
CS 247



# Design studio



- Popularized by the École des Beaux-Arts in France in the 1800's
- Learning-by-doing with expert critique





# Why critique?

- Nudge a designer out of an unproductive design space
- Help a designer see the bigger picture, then restart their brainstorming
- Train a designer to better evaluate their own ideas

# A critic vs. a critique

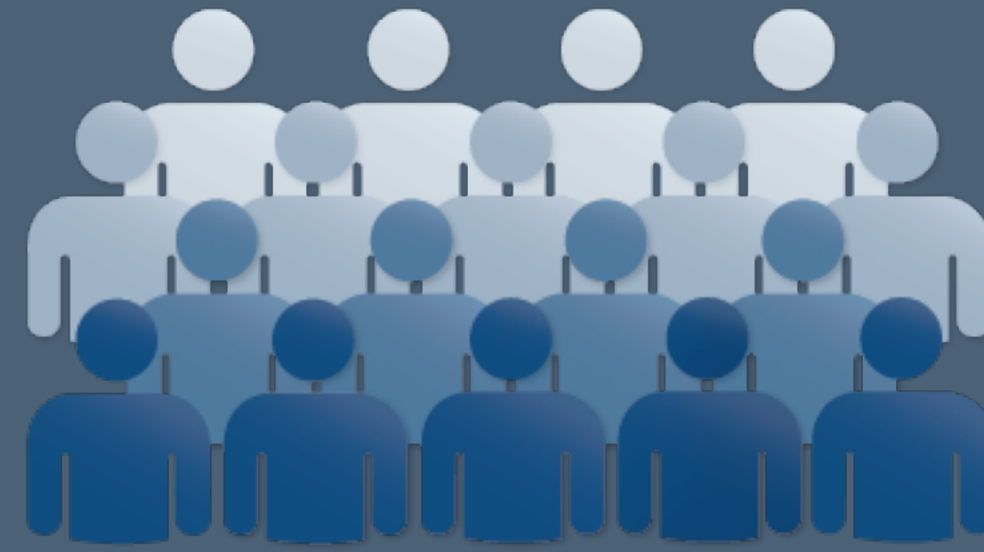
- Critique is an open-ended process that is intended to push the designer to be even better.
- Being critical (e.g., being mean, or attacking the idea) does not serve that goal. It shuts people down.
- Your goal: give the designer an “aha!” moment about their own idea.

# Roles in a critique



## Presenter

- Describe problem being solved or idea explored
- Present design solution
- Show not sell



## Audience

- Understand problem and context
- Ask lots of questions



## Facilitator

- Create a plan and schedule
- Ensure everyone stays on track
- Keep people in their roles

Presenter(s):  
Getting critiqued

# Set the stage, but briefly

- Tell everyone what you are solving for and what your design goals are BEFORE you describe your project.
- Don't give a feature tour, focus on a user's experience.
- Be quick. The more you say, the less feedback you get.



# A problem statement

- I am showing [early/mid/late] work
- Around [the problem]
- Because [why it's a problem]
- And am looking for feedback around [specific focus for feedback]
- I am not looking for feedback yet on [things you have not thought about yet]

# Breathe.

- Your goal is not to defend your idea.
- Your goal is to understand the feedback, and **why people are reacting the way they are.** Use this information to improve your design.
- Or do you really think that your design is the best possible idea in the world, and can't be improved?



# Write it down.

- Dedicate a team member or a friend (if a solo project) to be the notetaker.
- You want to focus your energies on being a part of the conversation, not on trying to remember everything.

Audience:  
Sharing critique



# What should I say?

Match your feedback to the design goals. Is this assignment focusing on usability, aesthetics, needs, or idea generation?

## Good heuristics:

- Did the designer make assumptions that should be questioned?
- Is the designer fixated on a part of their design that doesn't match the goal?
- Is there a nearby point in the design space that gets more to the core of the problem that they should think about?

# Pose thoughts as questions

Questions make it about considering rather than defending.

It's about finding **unexplored opportunities**...vs.  
**criticizing** what is there.

**No one needs to have any answer right now.**



# “I like”, “I wish”

Alternatively, try starting your comments explicitly with these phrases.

# For example

“I really like [an aspect of the design].  
It can be even better.  
I wish it did X more effectively...”



# Example

Suppose the designer was exploring ways to help parents calm down crying, whining children at the supermarket.

What might your crit involve?

# Example: getting to the core

“What if you focused not on how the parents deal with whining kids, but with what made the kids upset in the first place?”

# Example: question assumptions

“Do you have evidence that the parents actually want to quiet down their kids? Maybe they just want to get in and out quickly to minimize the pain to everyone else, and trying to fix it will only prolong things.”



# Example: question assumptions

“Are you sure that the parent can get out their iPhone to use your solution? Don't they often have a kid in one arm and holding the hand of another one? I've never seen a parent staring at a phone in the market.”

# Example: questioning fixation

“The interaction design for the touch interface is really beautiful. I wish you had focused on verifying the design approach first. A beautiful interaction is lost on a design that doesn’t solve a need.”

# Project 3

Launch!



# Design Sprint

Work in teams of 3 people to rapidly identify and prototype a solution to a meaningful user need.

# Recommended schedule

- Jan 29 (week 4): P3.1  
Form team, identify area of interest, needfinding plan
- Feb 5 (week 5): P3.2  
Needfinding observation and interpretation
- Feb 12 (week 6): P3.3  
Brainstorming and rapid prototyping
- Feb 18 (week 7): HARD DEADLINE for P3.4  
Prototypes in the field, iteration, and selection

# The plan

- Your team can pass the milestones at your own pace.
- Show us your milestone during any studio period. Submit early, since milestones involve iteration.
- We will give you  $\sqrt{-}$ ,  $\sqrt{}$ ,  $\sqrt{+}$  feedback each time:
  - $\sqrt{-}$ , definitely go back and do it again
  - $\sqrt{}$ , it's fine to move on, but consider rethinking things first
  - $\sqrt{+}$ , you rocked our socks
- Each milestone is worth 5 points.



# P3.1

- **Form a team of three.**  
You will stay in this team for P4. We recommend a different team than P2.
- **Identify an area of interest**
- **Write a needfinding plan**, including a discussion guide. (Who, What, When, Where)
- **See write-up for specific instructions**