

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE PLANNING AND PRESERVATION
CORE I STUDIO A4101X FALL 2014

Core Director: Michael Bell

Core I Coordinator: Galia Solomonoff

Critics: Mark Rakatansky, Christoph a. Kumpusch, Paula Tomisaki, Josh Uhl, Janette Kim, Gisela Baurmann, Pep Avilés, Jeffrey Johnson

Studio Assistant: Jesse Catalano

TEMPORALIS BRIEF I: ARTICHOKE



"You fail only if you stop." - Ray Bradbury

"Architecture is usually understood as a visual syntax, but it can also be conceived through a sequence of human situations and encounters. Authentic architectural experiences derive from real or ideated bodily confrontations rather than visually observed entities. Authentic architectural experiences have more the essence of the verb than the noun. The visual image of a door is not an architectural image, for instance, whereas entering and exiting through a door are architectural experiences." - Juhani Pallasmaa

"Flowers, if described with phrases that define them in the air of the imagination, will have colours with a durability not found in cellular life."

There's nothing in life that's less real for having been well described.

The novelist is all of us, and we narrate whenever we see, because seeing is complex like everything." - Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*

Temporal, from Latin *temporalis*, from *tempus* time, defined as

- 1: of or pertaining to time
- 2: pertaining to or concerned with the present life or this world
- 3: of or relating to secular as opposed to spiritual or religious affairs
- 4: lasting for a relatively short time

This semester has **3** interrelated briefs. Each brief asks that you exercise control over the materials you deploy, devise ways of describing the actions you perform, use systems of measurement and representation, and challenge the relationships between objects, bodies, space, and atmosphere. The studio's dictum and desire is that by the end of the fall, you will be well versed in the common language that we share as architects, understand both its research and propositional modes and have a clear sense of the material properties of the elements you engage. The shared architectural language emerges through its own logic and 'grammar', to frame divergences and to formulate individual expressions of form and thought.

Architecture does not need to be a building, yet it is always a construct that structures the relationship of space and form.

Core Director: Michael Bell

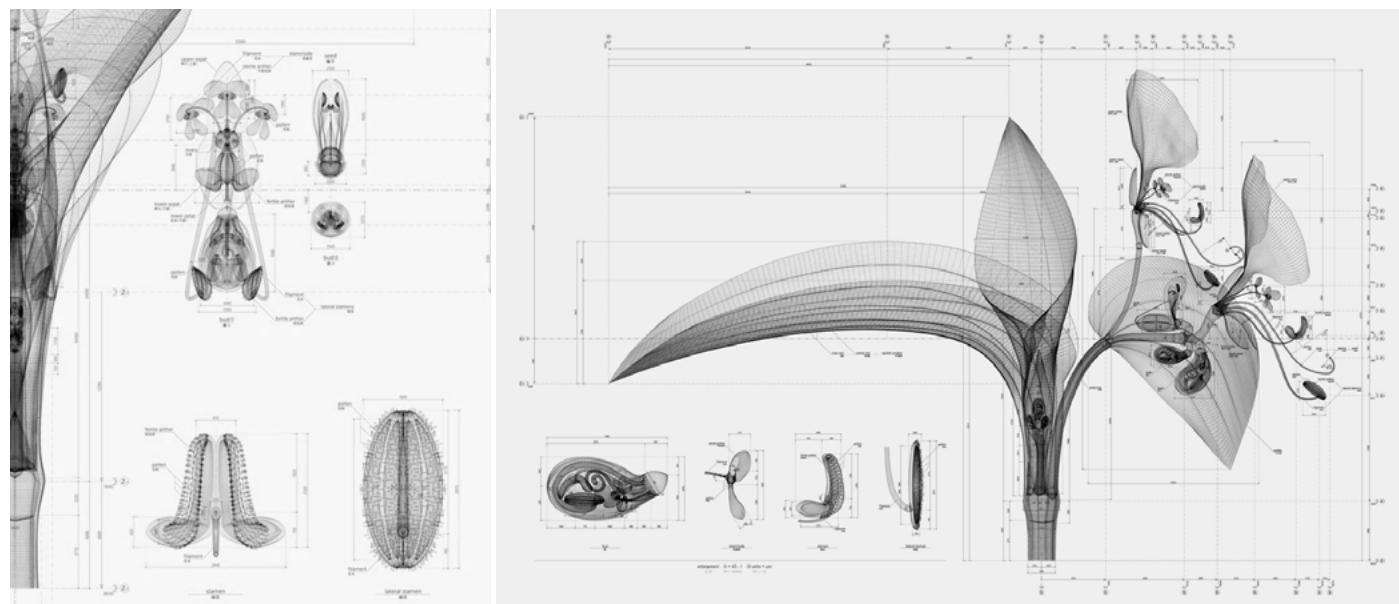
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NARRATIVE

Measure: In 1795, the gram was defined to be equal to "the absolute weight of a volume of pure water equal to a cube of one hundredth of a meter, and to the temperature of the melting ice." For practical purposes though, a metallic reference standard was required, one thousand times more massive, the kilogram. Then the mass of one liter of water was precisely determined. Scientists chose to redefine the standard and to perform their measurements at the temperature of highest water density, which was measured at 4 °C equal to 39°F.

Context: Artichoke - the globe artichoke is a thistle which has been cultivated as food. The portion we consume is actually the bud of the artichoke flower, we consume it at a specific time in its development as plant. Part of this exercise is to understand what happens, or what would happen if undisturbed, to the artichoke bud before and after this moment.



Macoto Murayama, Botanical Diagrams

THESIS

The response to this brief requires minimal input from your critic. It requires self-direction and ability to **read the artichoke**. Observe, account and **translate** your findings into an effective **drawing/diagram**.**

The objectives are:

- To decipher ordering systems
 - To understand the fundamentals of both natural and formal ordering systems and the capacity of each to inform two- and three-dimensional design
 - To understand and communicate the interrelation of function and form
 - To demonstrate ability to raise precise questions, use abstract modes to interpret information and reach well-reasoned conclusions

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TASKS

1. You will receive an artichoke on September 3, 2014.
2. Document its size, color and weight **in time**.
3. Scan/Draw the artichoke at least 12 different times, consider the changes to the bud on every 8 hours intervals for a period of 4 days. You can keep it in water or not. You can press it, etc.
4. Select 6 out of these 12 scans. At some point you may choose to alter, dissect or flatten the artichoke in some way.
5. Register the artichoke's characteristics and changes through a composite, layered drawing.
6. Devise a strategy to layer the drawing in a way the can be read without a verbal explanation.

DELIVERABLES

- One landscape 24" x 36" drawing that shows 6 scans of the artichoke (layers can overlap)
- Consider all the techniques that you know to explain order, material and change. These techniques may include section drawings, diagrams, timelines, and charts.
- Consider the drawing medium – opaque vs. transparent, gloss vs. matte
- Make your line drawings express as much information as possible: convey depth, thickness, motion, rotation, material, surface, geometry, context, aesthetic character, etc.
- Use different line-weights to reveal what is being cut, what is hidden, what is changing, and what is beyond.
- Write a paragraph, (350 words maximum) about your findings to verbally present at your review.
- Label the drawing with your; LAST NAME/GSAPP/CRITIC NAME/FALL 2014/BRIEF I

RULES

- Understanding that color is a measurable element; it should be mapped– RGB, CMYK, or other codification so that it is reproducible and indicates quantifiable differences.
- Photos can be used as documenting devices/process but not as final presentation.
- Choose a consistent format – scale, measure, lettering – throughout the task.
- You may choose to impart one action: slice, cut/sand, flatten, pin, peel, laminate, torque, freeze.

TIMEFRAME

- Deliver by September 10th – All Studios, 2 sections per review

REFERENCES

- Alain de Botton, The Architecture of Happiness, "I. The Significance of Architecture," pp. 9-26
- Juhani Pallasmaa, The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses, "Part 1," pp. 15-37.
- Georges Bataille, Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939, "The Language of Flowers," pp. 10-14.

The Language of Flowers

It is vain to consider, in the appearance of things, only the intelligible signs that allow the various elements to be distinguished from each other. What strikes human eyes determines not only the knowledge of the relations between various objects, but also a given decisive and inexplicable state of mind. Thus the sight of a flower reveals, it is true, the presence of this well-defined part of a plant, but it is impossible to stop at this superficial observation; in fact, the sight of this flower provokes in the mind much more significant reactions, because the flower expresses an obscure vegetal resolution. What the configuration and color of the corolla reveal, what the dirty traces of pollen or the freshness of the pistil betray doubtless cannot be adequately expressed by language; it is, however, useless to ignore (as is generally done) this inexpressible *real presence* and to reject as puerile absurdities certain attempts at symbolic interpretation.

That most of the juxtapositions of the *language of flowers* would have a fortuitous and superficial character could be foreseen even before consulting the traditional list. If the dandelion conveys *expansion*, the narcissus *egoism*, and the wormwood flower *bitterness*, one can all too easily see why. At stake here is clearly not the divination of the secret meaning of flowers, and one can easily make out the well-known property or the adequate legend. One would look in vain, moreover, for parallels that strikingly convey a hidden understanding of the things here in question. It matters little, in fact, that the columbine is the emblem of sadness, the snapdragon the emblem of desire, the waterlilly the emblem of indifference . . . It seems opportune to recognize that such approx-

imations can be renewed at will, and it suffices to assign a primordial importance to much simpler interpretations, such as those that link the rose or the spurge to love. Not that, doubtless, these two flowers alone can designate human love—even if there is a more exact correspondence (as when one has the spurge say: “It is you who have awakened my love,” so troubling when conveyed by such a shady flower), it is to flowers in general, and not to any specific flower, that one is tempted to attribute the strange privilege of revealing the presence of love.

But this interpretation seems unsurprising: in fact love can be posited from the outset as the natural function of the flower. Thus the symbolic quality would be due, even here, to a distinct property and not to an appearance that mysteriously strikes the human sensibility. Therefore it would only have a purely subjective value. Men have linked the brilliance of flowers to their amorous emotions because, on either side, it is a question of phenomena that precede fertilization. The role given to symbols in psychoanalytic interpretations, moreover, would corroborate an explanation of this type. In fact it is almost always an accidental parallel that accounts for the origin of substitutions in dreams. Among other things, the value given to pointed or hollowed-out objects is fairly well known.

In this way one quickly dismisses the opinion that external forms, whether seductive or horrible, reveal certain crucial resolutions in all phenomena, which human resolutions would only amplify. Thus there would be good reason to renounce immediately the possibility of replacing the *word* with the *appearance* as an element of philosophical analysis. It would be easy to show that only the *word* allows one to consider the characteristics of things that determine a relative situation, in other words the properties that permit an external action. Nevertheless, the *appearance* would introduce the decisive values of things . . .

It appears at first that the symbolic meaning of flowers is not necessarily derived from their function. It is evident, in fact, that if one expresses love with the aid of a flower, it is the corolla, rather than the useful organs, that becomes the sign of desire.

But here a specious objection could be raised against interpretation through the objective value of *appearance*. In fact the substitution of juxtaposed elements for essential elements is consistent with all that we spontaneously know about the emotions that motivate us, since the object of human love is never an organ, but the person who has the organ. Thus the attribution of the corolla to love can easily be explained: if the sign of love is displaced from the pistil and stamens to the surrounding petals, it is because the human mind is accustomed to making such a displacement with regard to people. But even though there is an undeniable parallelism in the two substitutions, it would be necessary to attribute to some puerile Providence a singular desire to satisfy people’s manias: how in fact

can one explain how these garish elements, automatically substituted for the essential organs of the flower, develop in such a brilliant way?

It would obviously be simpler to recognize the aphrodisiac properties of flowers, such as odor and appearance, which have aroused men's and women's amorous feelings over the centuries. Something is explosively propagated in nature, in the springtime, in the same way that bursts of laughter are propagated, step by step, each one provoking and intensifying the next. Many things can be altered in human societies, but nothing will prevail against the natural truth that a beautiful woman or a red rose signifies love.

An equally inexplicable and equally immutable reaction gives the girl and the rose a very different value: that of ideal beauty. There are, in fact, a multitude of beautiful flowers, since the beauty of flowers is even less rare than the beauty of girls, and characteristic of this organ of the plant. It is surely impossible to use an abstract formula to account for the elements that can give the flower this quality. It is interesting to observe, however, that if one says that flowers are beautiful, it is because they seem to *conform to what must be*, in other words they represent, as flowers, the human *ideal*.

At least at first glance, and in general: in fact, most flowers are badly developed and are barely distinguishable from foliage; some of them are even unpleasant, if not hideous. Moreover, even the most beautiful flowers are spoiled in their centers by hairy sexual organs. Thus the interior of a rose does not at all correspond to its exterior beauty; if one tears off all of the corolla's petals, all that remains is a rather sordid tuft. Other flowers, it is true, present very well-developed and undeniably elegant stamens, but appealing again to common sense, it becomes clear on close examination that this elegance is rather satanic: thus certain kinds of fat orchids, plants so shady that one is tempted to attribute to them the most troubling human perversions. But even more than by the filth of its organs, the flower is betrayed by the fragility of its corolla: thus, far from answering the demands of human ideas, it is the sign of their failure. In fact, after a very short period of glory the marvelous corolla rots indecently in the sun, thus becoming, for the plant, a garish withering. Risen from the stench of the manure pile—even though it seemed for a moment to have escaped it in a flight of angelic and lyrical purity—the flower seems to relapse abruptly into its original squalor: the most ideal is rapidly reduced to a wisp of aerial manure. For flowers do not age honestly like leaves, which lose nothing of their beauty, even after they have died; flowers wither like old and overly made-up dowagers, and they die ridiculously on stems that seemed to carry them to the clouds.

It is impossible to exaggerate the tragicomic oppositions indicated in the course of this death-drama, endlessly played out between earth and sky, and it is evident that one can only paraphrase this laughable duel by introducing, not

as a sentence, but more precisely as an ink stain, this nauseating banality: *love smells like death*. It seems, in fact, that desire has nothing to do with ideal beauty, or, more precisely, that it only arises in order to stain and wither the beauty that for many sad and well-ordered personalities is only a limit, a *categorical imperative*. The most admirable flower for that reason would not be represented, following the verbiage of the old poets, as the faded expression of an angelic ideal, but, on the contrary, as a filthy and glaring sacrilege.

There is good reason to insist upon the exception represented, in this respect, by the flower on the plant. In fact, if one continues to apply the method of interpretation introduced here, on the whole the external part of the plant is endowed with an unambiguous meaning. The appearance of leafy stems generally gives the impression of strength and dignity. Without a doubt the insane contortions of tendrils and the unusual lacerations of foliage bear witness to the fact that all is not uniformly correct in the impeccable erection of plants. But nothing contributes more strongly to the peace in one's heart and to the lifting of one's spirits, as well as to one's loftier notions of justice and rectitude, than the spectacle of fields and forests, along with the tiniest parts of the plant, which sometimes manifest a veritable architectural order, contributing to the general impression of correctness. No crack, it seems—one could stupidly say no *quack*—conspicuously troubles the decisive harmony of vegetal nature. Flowers themselves, lost in this immense movement from earth to sky, are reduced to an episodic role, to a diversion, moreover, that is apparently misunderstood: they can only contribute, by breaking the monotony, to the inevitable seductiveness produced by the general thrust from low to high. And in order to destroy this favorable impression, nothing less is necessary than the impossible and fantastic vision of roots swarming under the surface of the soil, nauseating and naked like vermin.

Roots, in fact, represent the perfect counterpart to the visible parts of a plant. While the visible parts are nobly elevated, the ignoble and sticky roots wallow in the ground, loving rotteness just as leaves love light. There is reason to note, moreover, that the incontestable moral value of the term *base* conforms to this systematic interpretation of the meaning of roots: what is *evil* is necessarily represented, among movements, by a movement from high to low. That fact is impossible to explain if one does not assign moral meaning to natural phenomena, from which this value is taken, precisely because of the striking character of the *appearance*, the sign of the decisive movements of nature.

Besides, it would seem impossible to eliminate an opposition as flagrant as the one that differentiates stem from root. One legend in particular demonstrates the morbid interest, which has always been more or less pronounced, in the parts that shoved themselves into the earth. The obscenity of the mandrake root is undoubtedly fortuitous, like the majority of specific symbolic interpretations,

but it is no coincidence that this type of emphasis, to which the mandrake root owes a legendary satanism, is based on an obviously ignoble form. The symbolic values of the carrot and the turnip are also fairly well known.

It was more difficult to show that the same opposition appeared in an isolated part of the plant, the flower, where it takes on an exceptionally dramatic meaning.

There can be no doubt: the substitution of natural forms for the abstractions currently used by philosophers will seem not only strange but absurd. It is probably fairly unimportant that philosophers themselves have often had to have recourse, though with repugnance, to terms that derive their value from the production of these forms in nature, as when they speak of *baseness*. No blindness interferes with defending the perogatives of abstraction. This substitution, moreover, threatens to carry one too far: it would result, in the first place, in a feeling of freedom, the free availability of oneself in every sense, which is absolutely unbearable for the most part, and the troubling contempt for all that is still—thanks to miserable evasions—*elevated*, noble, sacred . . . Don't all these beautiful things run the risk of being reduced to a strange *mise en scène*, destined to make sacrilege more impure? And the disconcerting gesture of the Marquis de Sade, locked up with madmen, who had the most beautiful roses brought to him only to pluck off their petals and toss them into a ditch filled with liquid manure—in these circumstances, doesn't it have an overwhelming impact?

Materialism

Most materialists, even though they may have wanted to do away with all spiritual entities, ended up positing an order of things whose hierarchical relations mark it as specifically idealist. They situated dead matter at the summit of a conventional hierarchy of diverse facts, without perceiving that in this way they gave in to an obsession with the *ideal* form of matter, with a form that was closer than any other to what matter *should be*. Dead matter, the pure idea, and God in fact answer a question in the same way (in other words perfectly, and as flatly as the docile student in a classroom)—a question that can only be posed by philosophers, the question of the essence of things, precisely of the *idea* by which things become intelligible. Classical materialists did not really even substitute causation for the *must be* (the *quare* for the *quamobrem*, or, in other words, determinism for destiny, the past for the future). Their need for external authority in fact placed the *must be* of all appearance in the functional role they unconsciously assigned the idea of science. If the principle of things they defined is precisely the stable element that permitted science to constitute an apparently unshakeable position, a veritable divine eternity, this choice cannot be attributed to chance. The conformity of dead matter to the idea of science is, among most materialists, substituted for the religious relations earlier established between the divinity and his creatures, the one being the *idea* of the others.

Materialism will be seen as a senile idealism to the extent that it is not immediately based on psychological or social facts, instead of on artificially isolated physical phenomena. Thus it is from Freud, among others—rather than from long-dead physicists, whose ideas today have no meaning—that a representation