

Columbia University GSAPP

Fall 2014

Bernard Tschumi

Advanced Studio

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Elements and Concepts

What is architecture? Is it an idea, a sequence of spaces, a montage of attractions, a material whirl, a supplement? Is it made of a finite number of elements (twelve, fifteen, or less, or more, as described in an important exhibition at this year's Venice Biennale)? This semester intends to investigate such a fundamental question. We know many beautiful examples of architecture without windows, walls, roofs, or corridors. From the "Architecture without Architects" of Rudofsky to Terragni's Danteum, from the Infinite Space of Kiesler to the domes of Buckminster Fuller, from the Aviary of Cedric Price to Nox Water pavilions, there are many architectures that carefully bypass such elements. We also know of very mediocre buildings that have plenty of windows, walls, roofs, and corridors which most people would probably never qualify as architecture. So what is the difference between architecture and just a building?

What about another history of Architecture made of (in no particular order) Meyerhold's Biomechanical Stage, Robert Wiene's Cabinet of Doctor Caligari, Schwitters' Merzbau, Pichler and Hollein's Absolute Architecture, Constant's New Babylon, Archizoom's No-Stop City, Günther Günschel's concrete shells, Eladio Dieste's brick works, Gordon Matta-Clark's Baroque, Site's Forrest Building, Raimond Abraham's Houses, Coop Himmelblau's Open House, and Philippe Rahm's Atmospheric Houses?

And what about architecture without human culture: Termite hills, ant colonies, beaver dams or bird's nests?

In this year's studio we will make it our agenda to investigate the design of an architecture without windows, walls, roofs or corridors etc. Students will be strongly encouraged to find ways to go beyond using them, in a creative, responsible, sustainable, and forward-looking way.

Parts 1 and 2, Short Intro Exercises (3-4 weeks, presentation Sept. 24th or Oct. 1st)

15 elements were defined as fundamentals at the current Biennale: Floor, Wall, Ceiling, Roof, Door, Window, Façade, Balcony, Corridor, Fireplace, Toilet, Stair, Escalator, Elevator and Ramp. But is this a full set of all the elements that architecture consists of? What about columns and beams, for example, or, as Reinhold Martin suggested, ground or real estate? Your task in the first part of this studio will be to define which other potential fundamental elements are missing from the list, and prepare arguments for your new addition(s). Students will also be asked to identify existing projects that are not using any of the fundamentals defined in the Biennale.

For this second part of the exercise we will ask you to design a project by using only one Biennale fundamental element of architecture, and that will be given to you by lottery. Using any of the other 14 fundamentals will not be allowed for this exercise.

Part 3 (8-9 weeks)

We will ask you to design a project with a specific program, but with the constraint that you are not allowed to use any of the historical elements at all but only those elements you will have found and considered fundamentals. We hope that any difficulty you may encounter will lead you to the discovery of other unprecedented elements.

Site/Program

The site for your project will be located within one urban block 200'x600'x200' in Manhattan. Students will work in pairs determined by lottery or by preference. Individual building programs will be selected among the following:

The program(s) will be as follows and will be determined by lottery:

1. A Elemental Library
2. A Elemental Hotel
3. A Elemental Clinic
4. A Elemental Museum
5. A Elemental Brothel
6. A Elemental Cemetery

Dates

Intro: Friday September 5th 2pm (Ware Lounge)

Presentation exercise 1: Wednesday September 24th

Mid review date: Friday October 17th 1pm – 7pm

Final Presentation date: Wednesday Dec. 3th

All reviews will be held in Ware Lounge unless otherwise noted.