Drawing after the Computer

Visual Studies A

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Background:

For at least 500 years the articulation of architecture has been through the simultaneous acts of drawing and modeling. With the enhanced digital/virtual environment afforded by the computer, the distinctions between these simultaneous acts have become blurred and their practice integrated into one. The production of drawings and models once served as independent mediums through which these explorations were conducted, but now this is combined within the singular opaque terrain of the virtual environment of the computer. The impetus for this shift was precision; the computer offers complete control. As the techniques and tools advanced the virtual model took on both qualities of the drawing and the physical model. As a result, we are no longer constrained to what can be shown by plans and sections, or built with miniature models. We are finally free to explore the totality of the design.

Declarations have been made that these historic precedents, the section for one, the physical model for another, are dead. Production with the digital tools asks, or even demands, that a cohesive virtual model be made first. From that point, we are then encouraged to extract the drawing or model by either an act of excising sections or establishing tool-paths for fabrication. Either way, this translation can in best be summarized by the single command “Control+P”. By printing, either on paper or with material, the acts of drawing and modeling are now reduced to output processes of information that has been first established in another field.

The values of these historic practices are up for debate. Whether we are translating into the flat, planar mode of a drawing or the techtonic mode of a physical model, the purpose of this act should be more than to merely satisfy an established convention or fulfill an arbitrary requirement. However, in a world in which we still feel obligated to render these constructions after the design is complete, we must ask ourselves why we still bother at all. This series shall serve as a laboratory in which these very questions shall be explored. Judgment as to the benefit or detriment of this practice shall be reserved. Rather, the hybrid condition of the drawing/model shall serve as the entry point into these respective explorations.

Course Objectives

Starting with a virtual model, this half-course shall explore the act of drawing as more than an act of extraction/reduction/excision. Embedded within the desires of the act of drawing is also an attitude towards exploration/explanation/evaluation. Specifically, through a series of explorations, the student shall continue to interrogate the artifact of the virtual model in drawn form to question and explore the value of a trace. A record of progress/iteration/evolution of design principles shall be documented and codified. In the end, an assessment of the value of this production can be made and possibly the ultimate necessity for this form of representation can be fundamentally critiqued, or at least a speculation towards it can be framed.

In the six weeks of the course, the student will be asked to prepare at least four iterations of an existing design. There will be weekly meetings were the first part will be a brief presentation of a particular aspect of drawing. The second part of the meeting will be an open discussion sharing the iterative progress of the work. The attitude within the course will be that of a laboratory where experimentation and new thinking

will be encourage. In the end a final presentation will be made speculating on the benefits of their findings.

Evaluation

The starting model for each section shall be a previous model designed by the student for a previous course. No specific notion towards any design shall specifically matter. Rather how the process of design is shaded through the respective lens of model or drawing is all that is of concern. The student is expected to come to this forum with an attitude of both self-exploration and a desire to evaluate the mode of the current practice. There is no pre-established opinion of what is the future of these practices, just a genuine curiosity that something still remains undefined.

The evaluation of each students work shall be made on their weekly contribution to their respective pursuit and the insight of their assessment of their own production at the end of the period. A final digital archive of the work produced in the course will be submitted at the end.

Schedule

Week 1 – 1/24 Introduction

Week 2 – 1/31 Pattern

Week 3 – 2/7 Scale

Week 4 – 2/14 Trace

Week 5 – 2/21 Class Discussion

Week 6 – 2/28 Class Discussion

Week 7 – 3/7 FINAL REVIEW

Assignment

The burden of documenting every component is one of the biggest challenges in constructing virtual models.The challenge is to avoid the false necessity of having a complete and accurate building. It is impossible to pre-solve every unique detail, and to do so would be unnecessarily exhausting. After all as Robin Evans put it, architects don't build buildings, they draw them.

Beginning with a previously developed computer model of your choosing, establish the major critical elements that will drive a systematic/aesthetic/pragmatic evaluation of the design. Recombine these elements according to a new logic and document the resultant creation. Create multiple vantages/drawings/tracings that establish and evaluate both the new constructions and the elemental forces that are shaping them. Iterate through these views to simultaneously condense the visual information into a singular image and identify the visual field through which you are operating.

The resulting document will be both an articulation of notations to describe the physicality of a space as well as a description of the sensations experienced within it. If the photoreal rendering is considered the de facto articulation of atmosphere and the annotated plan/section the articulation of material, then the goal for this course is to develop a singular visual document that is both. After all, both elements are in the contemporary practice generated from the same source file.

Format – There is no set format for the material generated in this course other than whatever is being

evaluated must be static. For the sake of consistency each iteration should be made the same.

Readings

There will be a reading assigned each week to be discussed as part of the class the following week.

syllabus Top of Form

syllabus

syllabus