



Banking Culture – Culture Bank

What comes to mind when you hear the words "Bank" and "Culture?" In recent years, especially following the Global Financial Crisis, the word culture has taken on a negative connotation in reference to corporate banking institutions and Wall Street. This may be indicative of a growing mistrust of corporate banking institutions by the general public as noted in a recently published paper in Nature Magazine, titled "Business Culture and Dishonesty in the Banking Industry."

There are a number of divergent definitions of "Culture" and like the evolving typology of the bank, the predominant definition seems to reflect the ever-changing interpersonal relationships that define our society at a given time and place. In this studio, you will begin with an analysis of banking with intent to move beyond the traditional model of monetary banks and to develop a **Culture Bank**. For this semester you'll consider "culture" as defined by Raymond Williams in the excerpt from his essay, "Culture" below:

But once we go beyond the physical reference, we have to recognize three broad active categories of usage. The sources of two of these we have already discussed: (i) the independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, from C18; (ii) the independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general, from Herder and Klemm. But we have also to recognize (iii) the independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. This seems often now the most widespread use: culture is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film.

Monetary Banks serve as an intermediary in the exchange of money between individual borrowers and depositors. Individual gains, in the form of interest for the bank and the depositor and availability of capital, via loans to the borrower, serve as a catalyst for this exchange.

In this studio you will explore the bank as an intermediary and as a catalyst for culture exchange with an emphasis on the spaces of human interaction and the physical manifestation of social networks.



Process

I don't paint things. I only paint the difference between things." - Henri Matisse

In addition to an analysis of precedent monetary banks you will examine a number of culture depositories such as Story Corps, The Brooklyn Art Library - "Sketchbook Project" and The City Reliquary. These institutions, which serve as places of collective exchange for a community that values art, history, oral tradition and the ordinary artifacts of everyday living, present an alternative notion of commodity, currency, interest and exchange.

Throughout the course of this studio you will engage in a rigorous, iterative design process that utilizes analytical drawing and making as investigative tools rather than as a means of representation. This process of "thinking with the hand" will allow you to acquire "tacit knowledge" of and reveal a range of existing conditions, underlying boundaries, networks and reciprocities that are inherent to the site and program, yet otherwise remain unseen.

Since, as Paul Valery's wrote, "to see is to forget the name of the thing one sees," it will be essential for you to unpack the program of "Bank" into the actions, actors and the duration that the action is performed. A series of iterative material investigations and reciprocal drawings will allow you to uncover/model the underlying programmatic relationships within existing banking models and to amplify your own positions on hierarchy towards program adjacencies, circulation, occupation, and boundaries as you develop new models of banking.

