

The Bank and the Work Space

Project

For this iteration of the X Bank, our studio will move beyond the traditional representations of banks – as secure or transparent, awe-inspiring or accessible, elitist or populist, DIY or technological – to reveal the ‘behind the scenes:’ the work environments – physical and virtual - that constitute most of the banking program and spaces. As a type, the bank building is an office building with an expanded public lobby where most transactions occur. The space of representation is traditionally focused on the ground floor lobby, the art-filled public plaza as well as the structure and surface of the façade. Inside, a thick crust of call-center like open offices, screens, conference rooms and glass-clad executive offices remain hidden from the public eye. It is this generic, banal, every-day space that we will turn our attention to, making it the ‘true space’ of representation of financial flows and transactions. Turning the bank inside out, if not literally then in terms of focus, we will examine how the history of work environments has informed that of banks, and how technological innovations have continued to reshape the every-day physical spaces of interaction.

Located in the heart of the Brooklyn Tech Triangle, the studio will assume that our X Bank serves a highly diverse community, on-line as well as locally, with a recent demographic push towards the technologically savvy, the creative and the innovative. The studio will consider this context as impacting not only the public spaces of the bank, but also the private ones, where the image of the banker is no longer that of a ‘suit’ but rather one of a community builder and tech guru with creative aspirations.

Building on the history of advertisement agencies as well as tech companies amongst others – from the seminal Mad Men-like office spaces, to the revolution of ‘work as home’ instigated by Gaetano Pesce's interiors for Chiat\Day and from the ‘work as play’ launched by technology companies with the early experiments of Olivetti and Microsoft to the more recent playground-like spaces of Google, the studio will ask: what is the future of the work environment and how will it impact the image of banking, and ultimately the architecture of bank spaces?

Process

The studio will emphasize the exploration of Representation in Architecture at the level of ‘image making’ both metaphorically and literally. As a result, we will work intensely on varying modes of representation, from diagramming to mapping and from drawing to rendering, with a particular emphasis on physical model making as a critical mode or representation to contrast surface and mass, explore scale and materiality and understand part to whole relationships.



Johnson Wax Headquarters, Frank Lloyd Wright



Larkin Building, Frank Lloyd Wright



American Republic Insurance Co.



Google Campus in Dublin, Ireland