

LA 439/539 Landscape Architecture Design Studio

Doing the most with the least

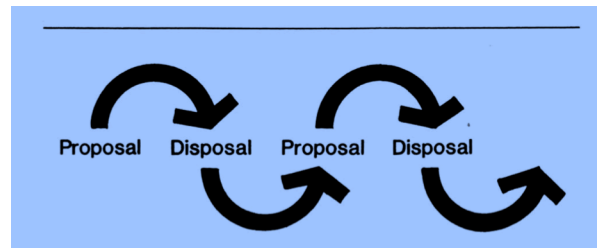
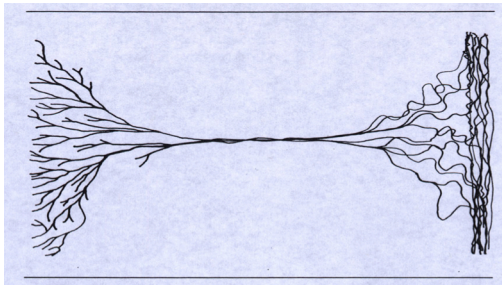
explore, investigate, propose, intervene, uncover, prescribe, represent

Department of Landscape Architecture • University of Oregon • Spring 2013

Prof. Bart Johnson, Dept. of Landscape Architecture • Office hours: Thurs. 1:00-3:00 PM

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MWF 1:00-5:00 PM • Location TBA • 6 credits • Grading P/NP



Design Process Images, John Lyle

Students will explore urban ecotones through a series of investigative exercises that culminate in a proposed intervention that “does the most with the least” to improve the qualities of a single site. Each student will begin by developing a decade list and a century list of issues they feel are among the most important societal challenges that landscape designers and planners can contribute to resolving. They will learn to scrutinize a site for how even small-scale site design can contribute to resolving large-scale societal issues.

In this studio, design is a process as much as a product; more a verb than a noun. Investigations are intended to lead to as many questions as answers. What does it mean to do the most with the least? How does one build bridges between understanding how a place functions, assessing whether it functions well, and proposing how it might function better? What sources of information and what kinds of investigations can we use to learn what a place itself can tell us, and to transform what we learn into recommendations for its future? Resolving issues also requires coming to decisions, and we will focus throughout the term on an iterative process of investigation, synthesis and design. ***The primary goal of this studio is for students to develop a toolbox of site investigative techniques that bridge critical inquiry and intuition, tools that will become a part of their lifelong process of learning by designing.***

The Process

Students will conduct their investigations at selected sites along the Willamette River in Eugene that include both intensively used human spaces as well as places with relatively little human presence. Each site can be characterized as an ecotone – a spatial juxtaposition of two or more landscape types that creates a tension zone between the different types.

Students will assess their selected site through a series of questions to be answered through different types of site investigations. By questioning the landscape from multiple perspectives,

and in distinctly different ways, students will build evidence and understanding that can jointly influence their design proposals. Students will learn to “read the landscape”, to observe, listen and perceive what the landscape itself can tell them through techniques that range from recording objective site observations to opening their senses to engaging the landscape through interventions. The overall goal is the ability to strategically, creatively and reliably apply a suite of design investigation techniques to any design problem. To this end, students will perform the following steps:

Explore. Examine the complete set of sites, at first through remote tools and then in person, to identify how each functions as an ecotone – a place where one or more landscape types come together to form an abrupt boundary or a zone of mixing and thus create a third landscape type. Select one of the sites that intrigues you and pose questions about it for further investigation.

Investigate. Apply techniques of observing physical traces and environmental behavior, and assessing archives (Zeisel 2006, *Inquiry by Design*), and reading the landscape (Johnson – your prof.) to answer questions about your site. Investigations should be targeted to the specific characteristics of each location, and in general should focus on answering: Why is this place the way it is? How does this place work? Is it working well? What is it in the process of becoming? How might it work better?

Propose. Develop initial, provisional ideas for how the site might be changed as a springboard for further, focused inquiry. Proposals should harness diagrams, annotations, text, plan, section, and/or models as means to deepen your investigations. Proposals will be recycled and revised during each subsequent step.

Intervene. Propose and execute a site intervention that is intended test ideas, raise questions, highlight hidden features, or influence people’s behavior. Students will monitor and document the affects of their interventions, and the class will visit each site during the next studio session.

Uncover. Further explore the site and your responses to it by writing poetry or prose that brings to light the more intangible qualities of the site, emotive dimensions of place, or your growing understanding of the juxtapositions the site presents. The use of poetry in particular allows a person to express impressions, intuitions and juxtapositions that reveal different layers of a place or experience.

Prescribe. Based on all that they have learned, students will propose final design solutions intended to conserve or alter the site so as achieve the most with the least intervention. Each student’s own resolution of what is “most” and what is “least” will have strong influences on their proposals.

Represent. Students will develop final design boards composed of drawings and text that present their investigations, the evidence and rationale that supports their proposals, and their proposed site modifications. You must critically describe who or what will benefit from their proposed modifications, and who or what will likely be detrimented. You must present a critically conceived evidentiary foundation for your proposals. The thoughtful choice of representation techniques is a key step in this process, and students will explore representation precedents, including the works of Edward Tufte.

Books to be used:

- Zeisel, John. 2006. Inquiry by Design : Environment/Behavior/Neuroscience in Architecture, Interiors, Landscape, and Planning. Revised edition. New York : W.W. Norton & Company. (BF353.Z44 2006)
- Tufte, Edward R. 1990. Envisioning Information. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press. (QA 90.T914 1990).
- Tufte, Edward R. 1997. Visual Explanations. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press. (BF241.T83 1997)
- Tufte, Edward R. 2001. The Visual Display of Quantitative Information. Second Edition. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press. (QA276.3 .T83 2001)
- Tufte, Edward R. 2006. Beautiful Evidence. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press. (P93.5.T837 2006)

Academic misconduct

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students.

Accommodations for students with disabilities

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course, which may result in barriers to your participation, please notify the instructor as soon as possible so that accommodations can be made. You may also wish to contact Disability Services in 164 Oregon Hall at 346-1155 or disabsrv@uoregon.edu

Inclusion Statement

The School of Architecture and Allied Arts is a community that values inclusion. We are a committed to equal opportunities for all faculty, staff and students to develop individually, professionally, and academically regardless of ethnicity, heritage, gender, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic standing, cultural beliefs and traditions. We are dedicated to an environment that is inclusive and fosters awareness, understanding, and respect for diversity. If you feel excluded or threatened, please contact your instructor and/or department head. The University Bias Response Team is also a resource that can assist you. Find more information at their website at <http://bias.uoregon.edu/index.html> or by phoning 541-346-2037.