

PERCEPTUAL SHIFT

Spike Wolff Studio Spring 06
Carnegie Mellon University 48-205



Studio Description

Form and space are the compositional elements of architecture. Walls, floors, windows; these basic lexical elements obdurately exist. These elements are used to shape and define our built environment. In the design studio, the materiality of these elements are represented by the elusive vacuity of chipboard. In reality, these elements are made of tangible physical materials which allow for human experience. Material is the corporeal medium through which we can experience the ineffable qualities of space.

The studio will focus on how materials support architectural ideas and the creation of architectural form. Design work will examine the typical characteristics associated with materials and explore possibilities to reinterpret their meanings in order to create new relationships. The studio will study the use and expression of materials and how one's sensory engagement with materials can shift the perception of space.

The perceptual qualities of materials are not limited to those characteristics thought to be inherent to them. Materials will be considered both in terms of the characteristics typically associated and atypically possible with them. The issue of materiality will initially be explored in terms of basic perceptual typologies - opacity, translucency, transparency, reflectivity. The project will begin with research into these typologies with the design of a 'window' - a perceptual threshold between two spaces composed of two perceptual types. This exploration will continue with the design of a transportable library bookmobile.

Architects suffer from the same studio syndrome. They work out of their offices, terrace the landscape and place their building into the carved-out site. As a result the studio-designed then site adjusted buildings look like blown-up cardboard models.
- Richard Serra

Material, space, and color are the main aspects of visual art. Everyone knows that there is material that can be picked up and sold, but no one sees space and color. Two of the main aspects of art are invisible; the basic nature of art is invisible. The integrity of visual art is not seen. Material is what art is made from. It alone is not art.
- Donald Judd

For there to be presence, does something have to be present? For there to be absence, does something have to be absent? Spaces do not need to be defined by walls, Sense of mass does not need to be conveyed by the presence of an object.
- Chang Zhang