

Architecture Studio: Foundation II / 1st Year Spring

Spring 2015, CMU, Arch #48-105, M/W/F 1:30-4:20
Studio Website: www.andrew.cmu.edu/course/48-105

Coordinator: Kai Gutschow
Email: gutschow@andrew.cmu.edu
Off. Hr: by appt. in MM302

(2/6/15)

Project 1: TECTONIC SYSTEMS: Span

Proj.1, ASSIGNMENT 6 (due Mon. 2/9, 1:30pm)

You have worked for about a week to understand and gain individual expertise in the specific problem of “Span,” the constraints, the challenges, and the opportunities. It has been difficult, but valuable, to work in sheets of paper when the goal is a wood project made out of sticks.

Your charge this weekend is to COLLABORATE with another classmate to invent at least three substantially different support-and-span structures. You may use paper or cardboard of any kind, but do NOT use any glue, tape, or other fasteners.

In addition, read the article by Marco Frascari, “The Tell-the-Tale Detail” (1984), which discusses the role of construction details as generators of architectural ideas, performance, design, and interpretation. Another suggested reading is M. Cadwell, “Flooded at the Farnsworth,” Ch.3 in Strange Details (2007) on details at Mies van der Rohe’s famous house. For a more philosophical take on “bridge” and the idea of “connecting” and “separating,” try the famous essay by G. Simmel, “Bridge and Door” (1903) in N. Leach, Rethinking Architecture (1997). All three readings can be found on the studio website.

Work with your teammate to bring together your ideas from the past week. You can choose from among the ideas you each brought to the table, or improve them with additional feedback from your teammate, or invent new ones. Remember that the span can change or morph from one end to the other; each support might carry the signature of one teammate. But the best projects will be a unified whole.

You will need to work with your teammate through the rest of this project, including the construction of the final wood span. Each studio may create the team pairings in slightly different ways. Every student will also be formally evaluating their teammate for effort, the spirit of collaboration, and bringing inventiveness to the team.

In addition to the learning objectives related to span, structure, tectonics, and woodworking, this project is very much about learning to work with others. It stresses the power of teamwork, the fact that “two heads are better than one,” and that the best ideas often come from discussions and synthesizing differing viewpoints. It is intended to model the fact that architecture is a “team sport,” that it is always a compromise and collaboration between many individuals and many constraints and points of view. It takes advantage of the efficiency and productivity that comes from developing individual expertise and responsibility within a team in which the “whole is greater than the sum of the parts.” As in an orchestra or sports team, rich and better results come from the variety of talents that pool together, even if sometimes that feels difficult. It demands respect, trust, and encouragement of team members. It requires everyone to lead and follow: we can’t and should not all be “master builders.”



