

Project 0 Materials Exploration
Perceptual Typologies of Material (page one)

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, 'A Picturesque Stroll Around Clara-Clara', by Yve-Alain Bois, from Richard Serra, edited by Ernst-Gerhard Guse, Galerie m Bochum, published by Rizzoli, 1988.

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. The unseen nature and integrity of art, the development of its aspects, the irreducibility of thought, can be replaced by falsifications, and by verbiage about the material, itself in reality unseen. The discussion of science is scientific; the discussion of art is superstitious. There is no history.

Color is like material. It is one way or another, but it obdurately exists. Its existence as it is is the main fact and not what it might mean, which may be nothing. Or rather, color does not connect alone to any of the several states of the mind. I mention the word "epistemology" and stop. Color, like material, is what art is made from. It alone is not art.

- Donald Judd, 'Some Aspects of Color in General and Red and Black in Particular', by Donald Judd, 1993, from Donald Judd: Colorist, by Donald Judd, edited by Dietmar Elger, published by Hatje Cantz, 2000.

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

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Materials may be thought of in the following basic perceptual typologies:

Opacity

No transmission or reflection of light

Associated characteristics: gravity, mass, stability

Associated materials: concrete, rock, stone, wood, brick

Translucency

Transmission, modulation or diffusion of light

Associated characteristics: planar surface

Associated materials: plastic, resin, treated glass, fabric

Transparency

Transmission of light and image

Associated characteristics: planar surface, smooth surface

Associated materials: glass

Reflectivity

Reflection of light and image; coexistence of virtual and real image

Associated characteristics: shiny surface

Associated materials: metal, glass

Materials will be researched and explored with the following considerations in mind:

What are the typical physical, perceptual and experiential characteristics associated with these materials?

What are some characteristics which transcend these associated meanings and perceptions?

How is perception influenced by the ontological (nature of its existence), phenomenological (via the senses) and synesthetic (subjective sensation or image of a sense occurring when another sense is stimulated) experience of these materials?

How do these materials operate in relation to other materials?

How do these materials operate in relation to the scalar proximity of the viewer?

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Examples (in-studio discussion):

Stone

- Associated Characteristics - Opacity
Zumthor -Thermal Spa Vals
- Atypical Characteristics - Translucency
Herzog+DeMeuron -Dominus Winery

Metal

- Associated Characteristics - Reflective
Gehry -Weisman Art Museum
- Atypical Characteristics - Translucency
Herzog+DeMeuron -DeYoung Museum

Glass

- Associated Characteristics - Planar surface
Sejima -Day Care Center
Rem Koolhaas/OMA -IIT
- Atypical Characteristics - Curvilinear surface
Gehry -Conde Nast
Moss -Umbrella

Concrete

- Associated Characteristics - Opacity
LeCorbusier -LaTourette
- Atypical Characteristics - Translucency
LitraCon Transparent Concrete

Brick

- Associated Characteristics - Planar surface
Wright -Robie House
- Atypical Characteristics - Curvilinear surface
Gehry -Case Western

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Additional Resource Suggestions:

FA Reference

729.1 I35
In Detail: Building Skins, Concepts, Layers, Materials (Schittich)
721.02 W34M
Modern Construction Handbook (Watts)
721.044 C744
Concrete Construction Manual
721.04496 G5492
Glass Construction Manual
724.6 D479
Details in Architecture

Periodicals

Current Shelf on Hunt 4 (A+U, Architecture, Architectural Record, Croquis, Domus, Lotus, Techniques + Architecture, International Architectural Review, Architectural Review UK, DU, GA)
Architectural Record, Metropolis, etc, monthly product sections (also check their websites for product reports)
Architectural Record, annual product review (Dec issues, typically)

Assignment:

Presentation

Slide Powerpoint presentation in studio, documenting your materials exploration

Binder

For reference in studio, binder cataloging your materials exploration.
Include all images of materials, at various scales (i.e. full shot of building installation and close up of material surface).
Label images (architect, project, location).
Include your notes on discovery.

Materials samples

Actual materials samples, for physical experimentation and construction of full scale mock ups.