

Thesis I

Fall 2013, CMU, Arch #48-509

Studio Website: www.andrew.cmu.edu/course/48-509/

Thesis Coordinator: Kai Gutschow

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Off. Hr: M/W 11:30-12:20pm & by appt. in MM302

(9/30/13)

Thesis Meeting, Sept. 27, 1:30, CFA206

- Poster exhibit in CFA?
- Read: Sarah Whiting, "I am interested in Engaged Autonomy," interview with Peter Eisenman, in Log 28 (2013) special issue on "Stocktaking" edited by Vidler & Eisenman
 - Previously I asked you to read one chapter from Piotrowski & Robinson, eds. The Discipline of Architecture (2001). Suggest articles by Leatherbarrow, Fisher and Anderson
 - What are the central architectural issues/problems of are day that need attention/research/ speculation?
 - What is architecture? What is the future of architecture?
- Set up student dialogues / crits / discussions?
- Faculty concerns about thesis
 - Defining a thesis
 - At it's core, it must be an idea generated by the student, and worked on in collaboration with an advisory team
 - A true thesis must be a challengeable or contestable proposition that if designed or defended successfully, can lead to new ideas, understanding, or paradigm.
 - It is not just a project;
 - It is not just research or accumulated data or ideas*
- How to create / impose a self-motivated, self-disciplined, productive work process?
 - Student obligations, responsibility, opportunity
- 18 units of studio credit implies:
 - More than analysis and reading
 - Defining the scope, knowing the resources
 - Precise site selection
 - Defining the program exactly
 - DESIGN work before December
- Primary Advisor / Studio Instructor / Multiple Advisors
 - Role of studio instructor? Role of studio colleagues?
 - Working with multiple advisors if the topics are not closely related to studio project.
 - Receptiveness to multiple kinds of feedback
 - Thesis as collaboration with team of advisors
- Official Advisor "Contract"?
 - Gather signatures
 - Can be changed

- Keeping/creating a notebook, documenting the RESEARCH process:
 - Documenting steps/results: design variations, iterative steps in a process
 - Notes, sketches, ideas
 - Precedents
 - Bibliography
 - Summaries of readings, websites, conversations
 - Uniform format, suggest 8.5x11 (easily printable)
- Starting a weekly email “newsletter” sent to all advisors to keep them up-to-date
- Creating (ambitious) **Lists of Deliverables**, for mid-review and final review.
 - Get advice from your advising team. Work in collaboration; set up a “contract” of work
 - Create a “syllabus” with daily/weekly goals (not just bar graphs)**DRAFT DUE: Fri. Oct. 4, 2013** - by email to Kai & advisors
- **Mid-Review: week of Oct. 21**
 - Public display/feedback necessary. Format?
 - Booklet due (pdf)
- **Thesis Final Review Sun. Dec. 8.**
- **Final booklet due Fri. Dec. 13.**
- All work will be evaluated in December, and none will be allowed to proceed that don't have the support of the faculty...

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“An Architecture thesis is not:

... A Written Paper. The Architecture Thesis is a project executed in analog or digital drawings, models, constructions, diagrams, with all the accompanying process work.

... A Device. You cannot say “My thesis is about light”. Light is a device through which architecture is manifest and perceived. It is not a thesis.

... A Question: You cannot ask “Why is architecture so cool?”

... An Announcement: “I will use architectural concrete in a new way”

... Vague Statements: “Modernism is bad”

... A Limited Subject: “Housing” “Libraries” “Hospitals”

... A List: “Light, Space, Form, Structure, Environment, and Architecture”

... An Autobiography: “A House for an Architecture Thesis Student’s Parents”

So what’s left?

A thesis is a position. It is a claim or a speculation you make about architecture and its relationship to the world. You should be able to say: “Architecture is _____”, Architecture can _____” or “What if Architecture_____”. A thesis is your chance to do more than demonstrate your accumulated skills—you are positing a direction for architecture, speculating on an aspect of the discipline, taking a stand on an architectural issue.”

– Pablo Garcia, as quoted by Rami El Samahy