

Processes in Digital Design:  
A Phenomenological Threshold for Curriculum Development in Digital Design

To smell a flower on a sunny clear day is not an activity which requires digital interaction; however, the designer engaging in this activity today is one who does so within the context of a dramatically expanded communicative potential regarding such an event compared with the same designer of only several decades past. This person is not only able to convey and expand upon this experience with enhanced communicative capabilities through digital technology, but also perceives and experiences such moments with knowledge of the mechanisms and abilities of a digital age. The experience is different now than it once was; the knowledge of what digital technology might facilitate is ever-present within this moment.

The poster submission to which this abstract belongs represents the results of a recent design charette, or student work session, which was held as a test run of new curriculum for an introductory studio course in digital design and fabrication. The studio is designed to work in conjunction with ongoing lower division design curriculum in use at [institution name removed for blind review].

The analytical and constructive process for the new digital design studio examines the *noesis* or “real content” moments of specific experiential, environmental, or spatial interactions using a reductive format of epochē to strip away conditions which are not directly useful in understanding these interactions and assign focus to those conditions which are. This format is part of a reductive analytical process which is founded in the writing and theory of Edmund Husserl, a 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher who is widely regarded as the founder of Phenomenology (Lauer, 1965, p. 5). By means of researching and assigning technological methods to mediate interaction between these moments and the fundamental spatial needs they represent, students construct meaning within basic assignment frameworks or programs. In the case of our design charette, students were offered the choice of three subjects for contextual investigation: a flower, a reading, and a photographic image. Analysis focused on extracting spatial characteristics and systematic relationships inherent in the context subjects, and followed a method of inquiry associated directly with Edmund Husserl's writing on the stages of phenomenological inquiry.

The most important component of this approach, whether the subject is about analog or digital means, is the focus on experience as a basis for both spatial analysis and generative design. Our new program in digital design and fabrication involves students in recognizing that digital design processes must be inextricably linked to the understanding of spatial experience and that such processes are rapidly becoming part of a widespread social, cultural, and technological identity (Kolarevic, 2003).

Kolarevic, B. (Ed.). (2003). *Architecture in the digital age: Design and manufacturing*. New York and London: Taylor and Francis

Lauer, Q. (Ed.). (1965). *Phenomenology and the crisis of philosophy*. New York: Harper and Row.