

On Fingerprints in the Act of Making: Position paper

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Collaborative Intuition: *Development of the Democratic Studio through Systematic Individualism*

In a democratic studio culture, can the palimpsest of group activity function as a form of phenomenological transparency?

To place into dualistic opposition the questions “*Where do you (I) come from?*” and “*From where will we proceed?*” might under certain conditions yield answers of conceptually identical locale. The second question however, in its very asking, may subsume the condition of “we” as a hyper realized form of “I” possessing characteristics not dissimilar to the uncanny “play of doubling” referenced by Anthony Vidler regarding the work of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Edgar Allan Poe (1), transforming the nature of opposition to that of a being/becoming duality.

Similarly, if architecture can be thought of as a supreme act of defining self within the selfless, then it may be in our very nature to imprint boldly, and our nature likewise to overwrite. Every “I” may ultimately become “we” in the act of telling who we were while constructing who we would become.

If the answer is yes, the palimpsest of group activity is (can be) a form of phenomenological transparency, and every “I” is an unrealized sublimation of “we” in the act of becoming, then the social structures we develop to facilitate this democratic interaction and the annotation strangers will ultimately apply to those structures might reveal that the core identity of all that is seemingly aberrant and intuitive in the way we construct as individuals can be quite systematic. Those systems then, when understood as a phenomenon of social transparency, provide the crucial moment of sublimation where the locale of “I” and “we” occur simultaneously.

The focus on systems in architecture then need not be seen as an activity exclusive of the aberrant and intuitive; such studies may serve as the vehicle for dualistic opposition against which and intermingled with, aberrance may find meaning. Further, the phenomenon of “place” may never truly exist in the absence of that which is placeless. Viewed this way, the concept of place is a wholly dualistic aberration in and of itself by the notion that it is the space recognized by the singular self but exists only in opposition to and in conjunction with the vast plurality of our universe.

Authorship, or the intent to author, might be seen as a critical ingredient in the making of democracy. The greater the intensity with which every “I” pursues expression, the denser the fabric of “we” ultimately becomes. Transparency would seem to be the enabling vehicle; the phenomenon of simultaneously understanding self within the selfless may be what enables reading of the richest and deepest meanings in architecture and in life. To answer the opening question then, the palimpsest of group activity is not really a form of phenomenological transparency, but rather dependent upon it for success. Unless the group can recognize the function of its “doubled” identity with the individual, meaning is lost in a cacophony of overwrite; and that which may otherwise be regarded as complex and democratic might be rendered simply anarchical.

On Fingerprints in the Act of Making: Studio Brief

Note: Translation of the previously stated position into the educational studio environment should emphasize clarity of systems interaction with consistency of individual development. Recognition of an "I" / "we" duality may reinforce understanding of other dualities involved in the construction of "place".

Brief

As we have seen through work in exercises involving the phenomenon of scale interaction, the aberrant and uncanny in architecture exist not simply adjacent to or in coincidence with that which is familiar and knowable, but play a crucial role in establishing the very identity of that which we may ultimately come to recognize as place. In a parallel to our spatial explorations regarding the dualistic interaction between that which is familiar and the uncanny, exercises will focus on the place of individual authorship within the democratic studio setting.

An introductory mapping and intervention project is to be undertaken requiring small groups to each select and develop distinct systems operating within a given context. These systems should be developed in such a way as to facilitate the eventual recombination of all systems to form a unified context analysis construction. Participating groups are responsible to coordinate with each other in the design and fitting together of individual systems elements. The interplay of group dynamic should bring out strong individual opinions against which the group intellect shall selectively edit. The resulting context development should be a strong restatement of the interaction of scales and systems found within the given context, providing a rich fabric of information within which intervention strategies may be developed.

Ultimately, the interactive experience should in turn influence the way in which individual intervention strategies are developed; the newly understood depth of systems and scale interaction should make its way into individual expressions as a dynamic synthesis of individual/group authorship.