

A BUILDING MADE OF BUILDINGS
(AND OTHER READYMADES)

Core II Studio
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Emmett Zeifman (ez2148)
Marc Francl (maf2283), TA

A building made of buildings (and other readymades)

We will make a building, a primary school, out of other buildings, among them, significant historic and contemporary examples, generic types, and the former school building that occupies the site. Through a variety of techniques involving the selection and combination of readymades—objects found on site, in studio, in books and magazines, on the internet, in stores and product catalogues, at home—we will challenge tendencies towards synthetic part to whole relationships, repeated spatial modules, and geometric motifs. Readymades are not merely found materials, they are complete, coherent objects in their own right (e.g. a stool, a bicycle wheel, a urinal, a shovel, a bottle rack). We will make buildings out of such wholes—functional objects with their own particular characteristics, precisely arranged to give them new meaning. We will make plans out of readymade objects, including other plans, sections out of readymade objects, including other sections, photographs out of ready made objects, including other photographs, models out of readymade objects, including other models. We will make buildings like they are models and models like they are buildings and drawings like they are precisely calibrated outputs of multiple software platforms, exploring the default and literal qualities of the various media with which we produce and communicate architecture. We will explore rules, chance, and other strategies of non-composition. We will reflect critically on the related legacies of Dada, Surrealist, “conceptual” and algorithmic practices that inform these challenges to conventional authorship. We will strive wherever possible not to design buildings in the conventional sense but to find them, to collectively construct rules and methods rather than pursuing singular expressions of individual authorship. We will consider the studio a form of play, an experiment in pedagogy about pedagogy.

All wholes

Schools, as detailed in the syllabus, are perhaps unique among significant institutional programs in the range of spatial types and programs that they have contained—art studios, auditoria, automotive shops, A/V rooms, bathrooms, boiler rooms, bus drop-offs, changing rooms, chapels, classrooms, computer labs, corridors, dining halls, dormitories, egress stairs, gymnasias, kitchens, laboratories, libraries, loading docks, maker spaces, metal shops, offices, parking areas, playing fields, playgrounds, rehearsal spaces, running tracks, sewing rooms, sports courts, swimming pools, weight rooms, wood shops, and many others. While each of these elements might itself be a site of design, our primary focus will be on the spatial and programmatic relationships that can be established between them. This is the material construction of a particular pedagogy and an idea of the civic function of a school—an architectural diagram that organizes the lives of its occupants and their relation to the city. From early collegiate models (and their monastic ancestors) we can understand the school as comprised of aggregated architectural types—chapel, dining hall, garden, master’s rooms, library, dormitory—deliberately sequenced to define the structure of an education (or life) in relation to the outside world. We will bring such models of collective life, including descendants such as the “social condenser,” to bear on this very different context and site. If Le Corbusier’s La Tourette is a modern exemplar of the medieval monastic type, perhaps Rem Koolhaas’ mythological Downtown Athletic Club is its metropolitan counterpart—a vertically-stacked machine comprised of the architectural elements necessary for the production of a secular, capitalist subject. Bringing together the disparate spatial, material and programmatic wholes of the varied elements of a school into new assemblies, we will critically evaluate ideas of pedagogy and their materialization in architecture—investigating by what architectural means children might be educated in the city today.

A studio mood board

