

An Ambiguous Utopia: Experiments in Collective Form #2

Matthew Soules

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School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
University of British Columbia

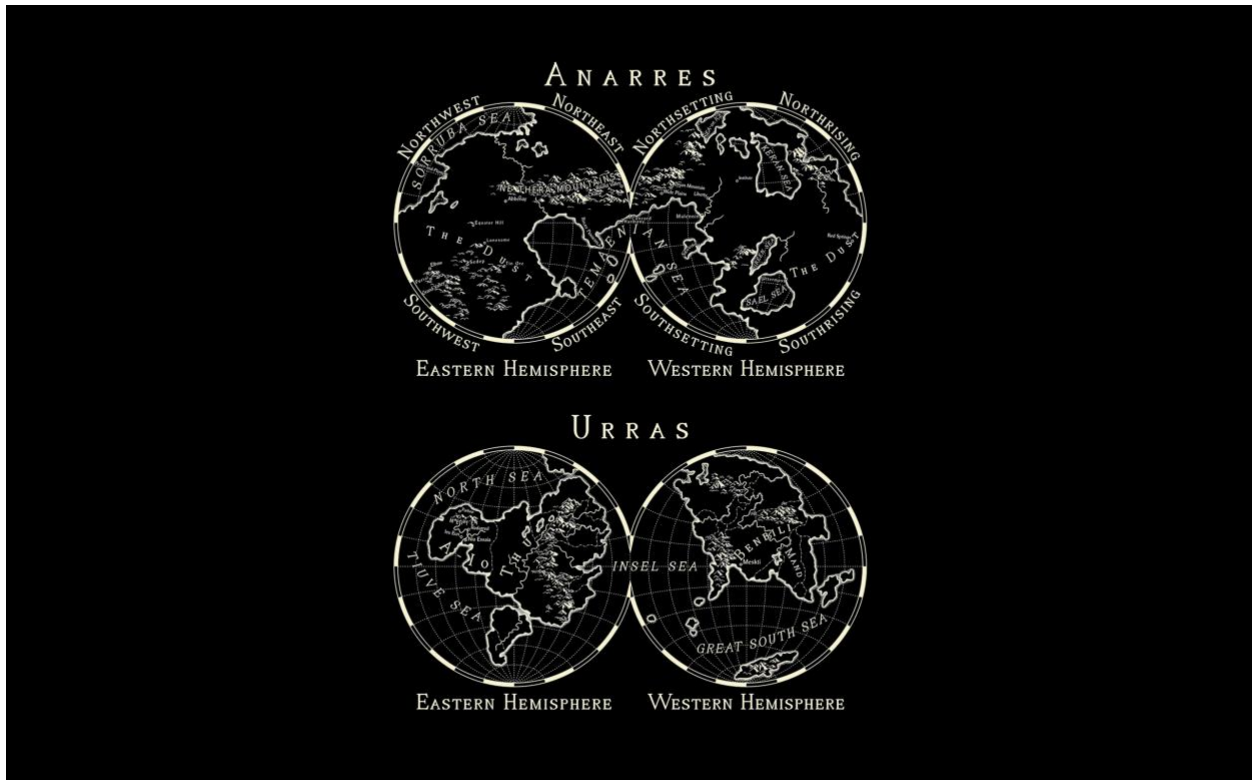


Image: Maps of the two planets in Ursula Le Guin's 1974 science fiction novel, *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*.

Description

This studio is guided by two simple principles. 1) That architecture is always formal. 2) That form is always ideological.

Beautiful and empowering form has the capacity to raise the human spirit and enhance community. This studio, at its most basic, is aimed at helping students become expert formalists. To shape movement. To position light. To offer material depth.

At the same time, the studio asks students to consider the political and ideological aspects of formal decisions. We will be seeking, together, formal conditions that enhance community bonds and build resilience.

We will be collectively exploring the formal qualities of position, proportion, shape, dimension, texture, colour, and sequence to help build a tomorrow that is better than today. In a sense, this is a little bit like architectural science fiction. World making through form.

Project & General Methodology

The entire studio is devoted to one continuous formal investigation that results in a design for a public building in the Kitsilano neighborhood of Vancouver. This singular journey is divided into three parts that iteratively build upon each other.

Students can choose to work as individuals or in pairs for the full duration of the term.

Part 1: Close Encounters (Precedent Analysis)

Duration: Approximately 4 weeks

The first part of the studio is devoted to experiencing, learning, and experimenting with instances of great design in and around Vancouver in a direct, embodied fashion.

Students will be provided with a list of buildings/spaces from which they are asked to select one to work on. As a group, we will visit these projects and try to become closely acquainted with their qualities. We will sit quietly within them. We will walk around and through them. We will discuss them.

Each student or pair of students will analyse their chosen project through drawing, digital modelling, and physical modelling. Emphasis will be given to the importance of iterative/investigative experimentation through physical modelling. Students are asked to find elements from within their chosen projects to 'sample' and 'remix' in the creation of a new spatial condition. Part 1 will culminate in the creation of a 'final' physical model that represents this new spatial condition that has creatively emerged from the analysis of found conditions.

Part 2: Situated Materiality (Conceptualizing materiality in relation to site, program, and structure)

Duration: Approximately 4 weeks

After having the completed Part 1, students will be introduced to the site and program in detail. The spatial remix from Part 1 will 'land' at the site and iteratively evolve and transform based on new information and criteria.

The site for the studio is the Kitsilano Pool and students are asked to design a new building that houses:

- Changing rooms, lockers, showers
- Sauna and hot pool
- An outdoor and an indoor theatre
- Restaurant and café

After an initial group site visit, students will generate a conceptual design for a public building in which the experience of materials plays a central role in their relationship to site, program, and structure.

Part 3: Iterative Refinement (Design as a practice)

Duration: Approximately 4 weeks

After arriving at a powerful conceptual design in which form and materiality synthetically connect with a public experience of site, program, and structure, students will practice iterative refinement through modelling, visualizing, and drawing in increasing detail and specificity.