

Rhode Island School of Design  
Division of Architecture and Design  
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## Advanced Studio: The Architectural Sketch

Course Outline  
Spring 2012  
Graduate Level Studio  
3 credits  
Monday 8:00am – 1:00pm  
BEB 319

*Instructor:*  
*Sheri Fabian*  
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*Office Hours:*  
*TuTh 9:00am – 11:00am, BEB 202*

### Course Description

“I can see an image only if I draw it myself.” – Carlo Scarpa

The architectural sketch, as we have understood it since the Renaissance, is unique in that it supersedes the illustration of spatial form and represents a much more pure expression of architectural thought. This course aims to examine the process of observation, analysis, abstraction, and projection of the built environment in order to explore its influences on the way we see the world around us.

Through rigorous experimentation with drawing typologies and mark-making, students will develop their own system of architectural documentation, engaging in the contention between objective parameters and their personal insights and imagination. Students will be pushed to establish a maturation of their value system on the merit and appropriation of the architectural sketch, both as a means of seeing and as an instrument for process and design thinking. Focused research in combination with field drawing and critique will equip students with the tools to make critical observations and propose challenges upon their architectural thinking, using their own body of work as a framework for argument.

The course will begin with the “loosening up” and practice of analytical skills, progressing towards a more sophisticated understanding of the sketch through weekly drawing sessions (outside!) and assignments. These weekly drawing sessions will prefaced by a brief lecture and discussion of the previous week’s assignments. Individual and group dialogue with the instructor will follow, depending on content and progression. The semester will culminate in a visual and written thesis project that references the students’ body of work and invents anew, exhibiting their personal discoveries and theories on the function, methodology, and meaning of the architectural sketch.

## Aims

- to develop analytical and observational acuity
- to develop an understanding of the architectural sketch as a means for design thinking and imagination
- to formulate holistic opinion and solidify (or reject) personal connection with architectural drawing for the future of an educational and professional career in design

## Objectives

- to draw=think a lot
- to produce a substantial and diverse body of work that is evident of the student's ability to extract, interpret, reinterpret, and postulate through the means of visual communication, achieved through a series of four (or more) completed sketchbooks of various media
- to engage in well-informed discussion on the means and value of architectural representation based on experiential knowledge, achieved through a dialogue between work and in-class critique
- realize a written and visual thesis that deconstructs, evaluates, and exhibits an established value system on the purpose of the architectural sketch

## Assessment/Critique Criteria

Work will be assessed individually according to effectiveness in meeting course aims and objectives. Critique will be approached as a means to clarify and communicate student's intentions for open and introspective dialogue between the student and instructor, as well as among the entire class. Students will be mandated to engage in discussion about their observations and ideas each week during lecture/discussion and field drawing. Students will be encouraged to raise concerns about personal processes and suggest alternate explorations where applicable. We will speak individually, in small groups, and as a whole at various stages during class. Success in critique will be "measured" by responsiveness, thoughtfulness, and willingness to utilize dialogue as a means for personal improvement and conceptual growth, based on discussion of the following set of criteria for sketchbooks and assignments:

- quality of line, markmaking, and representation
- quality of conceptual investigation
- quality of presentation/ability to discuss findings and ideas
- mastery of conventional sketching techniques and drawing typologies
- willingness to experiment and evaluate

Though grading is not the most important outcome of the course, final grades will be compiled based on assignment packages follows:

*Body of Work (see handout 1)*

*Weekly Assignments*

*15% Free Sketch (see handout 2)*

*– students will be asked to allot 2–4 hours per week for free field sketch*

- drawing may display various levels of relevance or extensions of current class themes
- completion per week will be assessed based on brief discussion at beginning of following class
- free sketch is intended to give students the freedom to both enhance thinking about class concepts and deviate or challenge ideas without consequence--privacy and practice are important
- 2 students per week will be responsible for formally presenting findings
- 2 students per week will be responsible for posting images on class image blog

#### 10% Brief Research Assignments (see handout 3)

- for 6 out of 12 weeks, students will be asked to gather images of a sketch, building, drawing, architect, artist, etc. and compile into a 1-page pdf presentation for which I will provide a template
- research assignments are intended to increase exposure to architectural and drawing precedent to expand our visual database--there is no such thing as copying, only manipulation and appropriation
- 2 students per week will be responsible for formally presenting findings
- 2 students per week will be responsible for posting images on class image blog (see handout 4)

#### 0% Pre-Reading Assignments (see content overview)

- just read them, they should not take you more than 30 minutes
- they will expose you to contemporary theories, makers, and thinkers
- you will be asked to incorporate them into your drawing thinking and our in-class discussion

Material for research assignments and pre-reading assignments will either be scanned and posted on Digication or placed on reserve in the library.

#### 25% Midterm Sketchbook Assessment

- students will be asked to highlight sketches of particular personal or curricular importance and sketchbooks will be collected for review
- sketchbooks will be returned with responses and additional highlights, brief individual discussion with instructor will follow
- effort, responsiveness, completion, and quality of weekly thematic field drawing will be emphasized
- students should fill approximately 2 8x10 sketchbooks

#### 25% Final Sketchbook Assessment

- students will be asked to highlight sketches of particular personal or curricular importance and sketchbooks will be collected for review
- sketchbooks will be returned with responses and additional highlights, final individual discussion with instructor will follow
- progress throughout semester and thematic development will be emphasized

#### 25% Thesis Project

- students will generate a written/graphic project that explicates their personal relationship with architectural representation and design thinking through sketch
- the piece will function in part as a manifesto, or a broad-based argument about the meaning of the architectural sketch, and partly as reflective diagram of knowledge acquired throughout the course
- the overarching goal is to synthesize the "ah-hah" moments of the semester in a relatively cohesive conceptual format and thus project a value system for future reference
- the written portion (600-800 words) may either function separately or become a part of the graphic composition/series of compositions
- any drawing media is acceptable

Please see attached handout for student examples of the sketch quality for which we will aim by the end of a full semester of drawing.

## Content Overview

### PART I: INTRODUCTION/HISTORY

- Week 1      History and “The Rules”  
Lecture/Discussion  
– architectural conventions, drawing typologies  
– media, line, mark-making, pacemaking  
– representation in the past and today (Why are you taking this class?)  
Exercise  
– MOVIE: *Sketches of Frank Gehry (2009)*  
Objectives  
– introduce students to the history of the architectural sketch and visual communication  
– stimulate discussion on relevance and purpose of sketch in modern discourse  
– set goals and understand what students want to achieve in the course  
Pre-Reading  
– none

- Week 2      Ways of Seeing  
Lecture/Discussion  
– representationalism: accuracy and precision (What is reality and does it even matter?)  
– extraction and abstraction of object, form and material  
Exercise  
– SKETCH: RISD Museum (felt/pilot ink pen)  
Objectives  
– explore attitudes and perception in visual communication  
– “break into” sketching process and pace in the class  
Pre-Reading  
– Edwards, Betty. *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. pp. 4–18

### PART II: OBSERVATION & ANALYSIS

- Week 3      Documenting the Built Environment  
Lecture/Discussion  
– spatial constructs, structure, component parts to the whole  
– hierarchy, ordering principles, urbanism, scale  
Exercise  
– SKETCH: South Main Street Park, Providence (felt/pilot ink pen)  
Objectives  
– utilize architectural drawing methods and ways of seeing to document information about the built world  
– begin the ongoing dialogue about objectivity in architectural communication  
– begin the cataloging of architectural imagery  
Pre-Reading  
– Riegl, Alois. *The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin*. pp. 621–654

- Week 4      What a Feeling  
Lecture/Discussion

- sensory perception: sight, smell, sound, touch, taste
- diagramming human behavior and reaction

Exercise

- SKETCH: Shooters Nightclub, 25 India Street, India Point Park (ink pen or pencil)

Objectives

- to begin to explore the codification of immaterial observations

Pre-Reading

- Suskind, Patrick. *The Perfume*. pp.1-80

PART III: MEMORY & TRANSFORMATION

Week 5 The Spreadsheet of the Architect

Lecture/Discussion

- graphic databasing
- the relevance and precariousness of iconography in visual communication

Exercise

- SKETCH: inside classroom/hallway (ink pen or pencil)

Objectives

- to understand memory and memory drawing as a vital tool for documentation
- to intentionally implement and control the graphic catalog developed in weeks 1-4

Pre-Reading

- Vidler, Anthony. *The Idea of Type: A Transformation of the Academic Ideal*. pp. 437-461

Week 6 Robots in Disguise (yeah that's right)

Lecture/Discussion

- transformation, logic, imposition
- additive and subtractive thinking

Exercise

- SKETCH: Weybosset Street, flip/flip exercise (ink pen or pencil)

Objectives

- to learn to distinguish and justify degrees of deviation and angles of focus
- to practice disassociation and sketch reinterpretation

Pre-Reading

- Allen, Stan. *From Object to Field*. pp. 24-31

PART IV: IMAGINATION

Week 7 Architectural Prisons

Lecture/Discussion

- atmosphere, mood, genius loci
- sublime and monumentality

Exercise

- SKETCH: Cathedral Square, downtown Providence (ink pen or pencil, acrylic or watercolor media optional)

Objectives

- to understand placemaking and vignetting of atmospheric concept
- to utilize the sketch as an exploration of the unknown

Pre-Reading

- Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. pp. 1-30

- Week 8      Extending Real/Surrealism  
Lecture/Discussion  
– narrative and thread in built works and drawings  
Exercise  
– SKETCH: Waterman Street Tunnel, East Side (any media)  
Objectives  
– to explore storytelling through series or compound sketches  
– to understand hypothesis, experimentation, and conclusion in prescriptive drawing  
Pre-Reading  
– Michael, Meredith. *Radical Inclusion!*. pp. 10–16

## PART V: PROJECTION & VALUE

- Week 10      Into the Pensive  
Lecture/Discussion  
– process, relationship, outcome  
Exercise  
– FIELD TRIP: Boston Commons (any media)  
Objectives  
– to begin to document what this is all about  
– to begin to formulate individual questions and develop hypothesis for experimentation in final 2 weeks (how/when/why can the sketch be a part of your life today and in the future of your design career?)  
Pre-Reading  
– Columnia, Beatriz. *Media as Modern Architecture*. pp. 19–44
- Week 11      The Beginning of the End  
Exercise  
– WORKING SESSION: in-class drawing and critique for final project (any media)  
Objectives  
– begin to solidify value statements and representational concepts  
Pre-Reading  
– Ranciere, Jaques. *The Aesthetic Revolution and Its Outcomes*. pp. 131–151
- Week 12      Final Presentations and Consultations

### Safety

Throughout the semester, we will be venturing to places of various levels of privacy and security. Please be respectful and remain in the general vicinity of the group.

### Material List

- Moleskin sketchbooks: (3) 8"x10" (or larger) unlined spiral-bound
- graphite pencils: 2H, H, HB, 2B, 4B, 6B, 8B
- erasers: kneaded, Staedler white
- pens: Micron or Pilot Fineliners, any point
- watercolor, India ink, or acrylic materials (optional)
- a puffy coat and gloves. It will be cold

## Conclusion

This course truly aims to increase awareness and enthusiasm for hand drawing in architecture and understand its place in the future of the design field. No ecological relationship rivals that between the subject, the paper, the pencil, the hand, the eye, and the mind in design thinking. I will attempt to diversify exercises and mix it up. We will draw objects, buildings, streetscapes, people, photographs, paintings, and other sketches. We will sit in stairwells, on curbs, and huddle on strangers' front lawns. We will watch movies and look at slides. Sometimes we will talk about them together, sometimes post them on our image blog, and sometimes ponder them on our own time. I look forward to learning and relearning about my personal connection to the architectural sketch through you.

## Reference List

Students do not need to purchase these books, though many of them have beautiful drawings and may be worthwhile to own. I will bring them into class and they will be available for your use in my office. Material for weekly pre-reading and research assignments will either be scanned and posted on Digication or placed on reserve in the library.

Smith, Kendra. *Architect's Drawings: A Selection of Sketches by World Famous Architects Through History*. Oxford: Architectural Press. 2005.

Edwards, Brian. *Understanding Architecture Through Drawing*. Great Britain: Cromwell Press. 1994.

Izzo, Alberto and Camillo Gubitosi. *Frank Lloyd Wright: Three Quarters of a Century of Drawings*. New York: Horizon Press. 1976.

Piedmont-Palladino, Susan. *Tools of the Imagination*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press. 2007.

Leon Krier. *Drawing for Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. 2009.

Edwards, Betty. *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. New York: Penguin Putnam. 1999.

Uddin. M. S. *Composite Drawing*. New York: McGraw-Hill. 1996.

Laseau, Paul. *Freehand Sketching*. New York: W.W. Norton. 1999.

Architects of note for sketches and drawings:

Frank Lloyd Wright

Leon Krier

Kazuyo Sejima

Eileen Gray

Frank Gehry

Zaha Hadid

Le Corbusier

Aldo Rossi

Sir John Soane

Giovanni Battista Piranesi

Francesco Borromini

Eero Saarinen

Mies van der Rohe

Santiago Calatrava

Enric Miralles

Renzo Piano

Tadao Ando

Herzog and de Meuron

Toyo Ito

I.M. Pei

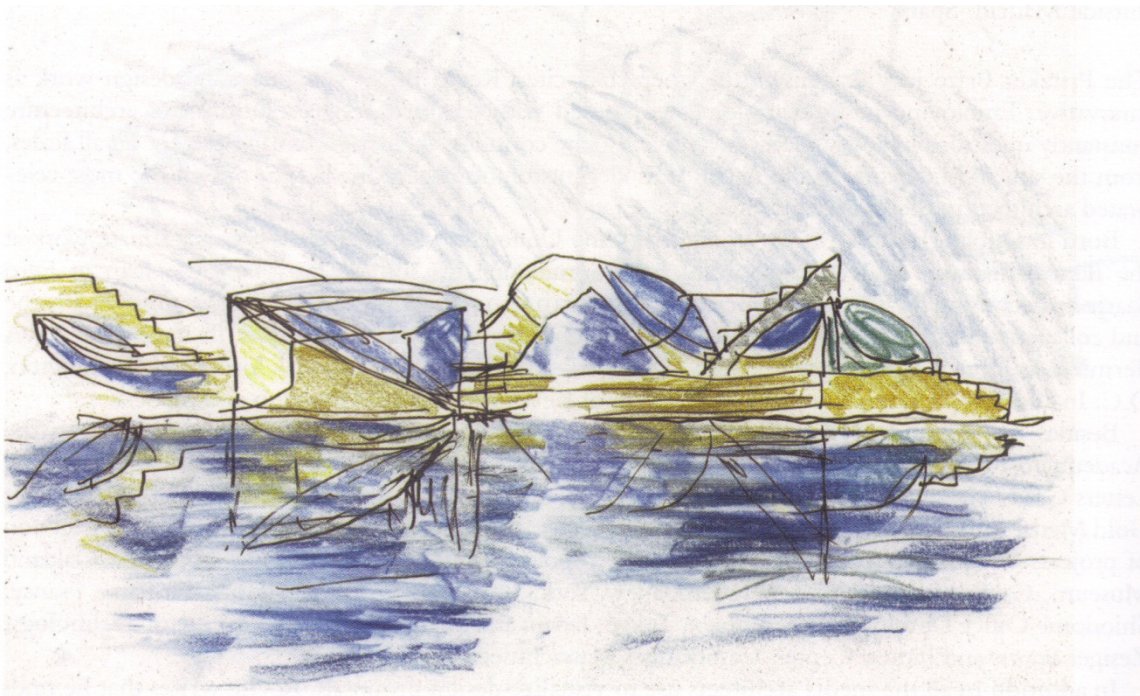
Fumihiko Maki



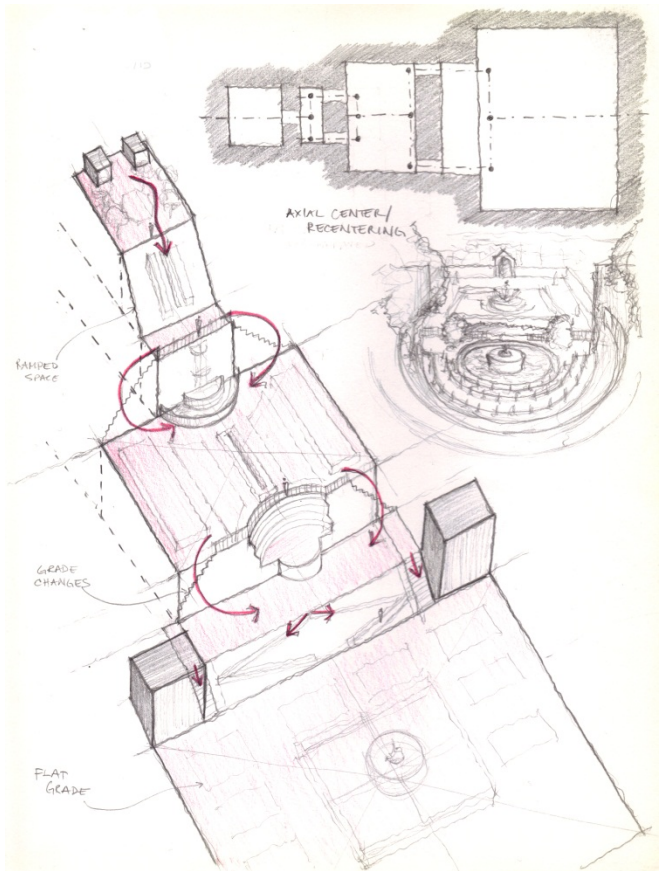
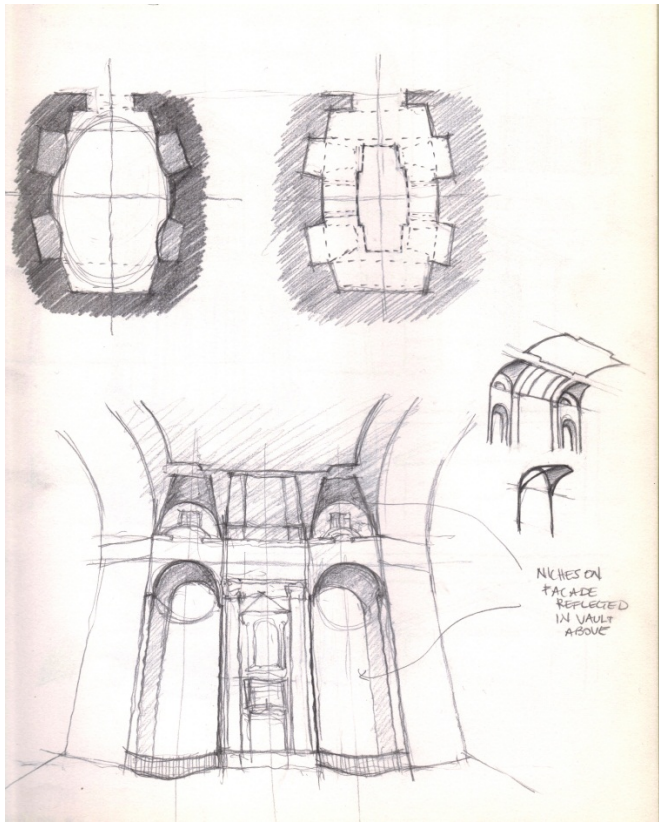
Student Work Examples



Lauren Harrison, Campo di Fiori, Spring 2010



Cheyenne Irby, Providence, Spring 2010



Anthony Pizzo, Rome, Summer 2011