

MIT Department of Architecture

Spring 2025

4.s13

units 3-0-6

Wed 2-5pm

room 1-136

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Design Process, atmospheres

Description

The sequence of weekly meetings intends to scrutinize typical atmospheres that tend to surround designers along with the design process. In other words, it is the world affecting architects and pushing them to react by producing architectural propositions. Through fourteen topics grouped in six different fields, as below, the discussion will be guided with the purpose of checking their pertinence and validity. Exactly how it happens in a design process, those topics are proposed as a first outline, to gain a sharper contour throughout the sequence of discussions. The focus will be on the design process, specifically on the successive moods, or atmospheres, it inescapably implies.

For over thirty years my academic and professional activities have been closely related to this research. The book: *Sao Paulo, reasons for architecture*, resulting from my PhD, focuses on how experiencing a city impacts in one's way to imagine architecture, but it was informed directly and reflects continuously in everyday practice of designing.

Topics

[I. on process]

Topic 1. design process

a supposedly infallible method that, by definition, can never be completed

[II. on sources, design as a tool to apprehend the world]

Topic 2. design as reading

the language of the physical world, given or constructed

Topic 3. design as walking

promenade is an architectural experience

Topic 4. design as talking

a sequence of dialogues and its specific way to record it

[III. design and abstract thinking]

Topic 5. design and concept

the strength and permanence of an idea before becoming a thing

Topic 6. design and precision

geometry and aesthetic rigor, lineaments

Topic 7. design and imagination triggers

genealogy of imagination; abstract thinking

[IV. on concepts]

Topic 8. design and purpose

know why and know what

Topic 9. design and synthesis

an increasingly demanding filter

Topic 10. design and tolerance

industrial meaning for material relationship; cultural meaning for people relationship

Topic 11. design and dissolution

as dissemination of meanings

Topic 12. design opposes to alienation

purpose, pleasure, engagement and fulfilment as requirement

[V. on architecture's nature]

Topic 13. architecture is an open source

vulnerability and strength

[VI. on architecture's humanism]

Topic 14. architecture to refrain human madness

M. Tafuri on Alberti's work: architecture takes one single task of refraining the madness that dominate mankind

Structure

The dynamic of classes would be:

- each topic will be introduced in the previous session to give students a week for preparing evidences or references (texts, drawings or images) for discussions in the following week.
- each session will start with a presentations by students followed by discussions; at the end of each session, a short lecture will introduce the topic for next session;

Pedagogical Objectives

The attempt of naming topics related to moods, or typical dilemmas that might be experienced along with a design process, has two clear goals:

- to make you feel more familiar while experiencing different moods through the design process;
- to make you feel more comfortable while dealing with uncertainties, unknowns, fallibilities, errors; in short, all that one is trained by traditional education to hidden or avoid. Without facing those the design process becomes vicious and does not move forward. Or simply, it wouldn't be human anymore, as if it could — and it really can — be done without a living component, without us, without life as a requirement nor a purpose.

Deliverable products

- a. one letter size page as reference (text, drawing or image) as a contribution to each session;
- b. a paper, 5-10 pages, on a selected topic (among those discussed during the semester), as a final product

Schedule and Topics

February	05	Topic 1
	12	Topic 2
	19	Topic 3
	26	Topic 4
March	5	Topic 5
	12	Topic 6
	19	Topic 7
	25	Spring break
April	02	Topic 8
	09	Topic 9
	16	Topic 10
	23	Topic 11
	30	Topic 12
May	07	Topic 13
	14	Topic 14

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used for the evaluation:

- participation, sharing experiences;
- contributions to class discussion,
- attendance and engagement,

The grading will be according to:

A: Excellent	The work surpasses expectations in terms of inventiveness, appropriateness, verbal and visual ability, conceptual rigor, craft, and personal development. Student pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class.
B: Above Average	The work is thorough, well researched, diligently pursued, and successfully completed. Student pursues ideas and suggestions presented in class and puts in effort to resolve required projects. The work is complete on all levels and demonstrates potential for excellence.
C: Average	The work meets the minimum requirements. Suggestions made in class are not pursued with dedication or rigor. Project is incomplete in one or more areas.
D: Poor	The work is incomplete. Basic skills including graphic skills, model-making skills, verbal clarity or logic of presentation are not level-appropriate. Student does not demonstrate the required design skill and knowledge base.
F: Failure	The work is unresolved. Minimum objectives are not met. Performance is not acceptable. This grade will be assigned when you have excessive unexcused absences.

Readings

(excerpts will be selected for each session, **list to be completed and confirmed**):

Stan Allen, *Four projects*, 2017

Pier Vittorio Aureli, *Architecture and Abstraction*, 2023

Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse*, 2000

Angelo Bucci, *São Paulo, Reasons for Architecture*, 2011

Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the New Millennium*, 1993 (1985)

Francesco Careri, *Walkscapes, walking as an aesthetic*, 2017

Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Part 3 – chapter VII, *Practice of Space, city walking*, 1984

Alain Corbin, *The Territory of the Void: The west and the invention of the beach (1750–1840)*, 1993

Michael Hays, *Architecture Desire*, 2010

Georges Didi-Huberman, *Atlas, or the Anxious Gay Science*, 2018

Clarice Lispector, *Letter to Tania Kaufmann*, 1948, in *Correspondências*, 2015

João Cabral de Mello Neto, *Education by Stone, Selected Poems*, 1996

George Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, 1997 (1974)

Daniele Pisani, *'A cidade é uma casa. A casa é uma cidade'. Vilanova Artigas na história de um topos*, 2019

Daniele Pisani, *Veneza como paradigma: uma genealogia da imaginação de Paulo Mendes da Rocha.*, 2023

Milton Santos, *The Nature of Space (technique and time, reason and emotion)*, 2021 (1996)

Luigi Snozzi, *25 Aphorisms about Architecture*, 2013

Annette Spiro and David Ganzoni, *The Working Drawing: the architect's tool*, 2014

Manfredo Tafuri, *Corso di Storia dell'Architettura*, IUAV, 1978-79: 2A, p. 61

Andre Tavares and Pedro Bandeira, *Floating Images, Eduardo Souto de Moura's Wall Atlas*, 2012

Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 1996

Walt Whitman, *Once I passed through a populous city*, in *Leaves of Grass*,

Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Intention in Architecture*

Octavio Paz, *The Bow and the Lyre*