

DRAFT V.1

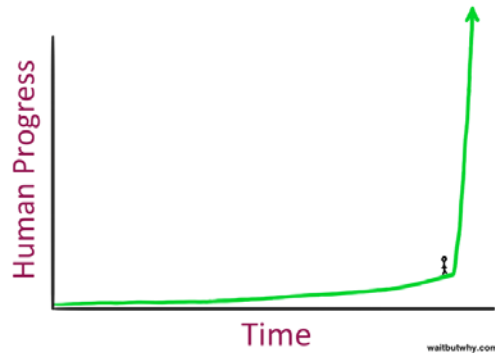
The Newer Age Studio

Columbia University, GSAPP

Advanced Studio V, Fall 2016

Critics: Dominic Leong and Chris Leong

TA: Jessie Baxa/Gabriel Burkett



Summary: This studio will explore architecture's capacity to facilitate new forms of collectivity in response to the increasingly dominant culture of flow, agility, and relentless mediation. Beginning with research into forms of collective living movements and intentional communities, the students will develop formal, material, organizational, scalar, climatic techniques to speculate on new forms of collectivity in a non-urban setting. The students will conduct research and complete two design projects. The first project (individual) will be a sauna and the final project will be an intentional community center (pairs).

Note: *The studio will be in partnership with a seminar, A6752 Peak Flow, conducted by Troy Therrien, curator of Architecture and Digital Initiatives at the Guggenheim Museum. Although participation in the seminar is not required, it is highly encouraged as it will provide a theoretical framework for the studio ambitions.*

Students will work individually at the beginning of the semester then in pairs for the final project.

Architecture vs. VUCA

While cultural conditions are always of importance to the practice and study of architecture, the regime of flow is particularly potent as it seems to undermine one of the historical tenants of architecture, stability. This seminar posits the concept of "peak flow", the potential limit of human capacity for conditions of pervasive variability, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, as a foil to develop new strategies for architecture to engage with one of the dominant characteristics of our time. Peak Flow, Troy Therrien

V = Volatility. The nature and dynamics of change, and the nature and speed of change forces and change catalysts.

U = Uncertainty. The lack of predictability, the prospects for surprise, and the sense of awareness and understanding of issues and events.

C = Complexity. The multiplex of forces, the confounding of issues, no cause-and-effect chain and confusion that surround an organization.

A = Ambiguity. The haziness of reality, the potential for misreads, and the mixed meanings of conditions; cause-and-effect confusion.

21st century Western culture can be defined by two general socio-technological experiences, stress management and maximizing human potential. Both experiences could be described as the result of VUCA, a continual state of Variability, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity and exacerbated by the discontinuities between the biological speed of human evolution versus the technological acceleration of computing power (e.g. Darwin versus Moore's Law).

Equally, as our collective experiences are increasingly hyper-mediate, we struggle to keep pace with the increasingly complex and continuous flows of information which govern our world. Many have theorized and forecasted this moment as either an existential crisis (Debord, Baudrillard, etc.) or as the next step on the path to technological transcendence (Elon Musk, Kurzweil, etc.), while architecture continues to search for its effectiveness as an antidote to the social anxieties of hyper-mediation or as an accelerator for unlocking human potential (see *Peak Flow*, Therrien seminar.)

While the world continues to accelerate exponentially into a continual state of VUCA, we question whether the Vitruvian triad of Utilitas, Venustas and Firmitas should be revised to embrace the fluidity of our contemporary global culture. If architecture is inherently "slow", how do we keep pace with the culture of peak flow? Or, does architecture's inherent slowness offer a means of resistance?

This studio will explore the potential for architecture to do both, resist and accelerate, while formulating new organizational, formal, material, and environmental techniques for collective experience.

Wellness – Secular Spirituality vs. Human Optimization

It is not too far-fetched to believe that a new religion will develop within the next few hundred years, a religion which corresponds to the development of the human race; the most important feature of such a religion would be its universalistic character, corresponding to the unification of mankind which is taking place in this epic... its emphasis would be on the practice of life, rather than on doctrinal beliefs. Erich Fromm

The emergence of human optimization techniques like nootropics (pharmaceuticals) and movements like the "Quantified Self" (Fit Bit and neuro-plasticity) seek to accelerate human cognition and maximize performance, increasing one's ability to exist in a constant state of flow. Similarly, the booming "Wellness" industry, predicted to reach a trillion dollars, and the popularity of "Mindfulness" translate ancient cultural practices (e.g. yoga and meditation) into consumable experiences for alleviating the physical and existential repercussions VUCA while increasing our capacity to operate within it.

Many of these current trends have origins in the 1960's and 70's which saw the simultaneous emergence of cybernetic culture and the New Age counter-culture movements of "intentional communities." The studio will research the origins of these wellness and community trends through historic precedents (e.g. Black Mountain College, Sea Ranch, Esalen, Institute for Metal Physics, Arcosanti, etc.) and chart their evolution to contemporary examples while speculating on new forms of collectivity. While many of the communities of the 1960's and 70's were predicated on counteracting the tyranny of capitalism, certain contemporary examples (Burning Man, Andrea Zittel A-Z) continue the same ethos while others are deeply embedded within the logic of the market. (e.g. The Big Quiet, Summit Series, Pioneer Works, etc.)

The focus of this research will be to understand the temporal, material, scalar, organizational, and atmospheric qualities of the architectural propositions which offer collective experience relative to these unique social-techno constellations.

Project 1 - Sauna

Site: TBD - Rural, 1 Hour from Manhattan

Individual Project

The first project of the studio will be to design a sauna and dwelling units for three people. In Roman culture, the Sauna was a space which bridged the individual act of bathing and rejuvenation with the social and cultural activities of poetry readings, eating, art and access to books. The students will be asked to reinvent the Sauna as a prototype for temporary collective living.

Project 2 - Intentional Community/ Colony Prototype

Site: TBD - Rural, 1 Hour from Manhattan

Students work in Pairs

The students will develop the Sauna program into larger colony for 30 people.

Studio Methodology

The seminar and studio will create a continuous non-stop feedback loop between cultural speculation and rigorous design production. Design and Theory will become interchangeable mediums of critical inquiry to contemporary culture and means of production for operating effectively within it. Over the course of the semester each student will develop a style of enactment which will inform design decisions and ability to perform with increasingly limited amounts of time. Production will increase inversely to the availability of time.

The understanding of timing and tempo relative to decision making is an essential aspect of the design process. The studio will experiment with different temporal patterns and intervals to maximize output.

Emphasis will be placed on model-making and material explorations. Students will be encouraged to think with their hands (and mice)

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| 9/9 | Fri | First Studio - 2pm, Location TBD |
| 9/22 | Thur | Pin-up - Research |
| 9/29 | Mon | Pin-up - Project 1 |
| 10/17 | Mon | Pin-up - Site |
| 11/3 | Mon | Mid-Review - Project 2 |
| 12/5 | Thur | Pin-up |
| 12/14 | Wed | Final Review |

Field Trips:

1. Trenton Bath House
2. Grace Farms

Other recommended visits

Spa Castle, Russian Bath House, Garrison Institute, Storm King, Dia Beacon, Pioneer Works.

REFERENCES:

Forthcoming