

A photograph of a wooden interior, possibly a cabin or a small room, with a white wireframe structure in the center. The structure is a rectangular frame made of thin white wires, with a bright light source at the far end, creating a strong perspective effect. The word "Mass" is overlaid in a large, bold, white sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Mass

Overview – Mass Timber

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The theme of this studio is the study of mass-timber and its role in the legacy of North American architecture. The aim is to build an installation that narrates wood as symbolic architectural entity. This installation will sit on the grounds of Taliesin and will be based on a concentric organization of an “entropic” system of timber in its different states. Between the authentic and objectified!

Since I have been working with mass-timber I have begun to realize that it plays upon the subconscious in a certain way. What this is exactly eludes me but I feel it has a lot to do with solidity and heaviness. A return to the inert materiality of original timber buildings.

Wood, it seems, has a special significance in architectural history. It comes and goes episodically in places where abundance and will power conspire and then fall away. At exactly the point that Europe deforested and turned to masonry buildings America was “founded” and wood entered perhaps its most prolific stage. London burnt down while America flourished! While all systems show entropy one system on the point of collapse means another is born.

Arguably the origins of wood in North America are deeply tied to the “foundation” of a nation. Whether or not America emerged from the Protestant settlement is subject to debate but how it adopted the “associationism” of timber is much harder to deny. Western settlement raised a pragmatic system to the heights of homely symbolism we see in today’s suburban homes. Through several identifiable stages wood in the US cultivated its work-bound humility into the picturesque of Arcadian mass market of the single-family house. Nearly all houses in the US are, at their heart, timber (stud) construction. However this system, like the fire that swept London, may also be reaching its entropic down cycle. 2008 may have been that point. This times the entropy of faux-pastoral consciousness.

But again one entropic system on the cycle of collapse may instigate another on the rise. What made me start thinking about wood (especially CLT in North America) is that it too is the result of an entropic system but this time as the beneficiary. The use of CLT in British Columbia results directly from the deterioration of the regional environmental deterioration in the 1990’s. The mountain pine beetle flourished

under warmer winter conditions causing devastation to the region's stock of Lodgepole Pine. The government of BC took action and promoted the mass-timber system as much as a response to a saturated timber market as to the promotion of engineered lumber.

Fabrication and Concentric Organization

So this studio will establish a system by which we can explore the “narrative arc” of wood in architecture. We will produce a small, full-scale structure on the grounds of Taliesin as a culmination of our learning. What this structure is will be determined as we progress. As a guide we will adopt a concentric organizational pattern to frame our thinking. This pattern allows us to categorize our thoughts about timber fabrication as a form of cultural expression. We will explore wood from a technical and theoretical standpoint through lectures, documentation, study trips and reviews. The final installation will be (provisionally) experienced through the phenomena of an *Ombra* (taken from the Mark Twain House)

Personal Reflection



While the final project is a group project you will also develop and area of interest of your own. This means a way of describing the project from your point of view, interest or expertise. This might be a type of drawing, computational analysis, landscape etc. This aspect of your work will be developed in discussions over the

Sequence

- PH 1.1 - 1 week – Model Home- Concentric Houses
- PH 1.2 – 1 Week- Mass Timber -Core
- PH 1.3 – 1 Week – Periphery - “Objectified” timber fixtures
- PH. 2.1 - Ombra -Sketch Design Phase/ Charrette Phase
- PH. 2.2 - Taliesin - Ombre - Making

Schedule

PH. 1.1 Taliesin - • PH 1.1 - 1 week – Model Home - Concentric Houses
Scheduled: Week 1

Students Present Concentric House and Personal Reflection
Scheduled: TBD (End of Week 1)

PH 1.2 – 1 Week- Mass Timber -Core
Scheduled: Week 2

PH 1.3 – 1 Week – Periphery - “Objectified” timber fixtures
Scheduled: Week 3

PH 01 Review
Scheduled: TBD (End of Week 3)

PH 1.4 – 1 (5 Days tba). Road trip – Minneapolis, Iowa, Nebraska.
Scheduled: Week 4

PH. 2.1 Taliesin - Ombra -Sketch Design Phase/ Charrette Phase
Scheduled: Week 4 (TBD)

PH02 Interim Review
Scheduled: TBD (Mid-Program)

PH. 2.2 Taliesin – Project Construction
Scheduled: Weeks 5 - 8

PH02 Final Review
Scheduled: Week 8 (TBD, Depending on construction/progress)

Assessment

PH 1.1

Model Home – 5 days

The aim of this session is to understand the importance of wood as the technical and cultural core of American architecture. This will be carried out through two activities that run parallel over the week.

- A. Reading historical progress of the American House. – Vincent Scully, (Venturi, Moore, Wright, Greene and Greene etc.)
- B. Making a collective “model” home as a series of concentric houses from chronology of key houses. We will use the “Russian doll” to order the chronology with old on the inside.

Process:

1. Instructor presentation on the history importance of the American home, Scully and own work.
2. Allocation of houses to each student. The following are suggested. However you can select others after the lecture on Scully.
 - a. The Jethro Coffin House
 - b. The Low House
 - c. Wright’s own house in Oak Park
 - d. The Beach House
 - e. Charles Moore’s House (Orinda)
 - f. Trubek & Wislocki
 - g. The Hadley House
3. Chipboard (?) model of each house at “concentric” (unfamiliar) scales. These are from inner to outer. 1: 50,40,30,25,20 and 15.
4. Arrange and present all houses as a collective model within the concentric pattern.
5. Produce a “Personal Reflection” that is your own interpretation of the project. As a guide this should be %20 of your effort.

PH 1.2

Mass Timber – Core – 1 Week

The aim of this session is to get you to understand and fabricate a mass-timber system and to experience “mass” as a core of our proposal. The session will begin with a presentation of engineered lumber and then focus on making dowel lamination full-scale samples.

As a design exercise you will be challenged to comprehend and then invent a new dowel laminated system. You then describe its organizational principle (parallel, offset, cross, angled cross etc. and then fabricate it from dimensional lumber. The full-scale model will then set the geometry for a drawing of your structure at a larger scale.

Process:

1. JG present Technical studies of mass-timber. CLT Dowel lamination.
2. Study several contemporary mass timber buildings.
3. Design make dowel laminated full-scale block (3'x 3'x 3')
4. Digitally model system repeated at a larger scale (as a “Cabon” 15'x15'x15')
5. Produce a “reflective piece” that is your interpretation of the project. Again this should be %20 of your effort

PH 1.3

Periphery - “Objectified” Timber – 1 Week

During this stage we will explore elements that define the outer concentric part of our installation and compose out ideas about the timber narrative. This narrative will be edited from a collection of timber products, objects and fixtures found in conventional hardware stores. These elements are to be selected by you on our study trip to local big box stores (Lowes, Menards, Home Depot etc). We will be focusing on the timber products isles.

Process

1. Visit, select and buy items.
2. Catalogue and classification of “objectified” timber from a hardware superstore (Menards, Lowes, Home Depot). Handrails, architrave, siding, balusters etc.
3. Evaluate its associations, cultural references, material process, forming etc.
4. Site walks and documentation
5. Create a digital model
6. This will be a group documentation of wood household fixtures.
7. Use the fixtures fabricated elements to add to your mass timber core from 1.3.
8. Produce a “reflective piece”. In this case it will be a sketch design project for a site around the grounds of Taliesin.

PH 1.4

Road trip – Minneapolis, Iowa, Nebraska – (5 Days?)

This phase is a proposed road trip to key mass-timber buildings and fabrication locations. (T3, South Sioux, WI Dept. of Natural Resources).

Location and Schedule tba.

PH. 2

Ombra – Installation timber and entropy.

PH 2 is the second and concluding project for the course i.e.

“The theme of this studio is a study of mass-timber as part of the cultural legacy of North American architecture. The aim of the studio is to build an installation that narrates wood as symbolic architectural entity. This installation will sit on the grounds of Taliesin and based on a concentric organization of an entropic system of timber in its different states. Between authenticity and artifice.”

The phenomenal relationship between these two states will be a condition of shade. In this respect I am using the term adopted for the Mark Twain house and Italian word *Ombra*.

We will discuss the *Ombra* as a perceptual device for communicating our narrative.

Ombra - Shade

- sedersi all'ombra (di) to sit in the shade (of)
- mi sedetti all'ombra I sat down in the shade
- dare ombra a qn to put sb in the shade
- essere l'ombra di se stesso to be a shadow of one's former self
- aver paura della propria ombra to be afraid of one's own shadow
- (fantasma) shade (liter), ghost
- (figurative, oscurità) obscurity
- nell'ombra secretly
- restare nell'ombra to remain in obscurity
- senza ombra di dubbio without a shadow of a doubt
- un'ombra di burro a hint o touch of butter.

PH. 2.1

Ombra -Sketch Design Phase/ Charrette Phase

PH 2.1 is a two-day sketch design phase and **Charrette** to decide the final design principles for the installation. By the conclusion of this phase we will have produced a composite presentation for the final design that includes the following suggested components of the project (these are to be informed by your "Personal Reflection"):

1. Location
2. Sketch design.
3. Narrative statement
4. Material and fabrication procedures
5. Other

PH. 2.2

Taliesin - Twain's Ombre - Making

This phase of the studio will consist of the full-scale fabrication and installation of our project. The program and installation for this phase will be subject to the nature of our design, location and material requirements. This will be issued at the conclusion of PH2.1.

Sketch design phase.
Site choice and analysis
Site visits

PH 2.1 – 1 Week - Installation

Visits – WI Dept. of Natural Resources, two current JG projects in CLT, local suburbs,

Design - Transitional geometry, between faux and authentic.
Site
Mass
Tree at the core Ombre? Belvedere phases
Site

Transition between faux picturesque and the log cabin as a paradigm. Sucked in to the sense of density.

It has to do with a historical entropic system.. Perhaps a paradigm of anti-simulated authenticity.

Is Mass timber an ultimately inert lumpen end point. Or is it a purging of artifice. Which way is it going?

Is this a return simplicity. A bundling together and compressing object fascination into a single featureless mass.

Is it a big crusher? House of things.

Perhaps a slowing down or preference for inert pastoral consciousness

CLT can from a devastation.

Emergent or entropic system. One and the same. Smithsonian's sense of the entropic?

Trip

1. Colfax <http://www.timber-technologies.com/contact.phtml>
2. T3 MINNEAPOLIS

Ted

Smithson

NLT – Green and mass timber

Writing on the Understanding wood as a symbolic material of American identity.

Studies of the picturesque in the US

Jackson Multiple narratives. Cavannagh. Critical and alternative cultures.

Beadrillards system of signs and object value.

Drawing and categorization

Faux authenticity. Periphery is simulacra. The most faux.

Notion suburban ruin- Noir/dark Pastoralism. Ownership society

Show Menards day.

Love the story of the Ash

Timorous beasties. And the twarle

Transition between manufactured picturesque to something inert. Profound in some senses.

Not one single narrative.

Not what is described as a massive system. An alternative.

First stud house.

Mass

House of things

Less things

Shoot a gun

The lack of authenticity comes from the local. Understand it in the most historical sense.

Terms. Menards

Categorization of these elements into concentric ring? As per Jean Beadrillard.

Consider the heart of your building to be an absolute mass of some sort. An inert center.

Studio should be based on certain angle on fabrication

Other notes

- Text on settlement
- This can include CLT but get slightly more manual and hands on
- Adam Curtis- All watched over
- Dowel laminated timber
- Wisconsin forestry
- Can include trips to my projects
- Has a technical component
- Tie in with H and T of wood in the USA
- Can be to do with impoverishment of the plan

- How is it contemporary?
- Mass. Notion of fortification. Contemporary compression of the house.
- Expenditure and excess of the house.
- Proximity to FLW themes.
- No longer about the model.
- Jonathan Solomon
- Agrarian discourse
- Visit some log cabins
- Strange needs
- Notion of ruin
- Decay and propagation. Entropic system.
- Phenomena and pop?
- Led pencil

Key texts

Scully

Mayo

Crawford

Sennett

Jackson