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MAKER/THINKER
Architecture as Cultural Production
574 Chicago Biennale

INTRODUCTION
This studio takes the position that architecture, as a form of public art, is situated within an expanded field of cultural production. With that in mind, Maker/Thinker is framed around the upcoming Chicago International Architecture Biennale 2017.

Maker/Thinker Studio creates new alliances between the SoA, the Graham Foundation, the City of Chicago, and The Museum of Contemporary Art, in addition to architectural firms, such as Studio Gang, Design & Co. and SOM’s research group. The cultural resources of the City of Chicago are utilized as an immersive classroom for architecture students by observing, critiquing and participating in an international design exhibition. Maker/Thinker Studio will be further enriched through a diverse cadre of prominent architects from Berlin, London, Zurich, Paris, and Boston who will contribute their expertise to the studio environment.

The Chicago Biennale
Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s vision for a major international architectural event is an outcome of the comprehensive cultural plan developed by Chicago’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events in partnership with the Graham Foundation. Joseph Grima and Sarah Herda, served as artistic directors of the 2015 biennial, titled The State of the Art of Architecture. Their mission states, “The Chicago Architecture Biennale provides a platform for groundbreaking architectural projects and spatial experiments that demonstrate how creativity and innovation can radically transform our lived experience.” In 2017, the artistic directors will be Sharon Johnston and Mark Lee, partners of the architecture firm, Johnston Marklee, past instructors at Harvard Graduate School of
Design, Princeton University, and University of California. Through the Biennale’s constellations of exhibitions, events and full-scale installations, students will be invited to engage with and think about architecture in new and unexpected ways, and to take part in a global discussion on the future of the field.

In the Maker/Thinker Studio we will study architects who are artists: Pritzker Prize winner Wang Shu, Gordon Madda Clarke, Maya Lin, UIUC SoA alum Lebbeus Woods, Jimenez Lai, as well as artists who produce works of architecture: Olifar Eliasson, Donald Judd, James Turell, Rachel Whiteread, among others. Within the Maker/Thinker framework, research and experimentation are also included as an emerging branch of cultural production, most notably with Skylar Tibbits’ (MIT) “Rock Print” which was constructed solely of string and pebbles from the 2015 Biennale, in addition to many other installations that foreground ecological design principles.

Other guest speakers:
Marshall Brown, IIT
Jonathan Solomon, Art Institute of Chicago
Amanda Williams, Washington Univ.
http://chicagoarchitecturebiennial.org/participants/

574 MAKER/THINKER STUDIO
PROJECT BRIEF

Professional Consultants

The Chicago Biennale Foundation has no permanent center of operations, thus, the studio brief will require students to plan and design a new headquarters for the Foundation as a 30,000+ sf development in the West Loop.

The design of the Foundation’s permanent headquarters will include administrative offices, public meeting rooms, library, auditorium, and exhibit spaces. The site is located in the West Loop on the corner of W. Washington Blvd and N. Carpenter Street. While the West Loop was once a semi-industrial neighborhood filled with late nineteenth century masonry warehouses, it is now a rapidly developing mixed-use area with Google’s Midwest located headquarters nearby. Importantly, the site is near restaurants, loft spaces and many other amenities. Its proximity to the downtown Loop and Lake Michigan allows for easy pedestrian and bike transportation.
MAKER/THINKER
Architecture as Artifact

Architectural studio pedagogy includes the process of making, whether drawing, rendering, or digital fabrication, including 3D models and iterative prototyping. In the 1990s, Daniel Liebeskin’s “micromegas” and Thom Mayne’s silkscreen drawings (a former UIUC Plym professor) were frequently exhibited and sold in art galleries. Other architects such as Herzog & de Meuron in Switzerland and Violich & Kennedy in Boston were commissioned to design and construct installations in art museums. Olifur Eliasson’s ambitious installations at the Tate Modern, London and the Long Museum, Shanghai could be considered architectural in scale and materiality.

How might curatorial methodologies assist us to better understand contemporary architecture through research, analysis, and exhibition? We will have the opportunity to study the architectural artifact from a curatorial perspective in order to explore the role of architect as artist.

Toward that end, Sarah Herda, current head of the Graham Foundation has offered to host several meetings at the Foundation. The design studio will also leverage other resources and participate in the Tuesday Talks, evening lectures, films and presentations related to the Biennale at locations such as University of Chicago, and IIT, as well as the Chicago Cultural Center.

Conclusion
While reinforcing the importance of structure, enclosure, and building systems, this studio seeks to expand students’ conceptual understanding of architectural design. Drawing from an array of international expertise, Maker/Thinker studio culminates in a mid and final – review open to the architectural design community. Foreshadowing the preeminence of culture for future cities, the objective of this studio is to construct a framework for design and discourse, as the field of architecture becomes the global locus of intellectual, social and cultural change.