

PERFORMING THEORY:

A Wild/Care Design Experiment

22nd of August – 9th of December 2022

15 Weeks /

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Brief Description

This new and intensive 15-week design studio aims at exploring, rehearsing and developing various ways of '*making theory work*' with/in/through architecture: performing theory through architectural design and making practices, mobilizing theory to trigger, support, expand, guide, and perform architecture, and engaging theory to enable and inform more open, caring and co-responding design experiments.

On the basis of an understanding of design as the invention and articulation of open instructions and the idea of the '*carrier bag*' ** - which emphasizes architecture's capacity to "hold" and "relay" and "care" adjusting its emerging form to the conditions of situations (rather than unfolding from predefined or imposed 'shapes') - participants are encouraged to *develop their own design explorations and fascinations*, which the course will listen, hold, and performatively adapt to.

Participants are thus not required to address or resolve any predefined architectural problem/question, nor to engage with specific sites or situations, but supported in the development of their own research/creation trajectories within situations of their making.

The course will end with a conference where the students will present '*statements*'. The word conference is not understood here as a "lecture" or collection of lectures, but as "gathering of people bringing their experience about a common topic". '*Statement*' on the other hand is taken to mean a "critical construction", a complex device whose function is the communication of an idea. When we create poems, houses, paintings, films, etc... we *make statements*. We *compose* and *articulate* them in order to communicate ideas. Statements are produced as part of any creative practice: architecture, visual arts, performing arts, design, music etc... A choreography, a theatre play, a musical score, a logo, a building... are all statements. Statements can be strong, aggressive, gentle, subtle, original, thoughtful, but also conventional or thoughtless, and we will therefore try to focus on their quality.

An important and central thread of the course will thus be that of free and open yet collective modes of study/learning, understood as what you do with other people, when you work, dance, speculate, suffer or rehearse... the also legitimate knowledge that comes out of workshops, bands playing, jam sessions, or sitting in a porch with others.

Structure and Components

The course is structured around two types of roundtable sessions (which will take place every other week) and a series of workshops exploring various modes of engagement and design/making/thinking tools, more or less evenly spread throughout the course duration.

Roundtables

Three 'S' roundtables work as thematic close reading and discussion seminars built around a selection of texts that need to be prepared in advance and are explored in depth. These seminars focus on the main underlying threads that motivate the course at its outset, combined with some of the current preoccupations of the school's ongoing collective experiment, namely the idea of 'making theory work', the relations of performance, performativity and the role of (moving) 'bodies' of all kinds in the making of space, and a turn towards more responsible and less exploitative modes of spatial design and intervention. These threads can be roughly captured by the following open matters-of-concern: performative/things, body/affect, and wild/care. (aka 'the seminars')

Intertwined, three more 'J' roundtables are dedicated to the presentation, sharing and discussion of all participant's work, as such, or in relation to their core threads, modes of engagement, concepts, other texts, other projects, or other things... in a largely improvised and open but intense and engaged collective operation. (aka 'the jams')

Workshops

A series of short workshops (2-5 days each) run by various artists, thinkers and practitioners from a range of fields, will be scheduled throughout the course, providing an opportunity to think and make with theory in a multiplicity of ways, as well as exploring alternative modes of engagement and tools for making and thinking.

All these guests will present the ways in which they approach their work, as designers, visual artists, architects, musicians, etc... providing know-how, methods and tactics to develop what we have here called 'statements'. The guests will have a strong profile and established international experience, and the workshops will be thus a chance to follow, learn from and be inspired by their ways of conceiving work(s) and structuring their creative process.

This structure implies that the successful development of the course is largely based on the capacity of the students to productively transfer the various inputs into their own trajectories/research. The course leaves an unusual amount of freedom to the students in deciding their own paths and working schedules and it therefore demands a great deal of self-discipline. Whilst the inputs will be scheduled at the beginning of the course, the development of trajectories/research (i.e. the individual schedule) will be a responsibility of the students. The teachers, of course, will be available for help and feedback throughout the semester.

Evaluation

Course participants are asked to engage in the performative making and setting up of the physical roundtable as the main setting of our interactions/encounters (seminar, jams, workshops, etc...), as well as of the final event's definition and enactment.

There is no exam or formal review of the work at the end of the course, nor is there an expectation to produce 'a final result' or outcome, but just a collective act of sharing and discussing, and the request to contribute with 'a statement' to this final event. Participants are thus granted a 'passing grade' on the basis of their active engagement, sustained presence and contribution to the course's unfolding and participation in the final event. Research creation throughout the course is expected to contribute somehow to the production, enactment or articulation of new knowledge of some kind.

Value and emphasis are shifted to the collective experience of learning shared throughout the course, and to the individual decision to engage in a caring practice of co-(r)respondence, active listening, and generous relaying, aiming at activating and performing more responsible theories and designs.

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The idea of the carrier bag is a direct reference to *"The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction"*, a short story written by Ursula K. Le Guin in 1986, freely available online.

Draft Overview of Activities

01W34 Intro	PERFORMING THEORY: A Wild/Care Design Experiment The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction + Roundtable Set Up
02W35 S1 -	Performative/Things
03W36 W1 –	Take an Object for A Walk / Shifting Agency: Techniques of Things
04W37 J1 –	First Jam
05W38 W2 –	Workshop 2: (2-3 days)
06W39 S2 –	Body/Affect
07W40 W3 –	Workshops 3: (2-3 days)
08W41 J2 –	Second Jam
09W42 W4 –	Workshop 4: (2-3 days)
10W43 S3 –	Wild/Care
---W44 – Cross Courses	
11W45 W5 –	Workshop 5: (2-3 days)
12W46 J3 –	Third Jam
13W47	Diffraction (1+4 days)
14W48	XTRA JAM
15W49	Final Conference / Assembly (2-3 days)?

(S = S Roundtables aka Seminars) (1 day)

(J = J Roundtables aka Jams) (1 day)

(W = Workshops, 2-4 days in duration each)

Diffraction = A period to do something performative, moving away from representation and 'reflection' (geometrical optics) and towards diffraction (physical optics). While reflection displaces the same elsewhere, diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection or reproduction. Diffraction does not map where differences appear, but where the effects of differences appear. (Haraway, Barad...)

XTRA JAM = After a diffraction session and a few days of processing, a longer, perhaps more performative, alternative and improvised jam takes place (format to be agreed with participants, 24h-non-stop, whole day including meals cooked/prepared and shared at the table, 2-day roundtable, day roundtable + night loud reading, etc...)