ANALOG/DIGITAL IMAGINATION

Independent studio work by Kelly Bair, under the supervision of Bennett Neiman, Sundance Lab, University of Colorado; with special assistance from Brian T. Rex.

"...imagination is our way of grasping objects through their images, shadows and reflections. But as we all know from our experience, such images can be fleeting, changeable, and illusory. ...In fact, on this account, nothing in the physical world gives us real knowledge, since all perceptible objects are constantly changing, while their essences are fixed."

-Mark Johnson

A common current in this series of studies is the technique variously known as: defamiliarization, juxtaposition, the chance meeting of an umbrella and sewing machine on the operating table, collage, relief, sampling, & détournement. The Situationists summed up "détournement" as combining disparate elements to create a third new and unthought-of condition. In some of these experiments the computer acts as a pixeling filter that transforms the project at hand, in others it is a canvas on which work is created, in a few we find that the computer becomes a vehicle or mechanism actively generating formal and potential programmatic conditions.

The student project represented here (facing page) offers a set of techniques for thinking and creating through the computer that do not exclude traditional, analog methodologies of making. Relative differences and distinctions between types and means of working, whether they be digital or analog model and drawing, are broken down by focusing on all design as an act of "playing", and "…the willful suspension of disbelief". When one learns how to "play" with the computer, to act as what Walter Benjamin would have called the "Magician", we develop in the student an ability to take the computer beyond the role of an illustration tool and into new potentials for digital generation of architectural form. We believe that the computer used only as a representational tool is not used to its fullest capacity. The computer should be used as a generative and active design tool.

There is no final product. The process is never finished. It has, in fact only begun. Intuitive moves based on previous phases create a layered convolution of an original image. Reality compressed into two dimensions only to be exploded again in future phases. Making the real artificial with the intention of restoring a new visual perception of space. A frozen moment in time. This is not a structure. It is a generator of spatial concepts. Breaking the object down into basic elements. An inventory is created, a warehouse of architectural ideas. Scale, reflectivity, texture. Build. (re)build. Cutting, editing, montage, underlay, overlay. In reference to a media-driven culture. Our self. Digital methodologies allow us the temporality we crave. Analog methodoloigies provide a foundation for the perceived physicality of proposed "space". Improvisational processes: hands interacting with traditional materials are prodded, manipulated, developed by the electronic mind. A laboratory for the poetic imagination.

-Project Statement by Kelly Blair

STUDIO@UB
Electronic Design Studio, Spring 1999
Wassim Jabi, SUNY - University at Buffalo

in•ter•po•late *(in tûr´pe lãt´)*, v. **-lat•ed, -lat•ing.**—v.t. *1. to introduce (something additional or extraneous) between other things or parts; interject; interpose; intercalate. 2. to insert, estimate, or find an intermediate term in (a sequence) …*

Design can be thought of as a process of interpolation. In the face of incomplete and distorted conditions, the designer interjects solutions that interpolate and mediate the given situation. The Upper level Electronic Studio in the Spring term 1999 investigated the nature of interpolation and its relationship to process, space, and program. In particular, it investigated how virtual space can interpolate and augment physical space. The students also researched the multiplicity of meanings of interpolation such as: Insertion/interjection, estimation, linkage, mediation, transformation, and augmentation. The process of interpolation was then mapped into a real architectural problem: The re-design of Hayes and Crosby Halls as an integrated School of Architecture and Planning for the 21st century. Some students took advantage of the option to choose other sites and building programs.
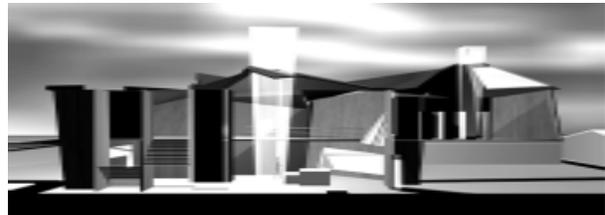
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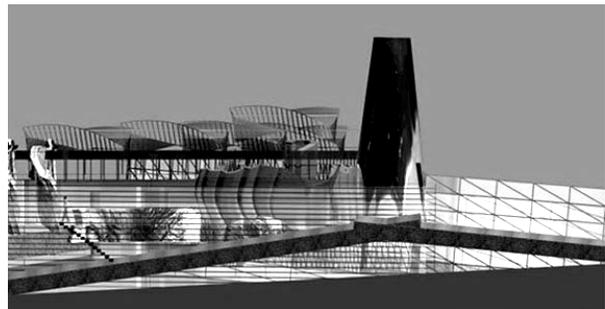
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