

have a place — that is, if not physical offices, at least a productive and influential site on the Internet. Others felt ACADIA should extend its influence by sponsoring ACADIA presentations in other venues and conferences. This idea was taken up by several groups, some suggesting CAD workshops be set up by ACADIA's members. These could be offered at conferences, or by videotape to the profession as a whole. Many felt this would be a natural extension of the organization's pedagogical role.

Others proposed that ACADIA transcend its boundaries by reaching out to other organizations through collaboration and joint research projects. Interdisciplinary collaboration was also suggested as a way to increase ACADIA's presence in the design community.

Issues for ACADIA

Several participants believed ACADIA's emphasis on CAD would wither away in the face of the profession's acceptance of CAD. After all, computers are even being used in design studios! But the tech demon is hard to shake. While the original ACADIANS were faced with technological challenges, today's membership faces ethical ones. Some questions may haunt us for years: how does information technology affect the built and natural environments? Will generative systems replace professional systems? If so, what is the nature of professional expertise — or academic expertise for that matter?

Many regarded the growth of distance learning and on-line degrees as a challenge to the conventional model of professional training. Some feared academic displacement as a result. Others saw dangers to intellectual property as course material appeared on school Web sites. Here computation — the very *raison d'être* of ACADIA — could put its own members out of work.

Is the sky falling? Probably not. But ACADIA's right to be restless. It's our nature - and the nature of our time. Technological change has out-stripped anyone's expectations, new national boundaries are pencilled in daily. Anyone who thinks ACADIA can be complacent is wrong: the profession is changing, academic security is evaporating, and ACADIA's very constituency is evolving. Ironically, in its first conference held outside the U.S., not one of the group presentations mentioned ACADIA's world role or its international membership. Self-awareness is the first step toward building a future. For ACADIA to lead the profession, it must first address what it is, who it comprises, and to where it will lead.

Look for a review of Peter Anders new book "Envisioning Cyber Space: Designing 3D Electronic Spaces" in the next issue of ACADIA Quarterly v18:2.

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AN ALLEGORICAL ARCHITECTURE: A PROPOSED INTERPRETIVE CENTER FOR THE BONNEVILLE SALT FLATS.

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*Man models himself on earth,
earth on heaven
heaven on the way,
and the way on that which is naturally so.*

Tao Te Ching XXV, Lao Tze

Architecture is the physical expression of man's relationship to the landscape- an emblem of our heritage. Such a noble statement sounds silly into today's context, because civilized society has largely disassociated itself from raw nature. We have tamed the elements with our environmental controls and turned the deserts into pasture. I find much of the built environment distracting. Current architecture is trite, compared to geologic form and order.

I visited the Bonneville Salt Flats- (Utah's anti-landscape) in the summer of 1997. The experience of arriving at the flats exceeded my expectations. I was overpowered by a sense of personal insignificance - a small spot floating on a sea of salt. The horizon seemed to swallow up the sky.

Off in the distance I noticed a dark fleck. It looked as foreign as I felt on this pure white plane. I drove across the sticky salt toward it, only to discover an old rusty oil barrel half submerged in salt. In my mind, the barrel has a history. It tells the story of a man's attempt at achieving a goal, or maybe it represents a broken dream left to corrode in the alkali flats. The barrel remains planted in the salt as a relic for those who venture into the white wilderness. This experience left me to ponder whether or not architecture can serve the same purpose - telling the story of a place through its relationship to a landscape, and connection to events.

This project tries to recreate my experiences - *where artifact, event, and landscape merge to define a phenomenological experience* - using architecture as the link between events and the landscape.

Process

The success of this project was dependent on the ability of my committee to understand the site. I obtained USGS DEM data to use as a deformation map within form•Z. These digital elevation models are converted to grayscale images with DemView shareware. I cropped the larger context to include 500 square miles. Landsat Photos and digital painting were used to create texture maps for the geometry. The site models were imported into Electric Image for texturing, rendering, and animation

Once the landscape was created, I printed out bird-eye perspectives of the turnabout at the end of the five mile access road, to which all construction is restricted. I used graphite and pastels to test the site with sketches. At this point design was beginning, and I needed to understand and interpret the

landscape. I did a series of abstract exercises to clarify my understanding of the sites mythical and geological events.

One exercise in particular began to shape the process. I used a sectional ultrasound image through the flats as a starting point for developing a formal approach. This approach was to reinterpret the creation of the salt crust and to infuse the project with these abstractions. At this point, I began to recognize a developing. I began to break down human site interventions, like roads, dikes, and racetrack axis' in order to add complexity to, and reinforce my argument.

I used analog representations as a starting point in the design. I found it useful returning to analog modeling from time to time. These were usually quick balsa sketch models. They served as markers in my process and allowed me to reference true 3D objects while working with form•Z. I have found that building the analog models aids in maintaining an understanding of the whole design.

Organizational, spatial, and formal ideas were developed or discarded as I began to understand what the implications of my thesis were. I began to pare down the ideas, tossing out elements which were superfluous to the argument. This left me with a very small program - providing enough to make the exploration architectural. I found this process to be extremely liberating.

I don't believe I was ever able to abandon my preconceptions in previous projects. I would fight to represent what was in my mind. During the Thesis Studio, however, I concentrated on the argument and "let the thing become what it wants to become." I believe I was able to do this because of my modeling process. I did not depend solely on drawing, analog models, or digital models. I wove these design techniques together throughout the process. When I got stuck, I would switch modeling types, which served as a filter for ideas. When an concept or developing logic began to make sense, I would test it with another technique. I found this process to be very complimentary.

Computer use was key to the success of this project. Without the ability to visualize these ideas, my argument would have depended on a lot of smooth talking. The jury was able to see what I was after with these digital aids.

Stephen James received a form•Z Award of Excellence for this project.

