

## Tammeron JonesFrancis

### Teaching Philosophy

Within the studio I emphasize three concerns: imagination, process and relation. Through imagination we construct, or more precisely, synthesize – from the world around us – a symbolic and relational perspective. Process assumes that we can cultivate an awareness of how we work or, in this case, design. Relation ties all of this together and is the ground of meaning. An emphasis on relation suggests that no architect makes, or imposes, meaning upon a gesture; but through education, we are able to develop associations and significance.

Imagination is the ability to make uncustomary connections between customary appearances. In the studio I have illustrated this by demonstrating that the significance of Mies's work, for example, lies not merely in his personal expression but an ability to rethink commonly available means of construction/technology within larger context of custom, history and ideas. The sense of stability and balance, so often associated with Mies's structures is illuminated as having significance in terms of the search for balance within the ancient Greek temple, likewise the nearly discursive fitting-together of his details refer to a modernists sense of a knowable and logical cosmos.

The work of imagination, designing – being in emphasis one of developing relation – needs further division before it can be grasped. These divisions are openness, order and style. Openness involves an enthusiasm for the foreign, unfamiliar and uncustomary. An open attitude in design involves both the intellectual attitude and design process. Openness inspires the imagination but its most significant contribution is awareness of possibility. The need for 'openness' is the reason that I encourage manual drawing. The apparently infinite patterns available to the pencil and paper are not characteristic of the graphical computer interface. Within the process of drawing I further encourage 'openness' by requiring a number of approaches to the project as evidenced in the bulk and density of their drawings and handmade models. My emphasis on manual drawing in the studio, however, does not aim to avoid digital approaches to design and representation. On the contrary, I believe that with a good grasp of manual drawing the pursuit of new forms of digital representation, as well as other means of engaging in architecture is better accomplished.

I introduce order as a historical problem and one essential to the architectural imagination. In the context of order I have lectured about the intent of the vanishing point, the evolution of the grid and orthographic projection. In that context I discussed architectural order in the ancient Greek temple, especially in terms of Vincent Scully's insights about landscape and temples, the Gothic enthusiasm for pageant and the "book of stone" as well as ordering principals in traditional Amerindian architectures.

All aspects of imagination bear on creative work in the form of style. A student's style comes into being through insights acquired within the reach of a particular biography. Only after a certain mastery of craft, however, can a student adopt the personal stance manifest in style. I encourage the development of a personal style by providing resources of interest to students. Also, by providing choices within a project for a student to pursue, students are able to take a stand on issues they believe

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important. In the past I have let students select from a number of possible building sites or develop particular regions within a project developed only to a schematic level. A window seat project, that I developed, offered three sites, (a first year project at Ball State University). For senior interior design students, at the College of Creative Studies in Detroit, I asked students to develop limited areas within a museum of industry, already brought to a schematic level, for development.

Second to imagination is process. An architecture school's design studio is a unique environment where designers are asked to pause and consider how the work before them came about. Our judgment of process is grounded in craft-knowledge and extended by discussions of historical and theoretical contexts. Here, therefore, within the class critique, is the appropriate time to introduce architectural theory. In the past I have assigned essays that directly bear on the assignment. Other-times, when particular issues arise, I found it useful to assign readings bearing on those issues. Past readings have included: Alberto Perez-Gomez's "Myth of Daedalus" ; Contrasting essays on representation by Omer Akin and Dalibor Vesely. I have also assigned selections from *The Mexican Kickapoo*, by anthropologists Latorre and Latorre, who discuss how the Traditional Kickapoo tribe of South Texas and Mexico have developed a means of organizing dwelling and community upon a complex of relations existant in long held mythic concerns as well as local appearances.

My third emphasis in the studio is 'relation.' Relation suggests Thoreau's insight that "in the pond can be found a reflection of heaven." In the studio I have found that beginning students are frequently resistant to extend beyond the narrow matter of producing a building design. I address this problem in the desk critique and/or lecture by showing how a project's site elicits possibilities within, for example, the particular bearing of the sun on a site, predominate winds, species of plants and animals to be protected as well as custom and tradition. Sometimes, again, it is also helpful to direct students to traditional Amerindian architecture. There, developing relation between land, design and meaning is explicit, and in accord to particular regions.

My orientation to architectural pedagogy, as well as architecture in general, places emphasis on the imagination. This is because within the imagination we let what is hopeful in our humanity, an ability to transform as well as care-take, to assert itself. My understanding of architectural imagination seeks a middle-road between making a fetish of technology and design as narrow personal expression. To this end I emphasize architectural design as a humanity, that is, as a practice that recognizes human needs – the need to craft something well, for example – as well as the need to consider and develop something significant. My inspiration for that perspective includes architects, philosophers and anthropologists, naturalists and geographers. I feel a special kinship for the architectural work of Louis Kahn and Carlo Scarpa, as well as the 'folk' architectures of the American Indian. My theoretical background lies with the existential phenomenology of Martin Heidegger and work related to that orientation. I believe that anthropology grants significant insights to architectural work, I am thinking here of Mary Douglas, and finally I am attracted the broad contextualizing scope of Lewis Mumford, Yi Fu Tuan, and Richard Sennett. While I will naturally be inclined to teach to this perspective I also believe it important to show contrasting orientations.