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Soft Spaces

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First Professional Masters of Architecture

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The purpose of this studio was to investigate materiality in the scales of human habitation and to expand traditional notions of architecture through narrative-based design. Narrative-based design is the culmination of studies in the phenomenology of built forms and spatial constructions. It is an experience oriented, democratizing process rather than an image-based, hierarchical process. Using narrative-based design and research on theoretical stances of product manufacturing and interior design we created a domestic space that is an installation. We will built upon Lois Weinthal's insights regarding the scalar difference between the body, interior design and architecture, and Anni Albers' theory that the technology of craft should be revealed in the work especially in expressing the nature of the materials used.

Making Poche

From the perspective of interior design, textiles have many possible interpretations because of their flexibility as structure and surface. Textiles can give a space power with color, form and texture. The introduction of textiles into architecture allows the body to understand the interior as soft, malleable, and fluid. Even the process of making indicates the versatility of textiles. The warp, vertical threads that remain taught on the loom, provide structure for the weft, the colored threads that reveal pattern and color.

In *Towards a New Interior*, Lois Weinthal relates architecture to clothing when describing poche, an imagined space that exists within the walls of a building. The concept comes from the french word, meaning pocket. The conceptual link between a pocket in clothing and a pocket in a wall raises questions about threshold and occupation. Poche is a porous boundary that indicates an undefined zone between interior and exterior. Where does poche begin and end? What is the difference between occupying a wall and a hand occupying a pocket? Do textiles create multiple levels of poche?

Here, we explore curtains; the place where textiles brush up against architecture but do not necessarily mimic architecture. Similar to clothing that drapes the body, curtains imply but do not describe something beyond. They imply openings, windows, ceiling heights, etc. to create an impression of the architecture. This is like a pocket that only hints at the identity of objects through their muffled shapes. Textiles will lie limp and flat unless activated by an outside element. The

meeting of curtains and architecture create a sense of the unknown and surreal because they animate the secrets of the poche.

We explore the notion of occupying poche and pose the question, Aren't we constantly in the poche?

Materiality

"The body's ability to comprehend the senses is crucial to the study of the interior in architecture, in part because crafting interior spaces ultimately relies on the senses for perceiving elements inherent to the interior, such as color, light, and darkness, sound and silence, and the texture of materials."

- Lois Weinthal

In *The Eyes of the Skin* Juhani Pallasmaa argues that the sense of touch is integral to our understanding of the world. He believes the skin is even capable of distinguishing colors. If the tactile sense is indeed dominant, it comes to pass that the haptic qualities of architecture surpass the visual qualities of architecture. If the skin gives us the most information about the world, then the textural qualities of architecture are more important than the image-based qualities of architecture.

The introduction of textiles into architecture allows the body to understand the room or the interior as soft, malleable, and fluid. The sensual qualities of textiles are integral to making architecture livable. Textiles, through their essential haptic qualities, interface between the hard static materials of enclosure and the inherently flexible and

ever changing body.

Design that starts with these principles prioritizes material information as a generative driver rather than the traditional hierarchical approach of design-form-construction. It is a conceptual way of designing with architectural parameters, conditions, relationships, and degrees of freedom. Using material logics, we define relationships and intentions in the form of process-based rules. We argue that this is more human and more relevant to modern life.

The Body

...the world and the self inform and redefine each other constantly...there is no body separate from its domicile in space, and there is no space unrelated to the unconscious image of the perceiving self.

-Juhani Pallasmaa

Can you occupy a curtain as a wall? We don't know what we look like in clothing, it happens to us as a purely haptic phenomena. We project ourselves into clothing. It's all imaginary, we don't see ourselves in the clothes. There are two criteria for our consumption of clothing: 1. how it feels on our body, 2. how we imagine ourselves in the clothing.

By anthropomorphising architecture we understand the building as... Do buildings feel the same way as human beings? Is a building naked? A building is like a human body, but inside out. The organs (MEP) of the building generally exist in the bones (structure).

Curtains create a secondary poche space between the interior wall finish and the textile.

A curtain means skin. The tree canopy is a type of curtain. If it is analysed, the canopy becomes like a map. First you begin with a simple grid that creates a full scale map. By making a curtain we're giving form to the map. The curtain is the memory of the map.

Writing About Making

"The body's ability to comprehend the senses is crucial to the study of the interior in architecture, in part because crafting interior spaces ultimately relies on the senses for perceiving elements inherent to the interior, such as color, light, and darkness, sound and silence, and the texture of materials."

Where architecture is static and implies permanence, textiles are flexible and have movement.

With this installation we introduce softness, movement, light, and time to a space for multiple people to inhabit and experience. The form of this installation is indeterminately furniture and partition, sculpture and decoration. (why? need explanation for why we want this indetermination and what it means)

(need transition into contrast. maybe doesn't belong in an abstract?) Contrast allows us to see these programmatic elements more vividly. Black makes white look whiter; heavy roving makes a warp look lighter. The negative space and the figure made by the weaving are symbolic because they define and enhance each other. (so what?)

Of Mapping

Mapping is the language of process. Mapping is the memory of impression and of molding. Mapping is the confluence of the line and the hand.

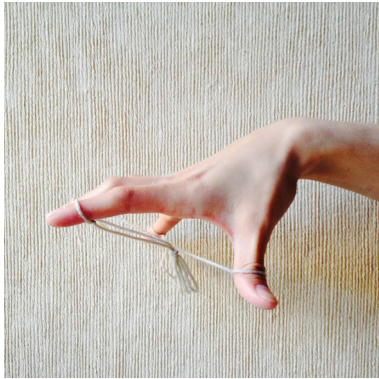
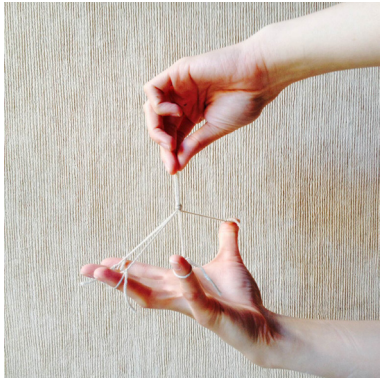
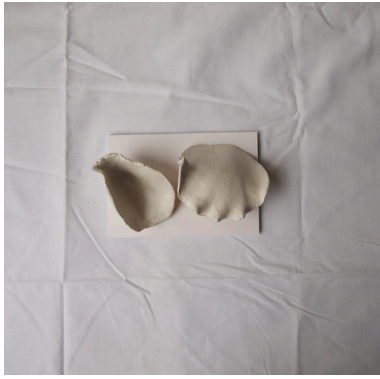
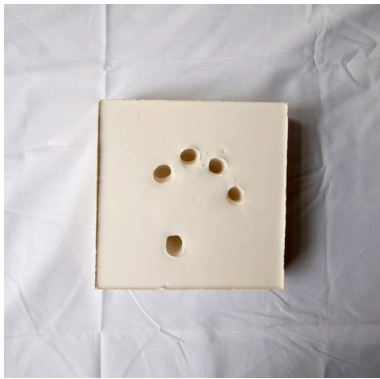
We began this exploration by mapping the hand in the various ways it can act to hold an object. First the palm can be laid out flat, second the fingers can cup to act like a vessel, third the fingers can curl to actively wrap around. These impressions show the memory of gentle force, they make light of a simple static quotidian process. The memory becomes formal, static and ephemeral.

It was necessary to contrast the massive plaster blocks with a lighter and more engageable

object. We used clay to mold a map of the interior of the palm. The resulting forms became like shells of the hand. In reading the *Poetics of Space* he notes the qualities of inhabiting the shell:

With shells...I have simply wanted to show that whenever life seeks to shelter, protect, cover or hide itself, the imagination sympathizes with the being that inhabits the protected space. The imagination experiences protection.¹

Further mapping studies explored the lines of the fingers and the open palm in tension. Mapping was used as formal language in a weaving that marked the qualities in the leftover thread, it is a literal mapping of the process of weaving.



Of Symmetry

Symmetry represents formal power. It can work in harmony with nature. It can also diminutize nature.

Donald Judd's search for purity of form exists in both his art and in the "design" of his utilitarian objects.

Thingness is not about something it is something. In Marfa the rigid symmetry heightens the contrast against the organic forms of the desert.

Geometry is the soul of the thing -
Frank Lloyd Wright

The sacred geometries represent the universe according to the Japanese monk Sengai. The circle

represents the infinite but is in itself formless, the triangle is man's contribution to the infinite representing intellect and tactility. The square is simply the triangle doubled.

The triangle, through history, also represents the temple.



Of Nature

Symmetry may be the basis of nature but nature's use of symmetry tends to skew its pieces and parts. The body is bilaterally symmetrical but each component, the hand the antler the bark is rather wonderfully asymmetrical.

With nature we developed the notion of the found object in our process. In order to own or understand the found object we had to make it holdable by the human hand. The bark is so flat and rough. By wrapping it in soft yarn the bark is given an indication of where to pick it up.

The antler, so smooth to the touch, is a rather large and aggressive found object. We wanted to see the impact of dissecting the antler.

What would happen if we looked at just one component of the whole. We cast a part of the horn but the materiality of the plaster, with its divets and elevated bumps, was so different than the horn that it was unpleasant to the touch. This most likely had to do with a bad mix of the alginate, the casting agent. Here the process marred the product. In the end, the horn was wrapped in soft thread but the location of the thread is less an indication of where to hold it than an indication that it can be held.

Nature can be used to stimulate other senses such as smell. We used flowers in our first true installation to create a calming and pleasant smell as the inhabitant rested on the perch.



Of Entropy

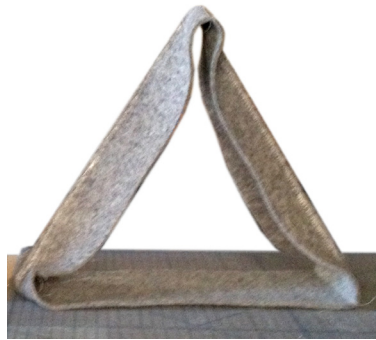
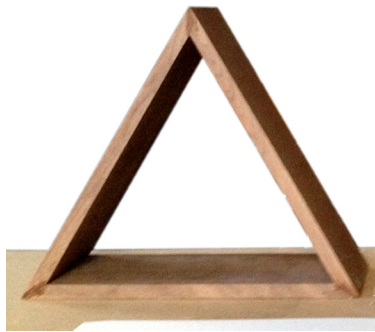
Entropy, the second law of thermodynamics, measures the tendency of all systems to lose energy. In nature, it is the organic process of aging and death.

Apart from nature, entropy is the measure of 'disorder' in any system. In the case of the wooden triangle, the rigid material and the perfect symmetry indicate power and strength. But when the triangle is built at the same scale out of a fluid material, the system is unable to hold its perfect shape.

It is at this point in our process that we decided to focus on the soft qualities of fabric and textiles. We began to weave textiles to understand the strength of the interlaced threads as a system.

While exploring this process, we decided to integrate roving (the raw sheeps wool that can be spun into thread or felted into felt) into the weaving. By incorporating the roving into the textile, we knew that with use the roving would eventually turn into felt. It is important for us to see the passive way that materials change. This time-based process will transform from day to day creating a kind of patina.

The wooden blocks created by turning and cutting are pleasant to hold and rub. This same process of additive patina applies to the wooden blocks. The wood will drastically change colors over time with wear.



To Hang

To hang is to visually represent the qualities of entropy. Especially in nature, the hanging cloth allows us to visualize the energy of the wind and of the fluid state of the fabric it allows us to visualize the energy gained and lost in the system. The fabric becomes an impression of this invisible natural element. In this way, the poetic and naked qualities of nature become visible.

The contrast of the red, hanging cloth with the well rooted tree reminds us of the hanging tapestries in gothic architecture. The structure of the building and the tree heighten the movement and vibrancy of a tapestry, an extreme contrast between the fluid and the static.

To hang cloth on the body also gives an impression of the physical form beneath it. Just like the hanging red cloth indicates the movement of the invisible wind, the cloth on the body indicates the energy used in movement. This is where we developed an interest in hanging curtains. When a hanging cloth can move, it takes on a dynamic expression. It does what static structural elements in architecture cannot do. It encourages energy to display itself formally. The curtain becomes like an aura of the energy of movement.



To Rotate

To rotate is to reverse the effects of entropy. Energy is recreated through this movement and the system is given new life.

We were interested to see what would happen if a wooden block was designed to be held in a number of ways based on the form of the hand. The blocks form came literally from understanding the sensation of holding the object to the bandsaw where it was cut in the shape of this sensation. This involved rotating the block over and over creating dynamic forms.

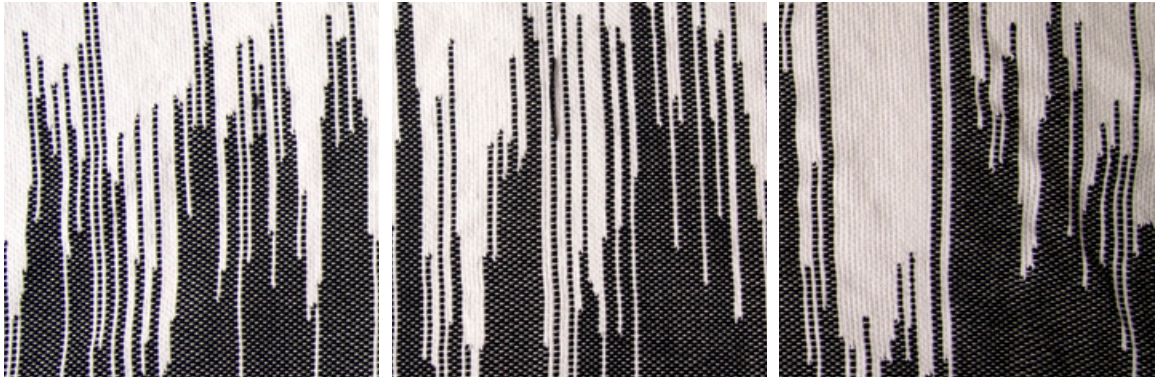
While we were exploring the concept of hanging, we felt it important to rotate the body within the hanging material. This encouraged to fabric to move and

to become a dynamic.



To Weave

To weave a fabric is to create order
in a system.



Of Felting

Similar to weaving, the fibers in a felt are interlaced but the outcome is far more organic. This is due to the process of felting where the fibers are rubbed into one another with soapy water.



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