

Project #1: Notating Site / Constructing Site

“In transcription, photographs “witness” events, while plans, sections, and diagrams outline spaces and indicate movement. The assemblage of media has both an internal coherence and disjunction-- patterns and narratives emerge as well as new or latent relationships between space and use, objects and events. The potential of this assemblage technique lies in its ability to layer, juxtapose, and superimpose conventional and unconventional relationships between space, event, and movement.”

--Clare Robinson

In this studio, “site” is considered as a palimpsest of events and conditions rather than as a given objective reality. It is a “construction,” a continuous process of development, that examines the interaction between its reading and its occupation (existing, imagined and projected). By registering/notating aspects of the site, one begins to re-create the site and prepare it for a critically reflective intervention.

In order to better understand our site(s), we will be recording, configuring and constructing it through a notational process that negotiates both subjective and objective conditions. During this process one selects and interprets particular elements of the site in order to reveal its inherent character and its underlying narratives.

Each notational strategy, by disclosing the sites different layers –such as movement systems, vistas and voids, materials and textures, history and fictions –suggest ways of occupying the site. The aim of this notational analysis is to create a re-constructed site –a new ground—for the programmatic matrix and sequence of spaces of our proposed projects.

Assignment # 1 / Readings

Holyoke Contexts

(these readings are all PDFs and are available on-line at: <http://blogs.umass.edu/arch600/readings/>)

- Bridging Divides, Building Futures: A Puerto Rican Perspective, by Agustin Lao Montes
- Working and Learning in the Streets of Hope: A Research Assistantship with Nueva Esperanza in Holyoke, Massachusetts, By Chris Holme
- Holyoke Community Profile, UMass Regional Planning Studio / Spring, 2004 Studio Group / Professor Elisabeth Hamin

No Written Response Required. Complete readings by Wednesday, September 12

Practices 1: Strategies of Representation (these readings will be handed out in class)

- The Manhattan Transcripts, by Bernard Tshumi
- Mapping the Unmappable: On Notation, by Stan Allan
- Browsing, Bouncing, Murdering, and Mooring: Negotiating the Relationship Between Inhabitation and Representation, by Clare Robinson

Written Response Due: Monday, September 17

Practices 2: Strategies of Engagement (these readings will be handed out in class)

- Urban Diaries: Improvisation in West Oakland, California, by Walter Hood
- Space Within, by Carlos Villanueva Brandt

Written Response Due: Wednesday, September 19

Assignment #2 / Site Research

You will be working in 4 groups (of +/-4). Each group will focus on a particular street/corridor that provide the east-west connections in downtown Holyoke. The four streets are:

- Cabot Street
- Appleton Street
- Dwight Street
- Lyman Street

Each group should begin to collect data about the site. Find appropriate maps and plans; research historic and community narratives. Spend time on your site in focused observation. Begin to record the physical, intangible and ephemeral aspects of the site. There will be a site visit to Holyoke on Wednesday, September 12th. Review the previous report on these “corridors” (to be provided in the studio). Each team should complete a visual and physical analysis of their site and provide maps and images to document and describe the results of that analysis.

Preliminary (in-progress) Presentation: Wednesday, September 19

Assignment # 3 / Investigative Notation

Continue to work in a group to develop an investigative notation of the site:

1 / Select a system of measure (spatial and/or temporal) which will order and organize your account of the site across its multiple layers both horizontally and vertically. This will be the matrix on which your various strata of information is organized. This system may be something neutral which is applied to the site (i.e., a series of horizontal lines designating a dimension, a series of vertical lines designating hours in the day, a grid, a series of concentric circles, etc...) or a system generated by a particular site conditions (the system of street poles and communication wires, connecting the array of entry doors, man hole covers, etc...)

2 / Identify and selectively edit your perceptions of the “site.” Consider the following categories:

- **the physical** (geographical, topographical, natural, man-made, “urban,” etc...)
- **the intangible** (historic, mythic, imaginary, social, legal, etc...)
- **the ephemeral** (day, night, the weather, shadows, sun, a passerby, a car, a train, etc...)

Map/Notate/Annotate/Survey these perceptions through your system of measure. These records will “inhabit” a drawing –a systematic 2D mapping of the site. Consider your sheet of paper (or a paper space of a digitally constructed image) as a “site.” Which is becoming constructed as you work to notate its qualities, characters, and concealed narratives. You may use any size and number of drawings, any type of model and any medium. These are not simply “interpretive” drawings, but should use your system of measure as a framework for recording both objective and subjective observations/perceptions of the site.

Some things to consider:

- **Multiple Viewpoints:** there can be several “mappings” each from a different perspective (above, below, besides, etc... or from the point of view of a resident, city official, visitor, etc... or a child, teen, adult, senior, etc...), or focused on a particular quality (i.e., a mapping of surfaces, of light, of movement).
- **Interrelationships:** how do discrete mappings/notations relate to one another? Consider how this process can act to weave together different but simultaneous conditions.
- **Invention:** create appropriate inventive categories. A site can be mapped for “desire,” “points of tension,” “economic value,” “beauty,” “accidents,” “voids,” “frames,” etc... Be inventive, but have these categories evolve from a deep observation/understanding of the site.

Use your understanding/synthesis of the assigned readings to create a framework for this work.

Preliminary Review: Monday, September 24

Final Review: Monday, October 1