dragging modernity: between beautiful and ugly

instructor: adam miller, race & gender in the built environment fellow
Adv Studio: ARC561R (0900)
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The studio posits that Modernity has left us with a lot of baggage that, as designers, we drag along with us, and proposes ways to recuperate and work upon Modernity’s gleaming surface. If the aesthetic goal of Modern architecture is the production and preservation of beauty, and its dogma is that beauty is predominately a masculine one, then we should locate alternate aesthetic expressions which better suit our post-gender world.

The studio will contribute original thinking through the production of aesthetic expressions outside the beautiful/ugly binary. Beyond positing a recuperation of the ugly, as Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour pursued, Dragging Modernity tracks the field of possibility in between the major aesthetic categories of beautiful and ugly. Through exploring minor aesthetic terms like cute, awkward, dumpy, whimsical, and more, the studio will pursue ways to recuperate Modernity, and to work upon and challenge its surface, to arrive at new understandings of masculinity and alternatives to beauty. The studio will travel to Japan for one week to investigate what it means when a minor aesthetic term, such as cuteness (kawaii in Japanese), becomes a dominant aesthetic marker in a culture. As means to reconsider Austin’s affinity toward weirdness, students will work in pairs to develop aesthetic categories between ugly and beautiful in the context of Austin’s I-35 corridor, an infrastructure which divides the city economically, racially, and aesthetically. Students will investigate hybridity utilizing minor aesthetic terms and representational ambiguity to design across various scales, to renegotiate spaces of binary opposition via: the scale of an object, the scale of a furniture, the scale of a building.
assignments overview

Legend

1

Public

Neither/Nor. Small Scaleless Thing. Minor Aesthetic Category Research. Individually, develop a theoretical position on a minor aesthetic category of your choice. Identify and analyze characteristics in a found object via drawings, models, a thesis. Partners chosen at conclusion.

Zine. As pairs, produce a hybrid thesis as a zine, to be used and added to in assignments 2+3.

Either/Or. Medium full-scale furniture. Program: Public or Private Furniture. As pairs, develop aesthetic category thesis through a shift in scale and introduction of program. Expect to build physical models which will sustain human use. Scale: only one, at 1:1

Both/And. Public-Private Double Entendre Building. As pairs, select a site for a hybrid public-private building along I-35 corridor related to your aesthetic category: exaggerate the extant characteristic of your term, or contest a lack through the intervention of your term. The installation must simultaneously be legible as both building and furniture. Scale: At least 2.
# schedule

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<tr>
<th>m</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>wk 1</strong></td>
<td>holiday</td>
<td>studio lottery</td>
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<tr>
<td>01.22-.24</td>
<td>martin luther king jr day</td>
<td>introductions</td>
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<td><strong>wk 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
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### Schedule

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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>wk 13</td>
<td>mid-review: assignment 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>wk 13</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>wk 14</td>
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<td>wk 15</td>
<td>pin-up: pre-review</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>wk 16</td>
<td>pin-up: pre-review</td>
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<td>W</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>wk 16</td>
<td>final-review: assignment 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>wk 17</td>
<td>submit documentation + submit thesis zine via email to adam</td>
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**Yamashita Kazumasa**  
*Face House, 1975*

**Aida Takefumi**  
*Toy Block House, 1979*

**Marco Zenini + Memphis**  
*Amazon Cabinet, 1985*
Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble. (Routledge: 1990)
Cheng, Anne Anlin. “Ornamentalism” Critical Inquiry: 44 (pp. 415-446)
Foucault, Michel. “Panopticism” Race/Ethnicity v2.1 Autumn, 2008. Indiana University Press. (pp. 1-12)
Muñoz, José. “Introduction” Cruising Utopia (pp. 1-18)
Sontag, Susan. “Notes on Camp.” Against Interpretation. (FGS: 1966 ) (pp. 275-292)
Tompkins, Kyla. “Crude Matter, Queer Form” ASAP/Journal 2.2 (pp. 264-268)
Vinegar, Aron. I am a Monument: On Learning from Las Vegas (MIT Press, 2008)
Zago, Andrew. “Awkward Position” Perspecta 42. (pp. 209-222)
Students will work in groups of two or three to develop a position between the beautiful/ugly binary via research and design for a minor aesthetic term. This course deals with issues of hybridity, and as such, collaboration, synthesis and compromise is key to the development of a successful project. Students will investigate what is included and omitted from the aesthetic discourses through collaborative research, the development of an architectural thesis as a zine, and through the design and implementation of that thesis across scales and programs: as an object, as a design-build furniture, and finally as a hybrid public + private building. Specific program and site emerge from the student’s thesis research. Students will become intimate to the misuse of representational techniques, understand the complexity and contradiction of scale, and take a position on aesthetics and its inherent politics.

We will approach subjects such as gender, sexuality, and race. Discussing these issues may be difficult, but they should be. Students should expect to take ownership of their comments during discussion and at times one’s comments may be challenged by others. It is the goal of the course to confront our preconceptions through respectful and sometimes difficult discourse. It is expected to listen to one’s peers and respond with respect. It is part of my job to ensure a safe learning environment of kindness, mutual respect, and professionalism.

Students will develop intellectual tools for reconciling and contesting, integrating or resisting the stories around our built environment, and importantly, crafting a story of one’s own through design.

collaboration

Students will work in groups and will be evaluated collectively. A general spirit of collaboration the tone set for the studio. Help each other out. If issues arise which cannot be solved through the expected compromise of paired work, bring it to my attention.

grading policy

Deadlines must be met for the successful completion of the course. Group work will be evaluated collectively. I will take your commitment, effort, originality, participation and improvement in this course into account when it comes to determining final grades. Final grades will be determined after the submittal of student documentation of completed work and are not negotiable. Grades for the course are based upon (+/- where appropriate):

A | Excellent work — Project surpasses expectations in terms of originality, conceptual rigor and craft. Work is complete in all regards.
B | Good work — Project is thorough, well represented, diligently pursued, and work is complete in all regards.
C | Required work — Project meets the minimum requirements but lacks rigor, originality.
D | Poor work — Project contribution is insufficient. Level-appropriate skills are lacking and work is incomplete in one or more regards.
F | Unacceptable work — Project contribution is unacceptable and very incomplete or student exceeds three unexcused absences.
X | Excused Incomplete — Due to medical or family emergency, after consultation with the Associate Deans’ office, a new completion date is assigned.
**attendance**

Attendance is mandatory. Work is expected to be completed in studio. Three unexcused absences can result in a lowering of one full letter grade. Three occurrences of lateness of more than 5 minutes will count as one unexcused absence. Advanced written notice is required for the granting of an excused absence. Medical and family emergencies must be notified to the instructor, and the observation of religious holidays is permitted.

**participation**

Students are expected to participate in class discussion and activities, in addition to completing assignments and readings before each class. This includes active attendance to each class and engagement with fellow students during pin-ups.

**required texts**

At times readings will be assigned and discussion is expected in studio. All readings will be posted on a shared Google Drive folder and must be printed and brought to class on the assigned dates. Readings may include texts from aesthetics, gender studies, queer theory, philosophy, architecture history, and architects’ own manifestos to better understand for whom and how the prevailing canonical architecture came to write its own identity—and how we can create one for ourselves.

**studio culture**

The School of Architecture believes in the value of the design studio model. Studio learning encourages dialogue, collaboration, risk-taking, innovation, and learning-by-doing. The studio offers an environment where students can come together to ask questions and make proposals, which are developed and discussed among classmates, faculty, visiting professionals, and the public-at-large. Studio learning offers intensive one-on-one instruction from faculty members, and provides the opportunity for each student to develop their critical thinking skills and spatial and material sensibilities. The design studio offers a synthetic form of education, where project-based learning becomes the foundation for developing an understanding of and commitment to the school’s core values — broadmindedness, interconnectivity, professionalism, exploration and activism — all in service of architecture’s fundamental mission: to improve the quality of the built and natural environments.

**studio security, sustainability**

The studio requires the careful attention to the needs of everyone. All spraying of fixative, spray paint, or any other substance should be done in the shop. Security is a necessary component for a studio that is accessible to you and your colleagues 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Do not leave your studio without your studio key and do not leave your studio unlocked. Hold yourself and your studio mates accountable for the security of your shared space. The studio is an opportunity to apply sustainability principles, being mindful to recycle and reuse to reduce material consumption at UTSOA. Recyclable materials should be placed in blue bins or any other containers with white bags. The Material Exchange, a give-and-take system for students to donate materials and take what they need for studio and fabrication coursework, is available throughout the semester to all UT students in the UTSOA Technology Lab. All unwanted, reusable materials should be brought to the Material Exchange station in the Technology Lab at the end of the semester.
Your mental and emotional well-being are the foundation for your health and success. If you are feeling overwhelmed or just want some support there are resources available:

Counselors in Academic Residence (CARE) Program places licensed mental health professionals within the colleges.

Abby Simpson (LCSW) is the assigned CARE counselor for the School of Architecture. Faculty and staff may refer students to the CARE counselor or students may directly reach out to her. Abby Simpson, LCSW | BTL 114B | 512-471-3115 https://cmhc.utexas.edu/CARE_simpson.html

For immediate support:

Visit/call the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC):
M-F 8am-5pm | SSB, 5th floor | 512-471-3515 http://cmhc.utexas.edu/

CMHC Crisis Line:
24/7 | 512-471-2255 | https://cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html

Free services at CMHC:
Brief assessments and referral services:
https://cmhc.utexas.edu/gettingstarted.html

Mental health & wellness articles:
http://cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html

MindBody Lab:
http://cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html

Classes, workshops, and groups:
http://cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html

A student shall be excused from attending classes of other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for the purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy requires students to notify each of their instructors at least fourteen days prior to the date of a religious holy day and of the absence as possible so that arrangements can be made. You will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work.
The syllabus and schedule is subject to change with advanced notice by the instructor. Additional information for more detail regarding specific assignments may also be provided, and shall count as corollary to the syllabus with equal weight, unless otherwise noted.

It is expected of every student to abide by the UT Honor Code. Dishonesty and/or the poor treatment of your classmates will not be tolerated. https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/

Every student in this class will be honored and respected as an individual with distinct experiences, talents, and backgrounds. Issues of diversity may be a part of class discussion, assigned material, and projects. The instructor will make every effort to ensure that an inclusive environment exists for all students. If you have any concerns or suggestions for improving the classroom climate, please do not hesitate to speak with me or to contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 617-824-8528 or the Campus Climate Response Team online via http://diversity.utexas.edu/ccrt/reportform.

At the beginning of the semester, students with disabilities who need special accommodations should notify the instructor by presenting a letter prepared by the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, and accommodations will need to be discussed at that time. To ensure that the most appropriate accommodations can be provided, students should contact the SSD Office at 471-6259 or 471-4641 TTY. Five business days before an exam or assignment, the student should remind the instructor of their accommodation needs.

This new law requires all employees of Texas universities to report sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking to a Title IX Coordinator. An employee who fails to report an incident may be subject to criminal offense (misdemeanor) and the university is required to terminate their employment. The reporting obligations and penalties take effect January 1, 2020. Reports can be made by phone: (512) 471-0419; email: titleix@austin.utexas.edu; or online: https://titleix.utexas.edu/file-a-report.

Occupants on campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exits. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. To find more information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures go to: www.utexas.edu/emergency

O: WMB 4.122A | Office hours: by appointment | Email: adam.miller@austin.utexas.edu