

ACADEMIC STATEMENT

Overview

Aim:

Throughout my academic career, I have maintained a close link between my teaching, research, and scholarship. My aim has been to render the research comprehensible and beneficial to the students, and keep the content of my courses abreast of new developments in architecture and other fields of study that are of particular interest to me, i.e., Cultural Anthropology, Literary Criticism, Philosophy, and History.

Scholastic Foundation:

At the root of my academic endeavors to date, including my scholastic focus and teaching pedagogy, is an enduring interest in the why of the way things are? For me, the what of architectural form and composition have been inseparable from the impetus behind a building's production, and the modalities of its use.

These questions led me early on to cultural anthropology and related disciplines in search of a better understanding of culture to which architecture is inextricably linked.

Objectives:

As a spatial, formal, and material language, architecture is an indispensable medium that allows a culture to transform its assumptions, beliefs, views, and ideas about the world into a factual, lived experience. Deciphering, understanding, and in turn communicating the modalities of this transformation and the complexities of the interdependent and inexorable dialogue between architecture and culture has been the focus of my academic career as a teacher and a scholar.

RESEARCH

Thrust

My research and scholarship have been interdisciplinary in nature from the outset of my scholastic career. I have integrated new approaches and analytical methods from other fields of study, e.g., Cultural Anthropology, Literary Criticism, Philosophy, and History, to probe and better understand the complexities of the dialogue between architecture and culture. This quest led early on to a close study of the history of theoretical discourse on architecture.

A. Research on Architectural Theory and Criticism

In various research projects and related publications to date, I have charted and discussed the complex ways in which theory has been a primary vehicle of cultural appropriation and regulation of architecture.

I. Focus:

Concerned as architectural theory has been with the delimitation of its subject, and the determination of what it is that architectural practitioners must do, architectural theory has and continues to be a highly instrumental normative and regulative cultural construct. It is thoroughly implicated in broader cultural strategies that seek a perpetual transformation of a culture's beliefs about the world into a factual experience of the world.

II. Objective:

Important as it is to locate and decipher theoretical formulations within their broader and multifaceted cultural context, it is equally important to pay close attention to their discursive and critical strategies and modes of self-validation. The authority of theoretical proclamations depends on the latter, and no critical inquiry can dispense with the thorough scrutiny of these strategies. The focus of much of my work has been the deciphering and critical reexamination of the distinct modes of delimitation and unique strategies of validation in Western theoretical discourse on architecture.

III. Contributions:

- a. I have tried to demonstrate how despite considerable formal differences and often-antagonistic postures of architectural theoreticians toward their immediate predecessors, the discursive and critical strategies and modes of self-validation in theoretical discourse on architecture have remained virtually constant at least since the Renaissance. Furthermore, I have investigated how these strategies are deeply rooted in western metaphysics and a broader humanist attempt to give that metaphysics the aura of physics and to culture the guise of nature.
- b. I have tried to show how from the prevalent self-marginalization of theory, to the recurring deprecation of culture as particular and arbitrary, to an unceasing search for a natural architecture based on eternal laws, a primary concern of theoretical discourse on architecture has been, despite appearances to the contrary, not a repudiation of culture as particular and ephemeral, but an effective masking of its operations.
- c. I have analyzed and discussed the inherent limitations, paradoxes, and contradictions of the historically prevalent distinctions between beauty and ornamentation, nature and culture, form and meaning, truth and representation, originality and imitation, appearance and substance, theory and practice, etc. These strategies of delimitation are, I have pointed out,

part of a long-standing cycle of recrimination and repetition in the history of theoretical discourse on architecture.

- d. My intent - in the critical examination and reevaluation of a perpetual and deep-rooted apprehension about language and representation in theoretical discourse on architecture - has been to sidestep the cycle and make room for different critical trajectories and other formative possibilities than those the discourse on architecture has traditionally allowed.

IV. Critical Consequences

Tradition: Criticism can assume three interrelated, though distinct roles in architectural discourse. In either role, analysis is criticism's point of departure. Directed at buildings, criticism plays a mensurative role. Implicitly or explicitly, it measures its subject against an ideal model or cultural norm. The goal is to affect conformity to the norm through negative or positive appraisal.

Instrumentality: In theoretical discourse on architecture, criticism plays a similar role, though often in preparatory anticipation of a new theory or norm. Directed at prior theoretical formulation(s), criticism treats its subject as an ill conceived construct that it proceeds to dismantle, if only to expose its blindness and weaknesses. This mode of criticism is highly instrumental in preparing the ground for a new theory. The latter assumes the role of a remedy to the proposed ills of the theories it selectively criticizes and seeks to displace.

Resistance: Criticism does not have to assume an instrumental role with respect to a new theory, worldview, or cultural norm. It does not have to be motivated and at that highly selective. It can analytically treat its subject(s) as a cultural construct. It can focus, not so much on the weaknesses and faults of that construct, but on how any given cultural construct is actually construed, according to what norms and rules, under what conditions, and for what purpose or end? As opposed to a search and destroy mission, criticism can be expeditionary. It can be a resistive force to the hegemony of any one particular worldview or ideational perspective. Unexplored as this third mode of criticism is in architecture, it has been a primary focus of my research and a number of publications to date.

B. Research on History of Secular Building Types

In tandem with the study of theoretical discourse on architecture, I have pursued a parallel interest in the history of secular building types.

I. Context:

Although it is not with great difficulty or much resistance that we may trace the particulars of an ideational and/or institutional agenda in the design and experience of an ecclesiastical building,

the same does not readily hold for secular buildings. The latter are far more resistive to such explorations, particularly the closer they are to us in cultural space and time. The more immediately familiar the building type, the greater is the likelihood of it appearing as no more than a pragmatic response to very real, practical needs and requirements. The library as a secular building type does not readily appear to be much more than a response to the need for storage and dissemination of books, the school to the education of the novice, or the museum to the preservation and public presentation of art, etc. It is not evident to what specific cultural variables or ideational agenda the design and the experience of these buildings tactfully give the guise of the objectively inevitable.

II. Objective:

If our secular institutional buildings do not appear as patent ideological constructs, this is not, of course, for want of participation in the construction and objectification of culture. Each building is an elaborate cultural construct from its inception and through every stage of permutation. The link between the ideational and metaphysical imperatives that have seen to the formation, proliferation, and perpetuation of secular institutions and their architecture is what I have tried to analyze and point out in this research.

III. Contribution:

- a. I have focused, in particular, on the genealogy of building types that shelter various forms of representation, e.g., museums, libraries, cinemas, and theaters, and outlined the historic link between their formal and experiential properties and western ideational stance on representation. In detailed studies and publications on libraries, museums, and cinemas, I have analyzed and discussed how the specifics of the design and the particular experience of each building-type objectify and sustain our assumptions about the nature of the relationship between the particular mode of representation each houses and the seemingly non-representational reality from which each is intentionally sequestered. The contribution of each institutional building-type to fabrication and perpetuation of a logocentric worldview, including the presumption of a hierarchical relationship between such familiar dichotomies as authenticity and imitation, real and virtual, original and copy, memory and mimesis, etc. have been subjects of detailed exploration and discussion.
- b. The broader social context for the research on museums and libraries is the Enlightenment, the subsequent rise of nation-states, and the ensuing consolidation, reorganization, and institutionalization of private collections and collecting practices under state auspices and control. Of particular interest to me has been the instrumentality of these new and/or thoroughly reorganized institutions and building types in establishing the “public” and the “citizen,” as vital components of a new mode of organization and exercise of power by the modern state.

C. Research on architecture pedagogy

Concurrent with the research areas outlined above, I have done extensive research on Architecture pedagogy. Research topics have included:

- I. The pedagogical challenges of globalization to architectural education
- II. The place and role of architectural history and historiography in design education.
- III. The pedagogical challenges of the digital media to architectural education.

D. Dissemination of Research

Publications:

Given the interdisciplinary nature of my research, I have made every effort to reach as wide an audience as possible both within and outside the discipline of architecture. I have made every effort to make a meaningful contribution to interdisciplinary dialogue. This has meant crossing the disciplinary divides as often as feasible to seek publication venues and attend conferences in the arts and the humanities, as well as architecture. To date, I have over **55** blind-peer-reviewed publications in highly selective venues that cross multiple disciplines. These include a forthcoming book, a book-chapter, 16 journal articles, 29 proceedings, including 18 ACSA national and international conferences, and numerous other presentations.

Teaching

I have persistently tried to study the broader cultural developments that are likely to require different skill sets from future architects, in order to shape and continually adjust my pedagogy to better prepare students for future professional and academic careers in architecture. My current pedagogy is shaped by trends and challenges that are outline below.

I. Pedagogic Context

Over the course of the past two decades globalization, along with the digital information revolution have radically transformed the practice and the profession of Architecture. The consequences of this transformation for architectural pedagogy are measurable and direct.

The digital technologies of the information age have provided unprecedented access to diverse bodies of knowledge, along with unrivalled potential for their manipulation and transformation. This has drastically shifted the focus from acquisition of information to analytical and critical organization of information.

Also, the digital technologies of the information age in tandem with a globalized economy have rapidly brought diverse cultures into unparalleled proximity and dialogue. The outcome has been global cultural and environmental change at a scale and pace that is unprecedented. The rapid transformation of traditional spatial and temporal dividing-lines between cultures, have made professional practices of all kinds, including architecture, multi-cultural propositions more so than ever.

The question and challenge these changes directly pose architectural education are how to educate the next generation of architects to meet not only the unique demands of a plurality of cultures and diverse environments, but more importantly a plurality of cultures and environments in a state of flux and change?

2. Pedagogic Response

To answer the challenges of globalization and information revolution, our pedagogy has to shift from the traditional emphasis on the acquisition of bodies of knowledge to a greater emphasis on the development of analytical, critical, and creative abilities that are essential to engaging and effectively addressing diverse bodies of knowledge.

Given the speed and changing modalities of global communication and cross-cultural exchange, bodies of knowledge, in their cultural specificity, face obsolescence with increased pace. In addition, in the global market place what is essential is not the extent of one's knowledge that is as such culture specific, rather it is the ability to engage, analyze, organize and, manipulate diverse bodies of knowledge. What is essential is creative problem solving skills rather than ready-made answers. For these skills analytical and critical thinking are essential prerequisites. These are the skills I have sought to foster in my teaching.

3. Pedagogic Objective

My overall pedagogic objective has been to instill a spirit of exploration, experimentation, critical engagement, creative thought, and innovation in a new generation of architects who, practicing within a global economy and faced with multiplicity and diversity of cultures and environments are well prepared to not only respect, but creatively respond and effectively sustain cultural and environmental integrity and diversity, locally and globally.

4. Pedagogic Requirements

If, implicitly or explicitly, what an architect is asked to do is to give tangible expression to the intangible beliefs and ideals of a culture, then the primary tasks of design education are, I believe:

- I. To develop analytical skills that allows students to decipher the complex relationship between form and culture, or form, function, and ideology. In the absence of analytical skills, students remain consumers of form. It is imperative they learn how to critically analyze the design

problem, understand its context, decipher its cultural premise, or else all they can do is repeat prior solutions and forms. They will not be, in this event, designing, or for that matter necessarily learning, but merely repeating.

- II. To develop the formal skills needed to translate propositions into form. This requires a thorough understanding of the expressive potential of forms and how and under what conditions forms become signifying figures.
- III. To develop the technical skills needed to give design tangible form.

5. History/Theory Pedagogy

History and theory courses provide an effective framework for making students keenly aware of the complex relationship between architecture and culture, as well as help them acquire the analytical skills they require. This is what I have tried to do in my history and theory courses. I emphasize the acquisition not of mere information, but the ability to analyze, understand, and critically use that information. I have organized the lectures and chosen the reading assignments such that they do not necessarily cover the same material, but complement each other, provide alternative points of view on each subject, and aid the students in developing their own critical approach to the study of architecture and its history. I have designed the assignments and the examinations to test not the knowledge of historic facts per se, but the students' ability to analyze and understand architecture as a cultural artifact.

Over the years, I have developed and taught a wide range of history and theory courses, trying all the while not to assume the traditional divide between these two modes of inquiry in architecture. I have persistently tried to demonstrate that there is no history that is not theoretical and no theory that is not historical. In addition, I have consistently tried to strike a balance in the classroom between formal analysis and careful scrutiny of the cultural context of architecture's production.

6. Technology and Pedagogy

I have a long-standing interest in the digital media and its impact on architectural education and pedagogy. I have made every effort to explore both the immense potential of the media to affect better communication with the students in lecture and seminar classes, as well as the unique impact of the media on our culture in general and historiography in particular. The digital visual databases I have developed over the years are a direct extension of these efforts. I have also addressed the curricular dimension of the digital media's impact on architecture in a number of publications and a graduate seminar on historiography and the digital media. I have made all my course materials, readings, presentations, etc. available online for more than a decade and a half now.

7. Studio Pedagogy

Important and indispensable as the role of the history/theory curriculum is, the greater burden of

architectural design education falls on the studio. This is, in part, because it is in studio that the required analytical, formal, and technical skills assume an interactive role vis-à-vis each other. To affect this interaction, I have developed a new approach to teaching design that is based on extensive research and critical analysis of the language of architecture and the role architecture plays within its broader cultural context. I have designed upper level studios around different institutional building-types whose proposition(s) about the nature of the activity each houses, and the rituals each provides for, are readily taken for granted, only then to carefully and analytically study and question those propositions by way of exercise.

8. Studio Pedagogic Strategy

I encourage the students to begin the design process by tracing the history of the assigned building-type from inception through the various stages of its permutation and development. The purpose of this genealogical study is to unravel the modalities of the building's use and its ideational instrumentality within the broader temporal cultural context. This study reveals the type's formal, spatial, and compositional continuities and discontinuities through time. The stylistic discontinuities are accounted for in relation to the ever-shifting cultural context. The continuities in functional distribution and spatial organization are, in turn, the attributes of specific institutional demands and requirements, whose purpose is the promotion and sustenance of a set of persisting cultural presuppositions.

The historic study of the building type is done in tandem with readings that critically engage its cultural propositions. This critical engagement creates a new context for design and changes the parameters of the problem sufficiently to require willful manipulation of form as opposed to reiteration of prior solutions. The critical contextual changes require students to forego the form and learn from historic examples only the principles of formation and rules of composition.

9. Studio Objectives

One pedagogic objective of the above exercise is to promote a conscious reevaluation of all the subconscious assumptions regarding spatial organization, the relationship of parts to whole, the inside to the outside, the particulars of volume and mass, solid and void, path and place, structure and material, ornamentation, proportion, scale, and others. The intent is to design a building that is both familiar and alien. A building that is neither a copy nor strictly an original. The goal is, in other words, a building that speaks silently of the designer's ability to willfully manipulate the language of architecture as opposed to faithfully re-produce prior statements.

In the practice of architecture, theoretical assumptions can and for the most part are tacit and subconscious. In the teaching of architecture, it is imperative to bring these assumptions to a conscious level and make students keenly aware of the interdependence of theory and practice. Raising this awareness opens both the theory and the practice of architecture to critical scrutiny and

reevaluation, and paves the way for new directions and different courses of action.

SERVICE

I have constantly searched for opportunities in service that are likely to make a lasting and positive contribution to the academic life of the faculty and the students. To date, I have served the academic community in a multitude of positions at six different academic institutions.

I. Administrative Leadership

I served as Department Chair for two years and as Director of Undergraduate Program in Architecture for four years. These were very valuable experiences that gave me the opportunity to implement important changes and make many positive contributions to the academic life of the department, the faculty, and the students, ranging from curriculum changes, to facilities improvements, to technology initiatives, and so on.

II. Administrative Service

I have played an active and in most instances a leading role as chair of the numerous committees at the departmental, college and university levels. These have ranged from serving on a Faculty Advisory Council to the university president, University Faculty Senates, College Assemblies, numerous faculty search, promotion and tenure, accreditation, and curriculum committees. My recent contributions as committee chair include developing multiple modes of teaching evaluations for architecture faculty and the department bylaws. In addition, In 2011, I undertook a comprehensive revision of the M.Arch. curriculum, incorporating recent changes to National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) requirements. This revision shared the same curriculum vision and structure I developed for a new undergraduate degree program in architecture at University of Colorado, Denver in 2010.

The proposed curricula are organized around areas of study, representing not bodies of information per se, but specific modes of inquiry and distinct methodologies for collecting, analyzing and organizing information. The broad objectives of these curricula are to instill a spirit of exploration, experimentation, critical engagement, creative thought and innovation in a new generation of architects who, practicing within a global economy and faced with multiplicity and diversity of cultures and environments in a state of flux, are well prepared to not only respect, but creatively respond and effectively sustain cultural and environmental integrity and diversity, locally and globally.

III. Curriculum Revisions

The University of Colorado, Denver graduate and undergraduate curriculum proposals build on a long-standing engagement with curriculum design and development that goes back to early years of my academic career. I feel particularly fortunate for having had the opportunity to develop and implement major curriculum revisions at different institutions over the course of the past decade and a half. These

include a major revision of the architecture curriculum, including the formulation and addition of a new digital architecture curriculum, in my capacity as the Director of the Undergraduate Program in Architecture at Parsons School of Design, as well as the complete revision of the design curriculum, covering four distinct two-dimensional and three-dimensional design disciplines, in my capacity as the Chair of the Design Department.

Both revisions responded to trends and transformations in the profession and the practice of design that required a broad perspective and the ability to practice effectively in multi-disciplinary environments. The catalyst behind much of these trends and transformations is the digital media.

The generative and transformational powers of the new media has lessened the dependence of the various design disciplines on exclusive traditional rendering and representational skills and placed a greater emphasis on creative thought and innovative concepts that are not necessarily and always discipline specific. This is a fundamental shift in the balance of skills.

Lessening the dependence on traditional rendering and representational skills, the new media has rendered traditional disciplinary boundaries less stringent as well. It has allowed designers to cross the bounds of pre-defined disciplines and pursue challenging and creative interdisciplinary careers. This process is hastened by an emerging and powerful trend toward multi-disciplinary design practices that rely on close communication and cooperation between designers with different backgrounds.

The pedagogic challenge of these changes is to create a curriculum that allows students to develop expertise in a given discipline or area without losing sight of the broader connections and points of overlap between the various disciplines. This curriculum has to emphasize and foster analytical, conceptual, and creative problem solving design skills that are applicable across disciplinary lines, in multiple design environments, including the digital environment.

IV. Curriculum Resource Development

As an extension of my ongoing interest in curriculum development, I have invested an immense amount of time and energy, from early on in my career, collecting visual data for the use of the faculty and the students at the various universities I have served.

A vital component of architectural pedagogy is the study of precedents. Understanding the history of architecture in all its complexity, learning to effectively analyze buildings, and critically evaluate past examples is an indispensable part of an architect's education. Access to comprehensive visual data on a large selection of buildings is prerequisite to the effective study of precedents.

The *Arch.ive* project, which first begun in slide format, was transformed into digital, and lately QTVR format, is a comprehensive digital visual database covering key monuments in the history of architecture. The database is an indispensable pedagogic tool that has served the students and the faculty as a visual aid for study, analysis, research, and instruction in architecture. Over the years I have received a number of grants for this project, including a recent grant from University of Colorado, Denver. The work on this project is ongoing. The impact and the benefits have been immediate. The collection has had a very positive impact on my teaching and students' learning in history courses and in studios. It has served

colleagues equally well.

As an instructional tool, the database gives access to digital visual information that can be hierarchically and dynamically organized for lecture and seminar presentations. The database also allows random access to different forms of visual data in class, particularly design studios, for illustration and discussion purposes. The latter is a vital component of studio pedagogy. As a study tool, the database gives students unprecedented access outside the classroom to the same visual information used in class. The visual information is of immense help to the students in their analyses and research.

V. Academic and Community Service

a. Professional Organizations

I have served as Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture Faculty Representative and as the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture Representative on National Architectural Accrediting Board Visiting Teams.

b. Conferences

In service to the academic community at large, I have reviewed numerous articles for peer-reviewed publications and conferences, chaired sessions at various conferences, attended design reviews and given lectures at various academic institutions nationwide.

I edited, designed, compiled, and published the Proceedings of the 18th National Conference on the Beginning Design Student: The Predicament of Beginning, held in March 2002, at Portland State University. I also designed and published the conference program and abstracts pamphlet.

c. Exhibits

I have organized, designed, and built a number of installations and exhibits of students' work, including the Emerging Voices exhibit sponsored by the Portland Mayor's Office, and Sub.Mission, a senior class exhibit at Portland State University. These exhibits build on many similar past experiences including two major exhibits of graduating design students' work in Seattle and a number of earlier exhibits and publications in New York and Philadelphia.

d. Lecture series

Lastly, I have organized a number of lecture series, covering a host of contemporary topics addressed by academics and accomplished designers invited from across the nation and Europe, including Shifting Trajectories in the fall of 1997, Digital Divide in the spring of 2000, In.Sight in the fall of 2000, and Re:Action in the spring of 2001. The positive and enthusiastic reception of these lecture series readily offset the considerable effort that went into their organization and implementation.