

Everything loose will land: Adventures in the False Field

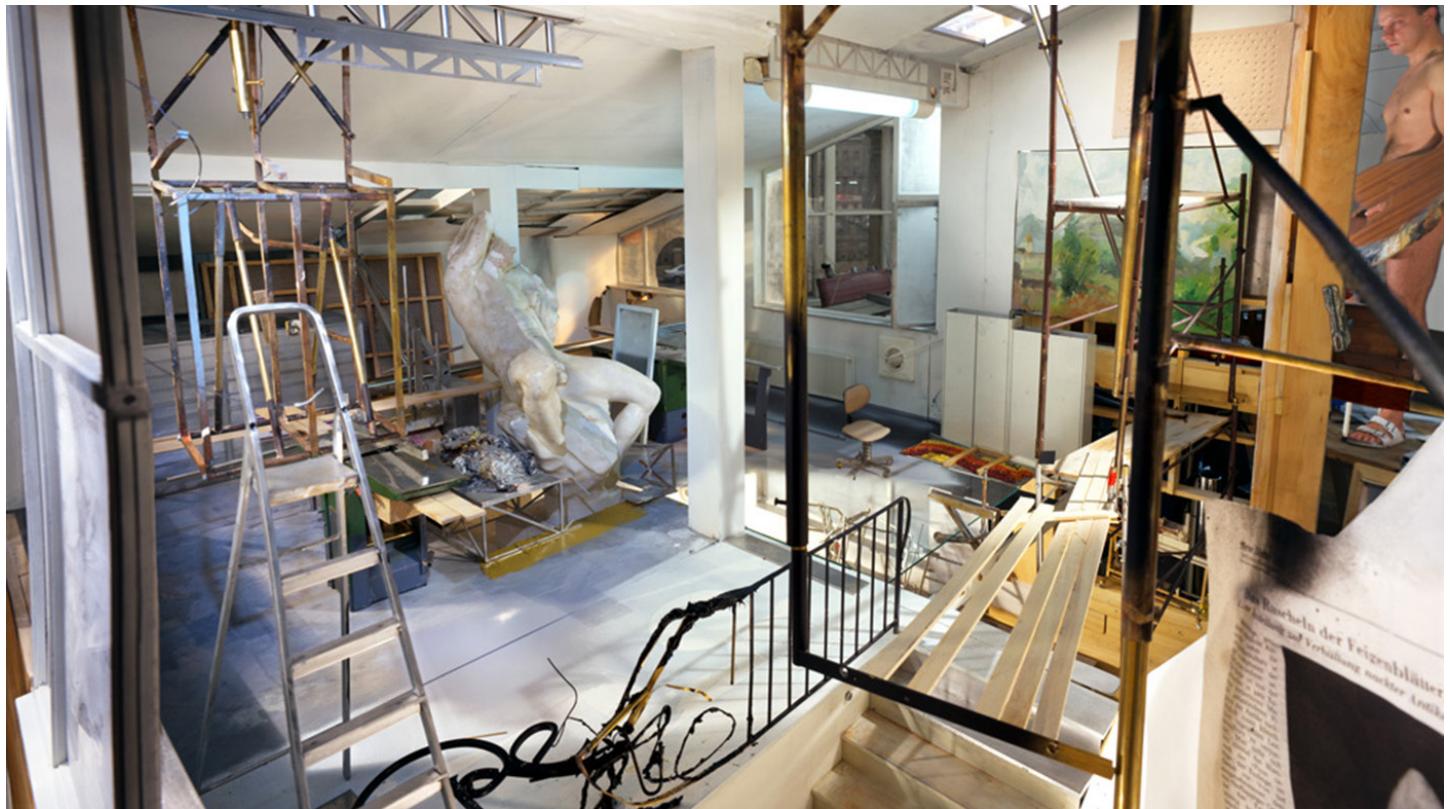


Image: Lois Renner, Das Rascheln der Feigenblätter, 2007.

Diving straight in

David Hockney looks at water. He has been asked to paint a swimming pool in Los Angeles - not *paint* it, but *paint* it. He seems like the right person for the job, having spent decades struggling with the optics of refraction and the capture of the ephemeral fluid. In the creation of *Sun on the Pool*, his reflections on water get projected into an actual pool in the form of a series of sweeping brush strokes. We witness his rules of representation land on the painted tiles of reality. The tool that focusses and fixes the water now becomes defined by the reach of his arm – the extent of his own body. The pool then gets refilled with what is now a hyper-water, a fluid filter stacked upon the painted bowl of simulated water. He photographs the hyper-pool with 77 polaroids, capturing the strokes of his friend swimming at different moments and from different vantage points. He arranges these in a regular grid, tiled.

Scientists look at water. Their digital models, however sophisticated, cannot precisely simulate the rough and tumble of the sea. They build a test facility for fluid dynamics, where they physically scale-down waves to a 25th of the size of their real-world counterparts. At first, they appear to break unconvincingly, but slowing down the footage to one fifth of the original frame rate makes the wave behave with uncanny realism.

Stacks, Doppelgangers & Aberrations

Look at any phenomenon and discover that it is multiple: a series of models and simulations, representations and alter egos. Whether within creative production, scientific knowledge or images of the self, notions of the singular, real or original have become secondary, irrelevant or often indeed non-existent. Instead, they are gradually replaced by a model we propose to call the Stack. The Stack is a hybrid pool of entangled doppelgangers, cross-contaminating representations, and bastardizing lenses.

The Stack doesn't just change the way we look at the world, it also profoundly defines how we construct it. As designers, we need to become fluid at navigating between the different layers of the Stack, between media and models, between the drawn and the made, the digital and the analogue, the technical and the psychological, the social and the perceptual, the false and real fields that constitute our creative process.

At the same time, constantly translating means constantly distorting. We bend time and space (as in the example of fluid dynamics), we use the tools and lenses at hand (as in the case of Hockney's hyper-pool), we lose or add dimensions, we shift scales and suspend our disbelief, we misread, subconsciously projecting our own tastes, memories and desires.

This year, unit 8 will explore these distortions, this space of aberration, as one of seduction and creative opportunity. We will venture into the false field, inhabiting the uncanny space of subtle difference between the doppelgangers and embrace the opportunity of mistranslation.

The Difference in the Double

In Project One, we will use the Double and its Difference – the space between – as the diving board for our own creative process. We will chase conceptual, technical, and psychological mistranslations like shadows, undercuts, shifts, blurs, projections, glitches, noises and misalignments as the moment where the unexpected happens – and hence as a vehicle for artistic production. Dissecting these minute differences with utmost precision will allow us to make huge conceptual leaps that lead into the unknown.

Project One will set the agenda for the rest of the year whilst providing an intense immersion into material experimentation, skilful detailing and precise joinery, training our tactile and digital dexterity. Along with a series of film screenings, we will run workshops in digital fabrication, photography, 3D scanning, drawing, portfolio curation and creative programming. These will enable the unit to move fluidly between the analogue and digital, the precise and intuitive, the virtual and real, the found and invented, and to operate with a well-judged selective sharpness. Shifting effortlessly between the doubling fields of the Stack is where the true agility of a contemporary architectural and creative practitioner lies. Crafting a good story requires skill and practice.

Everything loose will land

Our field trip in January will take us to Los Angeles, an exciting architectural playground packed with wildly peculiar buildings – yet a city often stereotyped as lacking density and complexity, harbouring a flat and superficial urban sprawl: “Tip the world over on its side and everything loose will land in Los Angeles” Frank Lloyd Wright notoriously joked.

On our trip, we will debunk this myth by uncovering the weird coexistences and complexities that endure within a city of overlapping and contradicting realities; we will scratch beneath the surface to reveal its strange character; we will drive on the city’s Lost Highways, taking shortcuts between buildings that only exist between the frames of a feature film; we will travel between the as-built Case Study Houses and their idealized representation in a

glossy magazine; we will chase the space of doubling and difference within a city that constantly “plays itself”.

In Project Two, we will deploy our Aberrant Doubles to develop building proposals dealing with the challenges and pathologies of LA’s regenerative downtown. As per unit 8’s strong tradition, these will be sophisticated and rigorous building projects developed through a variety of critical architectural positions.

Unit ethos

In unit 8, we welcome the brave and the curious. We value the type of individuality and character that thrives from a will to find out, rather than the need to prove. We like to give time and space for the development of an approach to design and research which is personal and grounded. The studio values work that is inventive, risk-taking and as precise as it is intuitive. This can be challenging, but together we will prosper in the promise of the unknown.

“Everything one invents is true, you may be perfectly sure of that. Poetry is as precise as geometry.”

Gustave Flaubert

www.unit-8.net



Image: David Hockney painting Sun on the Pool, 1982.