



## **X-25**

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### **Unit approach**

We are an experimental unit – both through an interest in experimental practices in architecture and a belief in the benefits of experimentation as a productive educational method. Two of our key sites of experimentation relate to how ideas are teased out by and embodied in media - the tools and materials through which we design and the materials and processes through which ideas are made real in architecture.

The previous sentence already presumes a commonly held idea of a separation between designing and what is designed. This year we will be looking at a number of seams that lie in between conditions that are often seen to be in opposition in architecture – one of them being reality and representation, with a subset of the relationship between material and pictorial space. We will also look at the realm where utility and desire might not be mutually exclusive and examine how appropriation and the bespoke might be equally capable of precise specificity. We imagine that students in the unit will eek out other seams of their own to inhabit.

Another dimension of experimentation lies in the pleasure of inquisitiveness and the condition of not knowing. While the discovery of knowledge is a benefit of the experimental process, the experience of discovery can be just as rewarding as what is discovered. In her essay *Tactics For Not Knowing* Emma Coker suggests that:

*For the artist, to prepare for the unexpected has a dual function. It is the gesture of developing readiness (for anything), a state of being at the cusp of action, mind and body poised. It is also an act of scarifying the ground, an attempt to create the germinal conditions within which something unanticipated might arise. Artistic practice recognises the value of not knowing, less as the preliminary state (of ignorance) preceding knowledge, but as a field of desirable indeterminacy within which to work. Not knowing is an active space within practice, wherein an artist hopes for an encounter with something new or unfamiliar, unrecognisable or unknown. However, within artistic practice, the possibility of producing something new is not always about the conversion of the not known towards new knowledge, but rather involves the aspiration to retain something of the unknown within what is produced.<sup>1</sup>*

One of the reasons why ideas are often located in opposition and simplified is that as a profession we try to appear to have knowledge. In doing so we try to express this knowledge in a form that is not the one we use. Our attempts to make our knowledge explicit through words tend to be a reductive distillation of the meandering subtleties that we hold in our tacit (or personal) knowledge. By developing ideas through the media with which we work this tacit knowledge with all its subtle and intimate pleasures can remain in the thing that we design. The things that are made and drawn in the unit are therefore much more agents of discovery than of presentation or rhetoric, with the possibility of being much more personal to their author - an aspect that we encourage.

## ***Negotiating the Seam***

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### **Programme**

The word 'space' is as much about intimation as it is about surveyable dimensions... It's dark outside and parts of my room - the illuminated drawing table, the open door near the light, and the light shade - hang suspended... Do these familiar ghosts belong to the space of the room, and if so, how far does the room extend? Do they belong in the street, and if so, how many spaces are out there? Do they belong to both at once or do they belong to neither because they are contained within the reflective surface of the window?<sup>ii</sup>

The studio's brief is situated at the extremities of ideas that are seemingly opposed. Specifically, we will investigate three seams: between the represented and the real - between the bespoke and the appropriated - between utility and desire. We will explore these edges to find opportunities for each student to find their realm of operation. Our hope is that these seams will provide crevices in which each student can nurture their own positions.

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### **Projects**

#### **1. Agents of discovery:**

During the first two weeks we will anticipate the sort of situations where we hope to practice, questioning our expectations. Our work will curate new relationships between architecture and the body. This introductory project will prepare the ground - to anticipate and play-out a revised reality.

#### **2. Suites of desire:**

The second project will be an opportunity to venture ideas that spawn from the introductory work into realms of uncertain possibility. We will rehearse fragments of the ideas for architecture through a range of experimental methods appropriate to each project, with the aim of teasing out the content through making and drawing the project. This project will begin to develop proposals for fragments of a larger, architectural idea as full scale realities.

These fragments will simultaneously achieve the roles of representing an idea, rehearsing an idea and embodying an idea through the invention or appropriation of media and methods that are resonant with these ideas.

We are interested in the question of what the work is when it is situated and has agency and what it might become during periods of redundancy. We are also interested in the idea that the work can establish a continuum of multiple agencies, which may only become apparent or understood on occupation. As such, the pieces may suggest multiple methods of engagement with both the site and the body, whilst maintaining specificity with regard to occupancy and programme. This project will become a real-time negotiator between external and internal seams of a site and a body.

#### **3. Occupying the edge:**

Sites for the building project will be selected during the field trip with a focus on identifying spaces which compose junctions. Our field trip will take us from Vienna to Munich via Graz. During the trip, we will experience examples of parallel realities, embedded realities and interchangeable realities.

The building projects will evolve out of the research undertaken in the first two projects. This project will become an explicit mediator between the programme, the body and the site. The work will be highly experimental and will embrace uncertainty whilst maintaining a high level of rigour and precision.

Image credit: Motion tests at Aleksei Gastev's TsIT

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<sup>i</sup> Coker, Emma. *Tactics For Not Knowing, Preparing for the unexpected*. In *On Not Knowing, How Artists Think*. Black Dog, 2013.

<sup>ii</sup> Evans, Robin. *The Projective Cast - Architecture and Its Three Geometries*. MIT Press. 1995.