



THE FRAME OF REFERENCE STUDIO: ANALOGY AS A STRATEGY TOWARD CREATING IDENTITY

At the outset the task could be problematized as the following:

How can one, living in the grips of modernity, work with the modular pre-givens and the pre-determinants as the fundamental blocks, and yet evade the ubiquity they threaten us with and reach for creative and intelligent solutions?

From stapler pins and clips to bottled beverages and automobiles to suburban buildings and rubber-stamped corporate buildings **MULTIPLICITY** marks the landscape of modernity. In the wide open, recently settled prairie-scape of the Midwest this phenomenon becomes even more apparent. Yet habitually, we screen it out of our active consciousness, our perception tuned to what is special and different. The rest become part of the "background", so to speak, and assumes an infrastructural character. In addition to what lies on the surface as omni-present repetition, there is underlying sameness of elements which structure and mechanize our cultural milieu.

Yet multiplicity and repetition is not always all bad, and is occasionally peeled away from its field and network like status by the perceptive visual artist and re-presented as an intriguing visual artifact. There are instances when this repetition and the sameness of the environment, its predictability is presented as reassuring and desirable, even as an aspect of Americana: as in a Wayne Thiebaud painting of pies and pastries ("Pie Counter from 1963 for example). Or, for other example, one can imagine a generic scenario of a weary, modern, traveling corporate employee arriving into a predictable hotel suite that holds no surprises, and is only differentiated by the "décor" and by often what lies outside as a framed view (which might also be inhabited by a network of sameness).

In the landscape of sameness, a difference is often sought for the sake of identity. From outside the discipline, it is not uncommon to find the view that architecture happens when some excess can be afforded and when that ability is seeking something which is "uncommon", something of a unique presence; an identity of its own. While this "differentiation" can be arguably achieved through purely intuitive processes and sculptural means, it is also possible and more meaningful to achieve this identity and uniqueness through ideational means, thinking consciously, critically and conceptually; without sacrificing the intuitive talents.

SKETCH PROBLEM 1

IDENTICAL vs. IDENTITY

KIT OF (SAME) PARTS: SCALE-LESS ASSEMBLAGE/ CONSTRUCTION

[This is a 1 to 1 free form exercise and should not be treated as a "representational model."]

In this first problem we will explore the creative and combinatory possibilities with everyday and utilitarian things that our lives are permeated with.

Select any industrial product that is produced and perhaps consumed in the millions everyday. Assume this to be a fundamental unit of a creative construction that you will build. Holding in suspension what a product was made for originally, you must react to the things at an intuitive level and explore how many of the same can be combined to create a new object, an engaging composition.

In its conception or during its construction, it is not necessary that the object bear a resemblance to any architectural element (walls/columns/ roofs/floors or other such, although such "readings" or interpretations can/will follow after the completion). Therefore, it is not necessary to differentiate the sides of the object in terms indexical terms.

The composition should be structurally firm and self-sufficient. The final object should be roughly big enough to occupy an 18" cubic volume and it can certainly be bigger.

Your objective is to creatively search for new possibilities of combining an everyday thing, removed from its original utilitarian context, and re-fabricated into a composition which as a "system" (obviously greater than its parts) will create a new identity. Attempt to creatively form space and planes.

Invent a single kind of joint and repeat it. Pay attention to the overall formal and spatial qualities and de-emphasize the connections.

Individual elements need not be used in whole; you can cut, reshape or somehow re-form the fundamental building block. But apply this action to all of them in some order or pattern.

SCHEDULE:

08/22:	Sketch project introduction
08/25:	Desk and collective review of materials/ composition and connection ideas
08/27:	Work day
08/29:	Final Review of the constructs

The discussions that follow the completion (in the form of an informal critique) is expected to address (but not limited to) the following points.

1. FORMAL:

How interesting is the piece as a composition and what makes it so?
Recall the logic that came to you instinctively during the process of "playing" and building
Analyze to see other ordering principles and logic in the finished composition
What are its specific qualities in terms of motion, weight and substance?
How did the basic unit/element influence the formal/ spatial aspects of your object?

2. INTERPRETIVE:

What interpretations does it evoke? What sorts of associations does it lead us to think, and, how open ended is it?

What are its potentials to engage the body? Depending on the materiality and structural qualities of the product you work with the result will have varying degrees of suggestive potentials: from screens and walls to enclosures and other sets of architectonic elements.

What other readings are possible analogically? What ideas might it plant in us for our architecture?

This first step is to be treated as creative form of research; one which should provide you creative, insightful formal ideas and also mental notions. The understanding gained from this effort must be consciously applied to the project that will follow (to be introduced later).