

# UNSTAKED TERRITORY: Frontiers of Beginning Design

Proceedings of the 19th National Conference on the Beginning  
Design Student, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma  
April 3-5, 2003



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Challenging The Boundaries I  
Challenging The Boundaries II  
Integrating The Boundaries  
Obscuring The Boundaries  
Various Terrains  
Initial Terrain

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## **Opportunities within the Ordinary**

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Beginning design studios form the foundation of a student's working method and provide an opportunity to challenge individual preconceptions through a process of critical inquiry. They are, by their very nature, the forum within which students explore how to begin the design process and establish a methodology that sustains it. The development of a student's process, which occurs across their education, is intrinsically tied to these early studios. It is essential to promote in them an awareness and utilization of a broader discourse concerning the discipline of architecture. The beginning design student, however, has not yet developed a repertoire to pull from, which can initiate a design investigation or inform a response to a design problem. The framing or structuring of beginning studio exercises as well as sequencing is therefore critically important. These factors establish a context for student investigation and provide a point of departure. Site and program are criteria commonly utilized in structuring a studio exercise and prompt students to consider their work within the context of a particular environment and use. Here, the design project contains the capability to provoke a re-evaluation of the commonplace and in so doing promote an inquiry into the potential within the conditions of the ordinary.

The search by beginning students, for inspiration and direction towards their work need not only originate from extra-ordinary sites or purportedly poetic programs. While these facilitate a particular aim through the amplification of specific conditions, they also promote a reliance on the ideal. A studio exercise can be structured such that students are confronted with the commonplace and in so, required to critically engage it. The built environment an architect must navigate is increasingly mundane and requires a hopefulness to look longer at the immediate despairing conditions. What do we tell our students about the cultural relevancy of architecture when we dismiss these conditions for more inspiring options? On some levels, are we not limiting the relevancy of architecture by opting not to confront these issues within the studio? The challenge for studio faculty is to structure these issues in a stimulating and accessible manor. The topics or issues an instructor brings to the studio provide the student with the opportunity to initiate a dialog between their project and a broader discourse spanning the discipline of architecture. Through this, students can recognize the value in looking outside the confines of their work as well as probing deeper, into the ordinary. So, one must ask, what are the opportunities within the ordinary?