

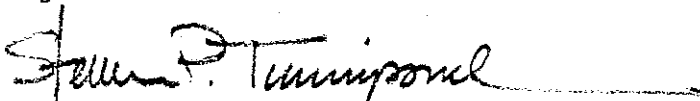
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS 77843-3137

As at the majority of design schools, the beginning design studio at Texas A&M concentrates on developing an understanding of the basic principles of design. Each freshman design studio professor has considerable autonomy in developing a narrow-scope focus within the broad objectives of the introductory design sequence. My studio concentrates on increasing the students' understanding of the impact of site and program pattern analysis in the development of problem solutions.

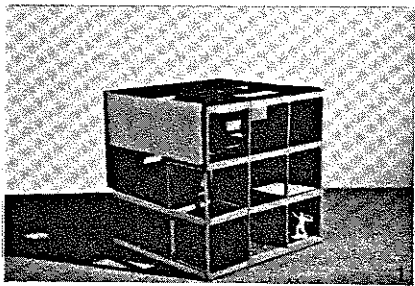
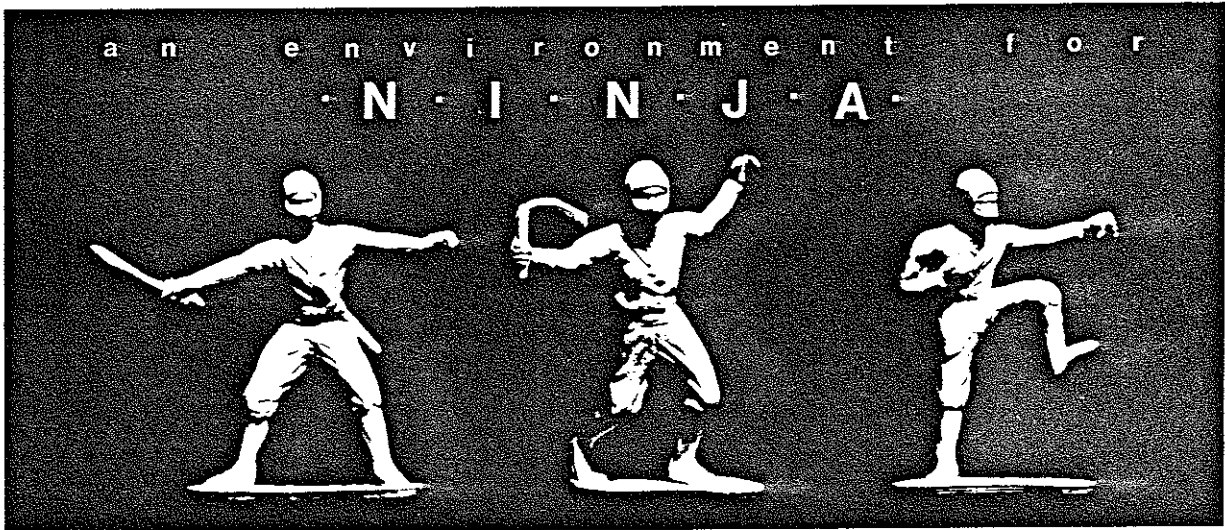
The challenge to design an environment for Ninja was first given in the fourth week of the 1987 spring semester. Through a series of readings, lectures, and short abstract exercises, the studio had already explored form, space and scale issues, had experienced the influence of simple ordering systems, and had been exposed to the conceptual uses of color and texture. This project was a first attempt at comprehensively applying these ideas in an "architectural" way. The intension was to pick a client type with a strong philosophy that would significantly influence design concepts. Although Ninja was actually picked as a client simply because 2 1/2" tall plastic figures were available at the grocery store (the alternative was a package of "hand painted" cowboys and indians), it turned out that the ninja was extremely well suited for the challenge. Class discussions of the client's disciplined and energy efficient movements led naturally into discussions of the use of major patterns in the site and program as appropriate and efficient generators of form and order. The ninja's physical abilities and his almost "magical" ability to appear and disappear allowed me to eliminate some of the more ordinary functional items (such as stairs) and to replace them with two concentrated functional requirements - a swinging element and a sliding element, both of which were required to make significant changes in the character of the project. These two functions come from some of the basic ninja moves - and again, class discussion of the ninja's efficient use of power and energy was re-focused on how a single major element can have significant conceptual and physical impact on a design. The project was developed over a three week period. Preliminary models were prepared and critiqued; the final model was typically constructed of painted balsa wood and painted or laminated cardboard.

I feel the project was a superb success. Although there were the typical incomplete and poorly crafted solutions, there were also an unusually high percentage of very successful designs that thoroughly investigated the impact of the client's philosophy on the design. In reflecting on the project, I would admit that the influence of the ordering system may seem excessive to some, although I personally was pleased with the structural awareness fostered by that emphasis. Also, the students had difficulty converging the influence of the swing and the slide. Typically a project had either a very strong swinging element or a very strong sliding element - seldom were both physically significant.

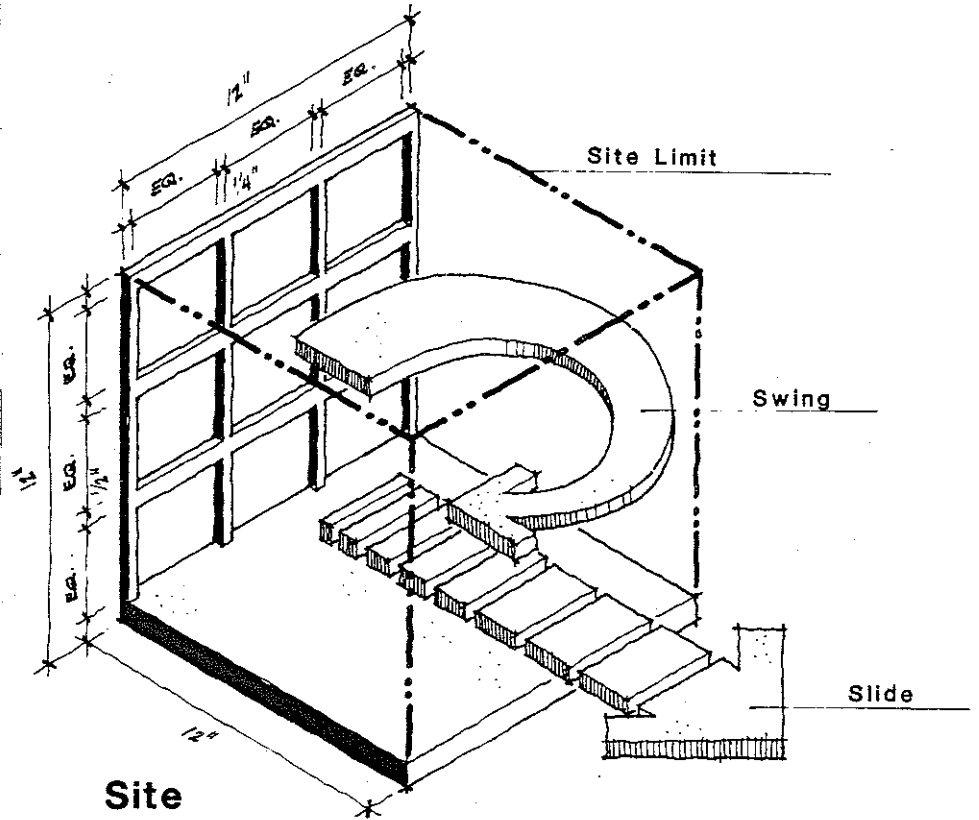
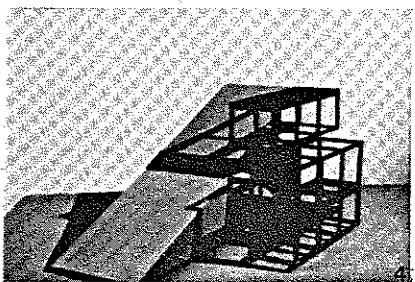
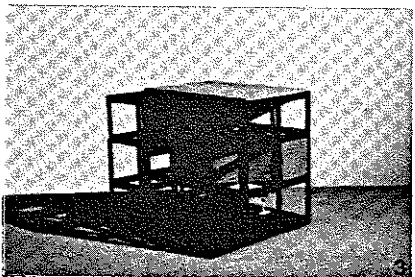
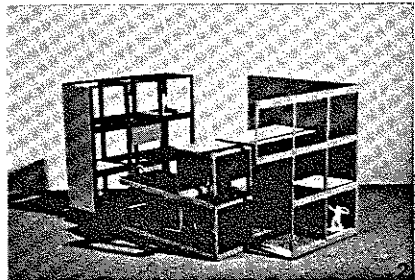


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(1,2) Design by Allen Lindsey, Spring, 1987
 (3,4) Design by Craig Vaughn, Spring, 1987



You are asked to design a combat environment for practicing the ancient art of Ninjutsu. The ninjutsu warrior adhered to a philosophy based on deception and suggestion rather than brute force, consequently accomplishing his goal with a minimum expenditure of energy. The site is a 32' cube which will be modeled in a 12" cube as shown. A square base and a single structural frame represent the existing context in this problem. The only program requirements are that the environment you design will accommodate a single major swinging element and a single major sliding element that will significantly alter the character of the combat environment when moved. The composition that results from the swing and/or the slide need not be confined to the original cubic site. Although your composition must have horizontal surfaces on which the warriors can stand, there is no need for stairs.