Threshold

A Winter Evening
Window with falling snow is arrayed,
Long tolls the vesper bell,
The house is provided well,
The table is for many laid.
Wandering ones, more than a few,
Come to the door on darksome courses,
Golden blooms the tree of graces
Drawing up the earth's cool dew.
Wanderer quietly steps within;
Pain has turned the threshold to stone.
There lie, in limpid brightness shone,
Upon the table bread and wine.
-Georg Trakl

Introduction

An essential task of the architect is that of creating nuanced transitions between unlike spaces (between public and private, light and dark, loud and quiet, etc.). Such thresholds – places that both connect and distinguish the spaces they are mediating - enrich experience and help prevent disorientation and discomfort.

For this introductory studio assignment you are asked to design a threshold – in this case a thickened, rhythmic zone of space – that is representative of an important transition you experienced in your life. Much of the success of this project will depend on the creativity with which you translate a more abstract idea/experience into a concrete architectural “piece.”

Project Components

A Recall (in class on Monday)
From dreams, memories or daily encounter, identify an experience that represented a striking shift in your life. Consider what sensory input shaped your feelings at this threshold: what did you hear, touch, smell or see? What behaviors and beliefs were you leaving behind, and what were your premonitions about the future? Please describe this threshold and its context.

B InFORM (for beginning of class on Wednesday)
Generate a minimum of (3-5) 1 1/2"thick x 4"long x 3"high chipboard exploratory models that represent markedly different ways of translating the threshold you have described into a 3D spatial assemblage. Some design considerations & constraints to keep in mind:
- Each 3D study should be built off a 5 1/2"long x 4"wide chipboard base.
- Each 3D study should consist of planar and linear (columnar or beam-like) elements, all on the orthogonal.
- Each composition should be characterized by rhythmic (richly patterned) SPACE.
- Not all elements should contact the base. Use some elements to support others as a means of generating rich space!
- Connections to adjacent (“past” and “future”) spaces should be apparent if only implied.

C Gather (for beginning of class on Wednesday)
Please bring to class on Wednesday: pencil, straight edge, triangle, 8 1/2” x 11” paper (thick such as Strathmore), scissors, glue & old magazines.
Threshold continued

Project Components

C EmBODY (beginning of class on Wednesday)
Your 3D studies are now @ 1/8" = 1'-0" or 12' thick x 32' long x 24' high. For each, please introduce a 1/8" wide x 3/4" tall colored chipboard scale figure and consider the following:
  • How might an individual actually experience the threshold space you have created? Is passage even physically possible? Are there multiple passages?
  • Does one of the studies succeed more than others in terms of how the spatial experience relates to your original intention about threshold? (please revisit your original description).

D Delve (Thicken) (in class on Wednesday)
  • Please select a promising 3D study as a point of departure.
  • On an 11" wide x 8 1/2" long sheet of thick paper, draw a 1/4" = 1'-0" (accurate) pencil "sketch" section of your chosen threshold study.
  • Include a scale figure.
  • Superimpose collage elements with an emphasis on how the threshold connects to the past and future places. Collage elements should not only represent the threshold but a (minimum 14' wide) portion of each adjacent, unlike space.

E TransFORM (for beginning of class on Friday)
In addition to your original 3D threshold studies and the 1/4" = 1'-0" pencil/collage section hybrid, please prepare for discussion and review:
  • A typewritten, 5-7 sentence narrative that describes the transition in your life and how the design you arrived at is revealing of that transition.
  • 1/4" = 1'-0" threshold model (with implied volume 12' thick x 32' long x 24' high or actual size 3" T x 8" L x 6" H) on 11" W x 8 1/2" H rigid base. For this model you should use the chosen 3D study and the 1/4" section as a starting point, but you should endeavor to improve the design so that it supports your intentions as best as possible. Edit out extraneous details.

Project Objectives
  • To consider different ways to experience boundaries, thresholds and transitions.
  • To challenge one’s imagination in translating an abstract idea/experience into a concrete architectural “piece.”
  • To create a spatial composition exhibiting richness, rhythm and depth.
  • To learn to accentuate architectural conditions through modeling and drawing.