Intermediate Unit 9

Mis-Architecture

Inter 9 starts drawing where AA stalwarts Libeskind, Webb and Wilson left off. It has been quite some time since anyone significant drew their way into architectural discourse, but aside from these 1980s appetisers, the unit will offer up something more sustaining in the form of Philibert de l’Orme’s *Premier Tome*, Andrea Palladio’s sectional elevations, Robert Adam’s unfolded sections, Henri Labrousse’s plans, El Lissitzky’s and Theo van Doesburg’s axonometrics and James Stirling’s worm’s-eye views. These ‘perspectives’ on architecture increasingly populate academic essays but they can also serve as the basis for contemporary practice.

The unit kicks off by taking two found objects from disciplines whose primary means of communication is drawing – whether this is hydrographic charts, or the diagrams of fluid mechanics – and combining them in a way that incorporates the idiosyncrasies of their glyphs, symbols and standards. We follow a design process that covers at least seven drawing phases (found, interference combinations, base drawings, 3D, classifying, siting and presenting), which experiment with the parameters and meaning of drawing and call on two of the school’s latest tools – laser-cutting and CNC-milling – for added sustenance. Two techniques inform the unit’s method – one of fictive readings, like an art historian interpreting a painting, and another that utilises a strategy of editing and process drawing from architectural practice. The resulting work is instinctive and rigorous (though always based on drawing’s fundamentally indeterminant nature) and this year has some Iberian chutzpah thrown in.

Following Max Ernst’s predilection for placing the ‘unusual’ in the ‘usual’, we will again situate our drawings in Barcelona. All projects produced in the unit will be located within a tightly defined section of the city’s Gràcia quarter, which includes Gauñí’s infamous Parc Guell and La Pedrera, as well as his Casa Batlló, situated on the city’s ‘Block of Discord’ which also features Josep Puig i Cadafalch’s Casa Amatller and Lluís Domènech i Montaner’s Casa Lleó Morera. The unit, however, is never entirely typologically or topographically based, and it is expected that through the drawing process all sorts of unknown and unimagined markets will be invented in this idiosyncratic context.

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**Christopher Pierce** studied at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and gained a PhD from the University of Edinburgh. Among his recent publications are essays on OMA, ‘From Bauhaus to Our House to Koolhaas: The Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) and Modern American Culture’ (2007); Cloud 9, ‘Seven-year Itch: Another Note from Empuriabrava’ (2008); and Diller Scofidio + Renfro, ‘Three’s a Crowd’ (2008). He formed Mis-Architecture with Chris Matthews in 2000.

**Christopher Matthews**, principal of Pastina Matthews Architects (PMA), was educated at the Bartlett School of Architecture. For nearly a decade he worked with James Stirling, Michael Wilford and Associates on projects including the Singapore Arts Centre, the Lowry Centre and No 1 Poultry before setting up PMA in 2000.