

Project One: Parsing

3 Weeks (Final Review Wed. Oct 4)



Image: *Un chien andalou (An Andalusian Dog)*, Luis Buñuel & Salvador Dalí, 1928.

Amongst the many definitions to be found for the verb parsing, the following:

To make sense of; comprehend: I simply couldn't parse what you just said.

See: <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=parse&x=0&y=0> and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parsing>

reminds us of **the liminal state into which the parts of a sentence are place when they are parsed**, in between meanings. They are suspended between states, offered the potential for new relations, and therefore essential personal transformations. At its best, the **active prolonged engagement** with architecture might enable us the same great pleasure. For the next three weeks you'll be parsing the Exploratorium's subtitle, **Museum of Science, Art and Human Perception**. Consider here that there is an implicit hierarchy to the structure of that phrase: museum *of* science (1), art (2) and human perception (3). Each of the museum's subjects are subordinate to the museum as object. Could the museum's very identity and structure be made subordinate to perception? Can it only exist when perceived a certain way? We'll get at these questions by taking its part out of relation to one another; by parsing.

There are many common bonds between science and art. They both begin with noticing and recording patterns - spatial patterns, patterns in time, patterns of process and behavior. They both elaborate, reformulate, and ultimately link together patterns, in nature and meaning, which initially appeared as unrelated. Both art and science are involved with order-disorder transitions and the creation of tension and the relief of tension. Both endeavors are deeply rooted in culture and heritage; both expand our awareness and sensitivity to what is happening in nature, and in ourselves.

- Frank Oppenheimer

As you now know, the Exploratorium's mission is to create a culture of learning through innovative environments, programs, and tools that help people nurture their curiosity about the world around them. Just as Oppenheimer here points out about bonds between science and art, so to with architecture: we begin with noticing and recording patterns. In our case, the study is willfully transformative. Our goal in parsing the Exploratorium is to architecturally liberate the terms that compose it, by keeping them in a suspended state, a liminal state.

To Do:

Start "from zero." By this we mean to begin with your sense of in-betweenness as you explored it in our first brief exercise. Develop your first model of **liminal event-space** by applying it to parts of our subject: the Museum of Science, Art and Human Perception.

Your first model was based on an urban phenomenon, for example. In it you have sought to study and model a **transformative state in space and time**. Now look over the table below and choose one object from two different categories (i.e., one science and one museum, or one art and one perception).

- Research and document the objects thoroughly.
- **Adapt your "zero" model, its language of space and time, to the objects you have chosen.** How does your construction of liminality evolve for each? How do new aspects to it emerge? New scales? *Patterns*? Does it take on different behaviors in each of the two studies?
- As you develop your new models, indicate **physical and non-physical components** for each. The non-physical component can denote *program* (in the case of a museum for example) or an *electronic component* (such as a website) that complements its physical space. The specifics of this can only emerge from your study, so allow this to arise from your attempts to model and understand the objects you have chosen.
- Make efforts to model consistently in your use of color, texture, motion, time, etc. Keep in mind that these are not building models; they are models of event-space. Therefore their essence is to study and operate on space and time. This is abstract of physical building, and so it may function as a diagram (as opposed to a floor plan).
- For your final presentation, you will be required to have the following:
 - a one paragraph description of your chosen objects in their transformative state.
 - full documentation of your objects of study (photos, drawings, etc) ;
 - your series of iterations in modeling your chosen objects (i.e. not just the final model);
 - a Maya or Flash animation (this may be your primary medium of modeling or it may supplement your model if you are working in plaster for example);
 - and, finally, three snapshots that isolate the before, during, and after moments in liminal transformation within your model.
- **Note:** As with your first project, this is aimed at developing a *liminal architecture* for the Exploratorium. Your own model of liminality will translate to different materials, scales, and site interventions as you apply it. The specifics of, for example, Marcel Duchamp, will likely be shed. However, the method of parsing and transforming will be yours to build with.

Museums (physical and / or operational / curatorial architecture)	Sciences / Phenomena Natural Processes	Visual arts	Perceptions
Louvre, Paris	Echo	Marcel Duchamp, Nude Descending a Staircase	Vehicular Dysrhythmia
Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin	Photosynthesis	Matthew Barney, Drawing Restraint 9	Anamorphic Projection
Natural History Museum, Paris	Ionization	Bernini, Baldacchino, St. Peter's	Taste
Tom Tits Experiment, Stockholm	Light refraction	Andy Warhol, Thirteen Most Wanted Men	Dyslexia
Museum of Jurassic Technology, Culver City	Absorption	Chris Burden, Turnstile Piece	Figural Aftereffect / Optical Illusions
Pittsriver Museum, Oxford University	Drift	Piero Manzoni, Cagata dell'artista	Receptive Fields
American History Museum, Washington DC	Feedback	Kara Walker, Endless Conundrum	Amnesia
Sen-Dai Mediatech, Sen-Dai, Japan	Induction	Rebecca Horn, Concert for Anarchy	Flashbacks
Beijing Ancient Observatory, Beijing	Filtration	Ann Hamilton, Tropos	Motor memory

Milestones / Deadlines:

1. This Friday, September 15: First research due on your objects of choice. Be expedient in reviewing the table and making your selections! If you choose to study an object that fits one of these categories but is not on the list, you may do so but must *first* email both instructors for approval.
2. Monday, September 18: Choose your two objects, desk crits. Quick Maya intro.
3. Wednesday, September 27: Pin-Up
4. Note: In the coming weeks there will be readings to prepare for in-class discussion.