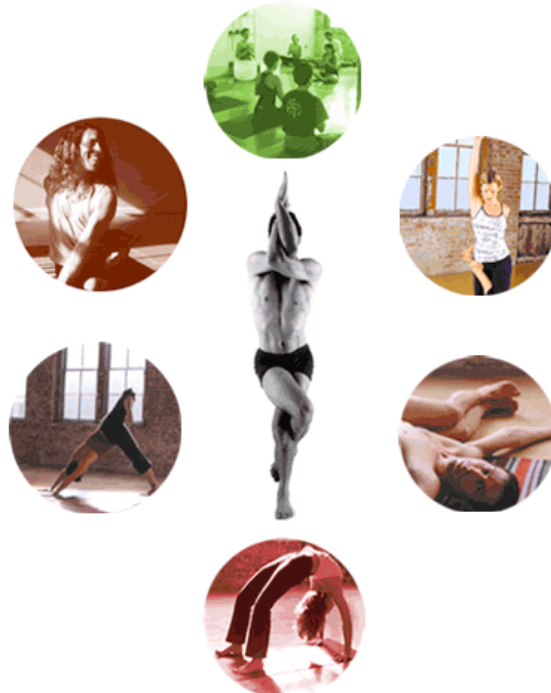
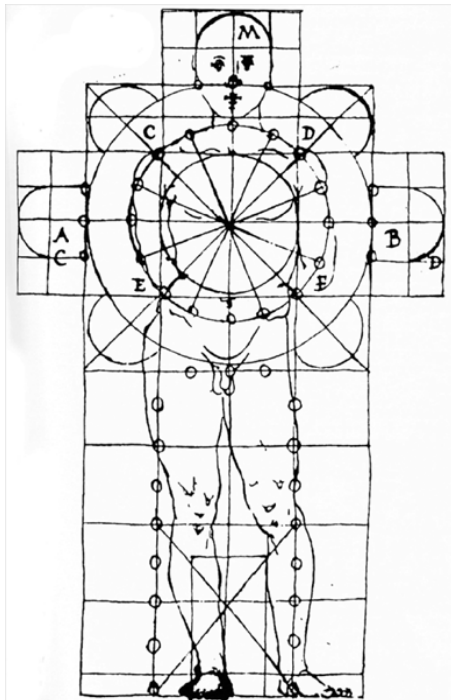


the yoga studio

inquiry into the relationship between architecture, mind, and body



Introduction

There is a fundamental relationship between architecture and the body that is evident anytime we want to learn, practice, appreciate or understand architecture. In fact, this relationship has been the subject of treatises and discussions among architects since antiquity. And naturally, most of these investigations have come to the issue from a purely architectural perspective which, although quite valid, it is also biased and limited. The second, longest and last assignment of this semester will ask you to jump into this age-old discussion but illuminated by insights coming from what is arguably the discipline with the most knowledge on the matters of the body: **Yoga**.

We will inquire into the ancient practice of yoga to revitalize and extend our understanding of architecture. Principles essential to yoga, such as alignment, concentration, strength, flexibility, interiority, tension, harmony, discipline, system, ritual, experience, and more, speak to architecture closely ... In learning about our body and its workings, we will learn about Architecture. And in making architecture, we will learn about our bodies.

The project will be to design a Yoga Studio using concepts and experiences you are going to learn from Yoga in association with new architectural methods and tools. This will enable you to translate Yoga into Architecture and Architecture into Yoga. In doing so, you will begin developing one of the most important skills that architects need: the ability to work with vastly different disciplines, worldviews, lifestyles, and expectations and manage to deliver spaces that accommodate them. This assignment is, therefore, an introduction to the real practice of architecture.

On the Body

It would appear that our body houses our thoughts, our emotions, our intuitions, our lives ... As such, our body feels like a building of flesh holding our minds. This view, however appealing, suffers from a reductive ‘Cartesian’ dualism. For, couldn’t we also argue that our mind is literally our body or that selfhood and body are indistinguishable? In fact, when we pay close attention to its working, we begin to realize that we are not other than this body. It is this body that brings us home. The only home we call ‘me’, ‘self’, ‘life’.

So, in using this body, in engaging it, in becoming aware of it, we do more than just exercising, getting in shape, becoming healthy, trying to look good, or accomplish a job. We are also expressing, feeling, and showing who we are. Thus, the more aware we are of our body, of its apparently mysterious ways, the more we are delivered to understand who/what/how we are. Bringing attention to our body is one manner of waking up to the reality of our own life. Yoga, the ancient practice of bringing body and mind into harmony, will be a vehicle to investigate this matter.



On Yoga

The Sanskrit word *yoga* means literally “union” and “discipline.” The goals of practicing Yoga are to unite/integrate one’s body with one’s mind. This integration is the foundation for the ultimate Self-realization. Here is where body and mind may become united and, additionally, where one may get connected with everything around him/herself. Breath is the source of life and thus, it is important that in Yoga it be treated with great respect and discipline. The body must also be highly respected since it is the vessel with which one moves through life.

Although it is well known that yogic teachings are at the heart of India’s three great religious cultures—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, it is safe to say that in general, Yoga does not call for any particular religious beliefs because it is primarily self-transformative and self-transcending. This is very clear in America, where Yoga practice has taken a non-religious path. It should be said, however, that there are different types of Yoga, each one addressing the bodily, mental, and emotional dimensions of our being with distinct emphasis. In all cases, the

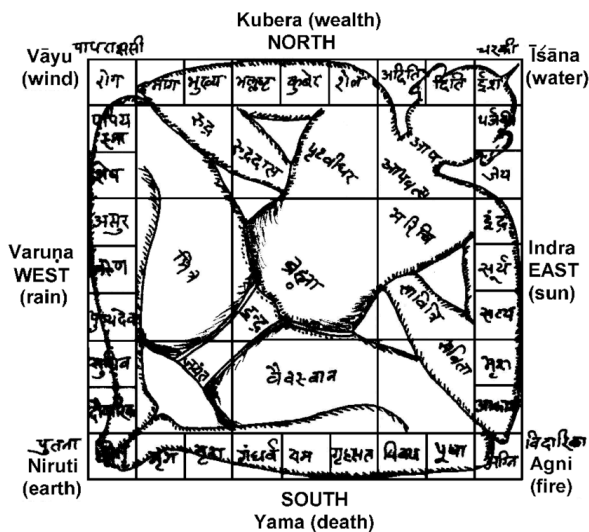
philosophical ideas connected with Yoga all stem from an intense experimental approach and are physically tested through different poses, stances, and breathing techniques.

Yoga is a form of liberation from illusions, delusions, and preconceptions, its objective is the focus on Reality. This state of liberation is viewed as enlightenment (*bodhi*), where one can experience the here/ now for what is truly is. This Ultimate Reality extends beyond the ego and is infinite, timeless, formless, and acutely conscious.

Yoga Teacher / Client

Yoga District teacher *Andrea D.* will introduce you to the world of Yoga. She has made herself graciously available to this experience in the belief that interdisciplinary inquiries further the frontiers of our understanding and experiences.

The Client will be assumed to be the *Yoga District*, a non-profit organization that successfully runs several Yoga studios around the Washington DC Metro area. For more information, visit: <http://www.yogadistrict.com/>



Site/Practice

The site for the Yoga Studio is an empty lot on **1004 H Street Northeast, Washington DC**. On **January 13th (Friday)**, we will go to visit the site and to practice Yoga at the Yoga District Studio on H Street (very close to our site). Students are strongly encouraged to be part of this experience.

(Diagram on left: *Vastu Purusha mandala*)

Program

To be introduced at a later time (Feb 1st)

Design Process

An essential goal of this assignment is to introduce you to *design strategies and tactics* that allow you to learn from other disciplines. This type of approach is at the heart of what enables architects to creatively respond to the most demanding needs of a client/problem, while still managing to provide new solutions that expand the available range of cultural, behavioral and architectural repertoires of society. Learning how to think and work across disciplines by means of architectural methods is key to your education as an architect in an increasing diverse, complex and changing society. During the following 3 weeks you will be given provocative assignments to guide your interdisciplinary design journey. We expect you to follow them wholeheartedly with an open-minded and experimental attitude.

Readings & References

- Alliez, Eric & Michel Feher. (1989). *Reflections of a Soul*; in M.Feher with R.Naddaff & N.Tazi (Eds.): Fragments for a History of the Human Body (Part Two) — Zone 4. New York: Urzone Inc., pp.47-84
- Bloomer, Kent & Charles Moore (1977) Body, Memory and Architecture, New Heaven:Yale University Press.
- Iyengar, B. K. S. (1979) Light on Yoga, New York: Schocken Books
- Kornfield, Jack (1993) A Path with Heart, New York: Bantam Books
- Vesely, Dalibor, (2002) *The Architectonics of Embodiment*, in G.Dodds & R. Tavernor (eds.): Body and Building, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 29-43

Links

<http://www.yogadistrict.com/>

<http://youtu.be/HmZFwoUU3WQ>

<https://youtu.be/v7AYKMP6rOE>

<http://youtu.be/rKQ0YGywqC8>

<https://youtu.be/JoRwXMLsVis>

Schedule

Project Introduction	Monday 9 January
Site Visit / Yoga Practice	Friday 13 January
Part I due (Precedents, Site, Program)	Monday 6 February
Part II Design Studies Review (Guest Jury)	Friday 24 February
Part II Parti Review (Guest Jury)	Friday 31 March
Part III Review (Closed Jury)	Friday 21 April
Exit Interview	Wed 26 April (2-6pm)

Grading Policy:

The grading of this project is broken down as follows:

Part I: Practice, Site, Precedents, and Program Analyses (Feb 6) = 15%

Part II: Exploratory Design + Parti (March 31) = 40%

Part III: Design Development & Communication (April 22) = 35%

Note: a high grade in Part III will replace a lower grade received for Part II. A low grade in Part III will not replace a higher grade received for Part II. This policy encourages you to do your best.

Evaluation

Juries and grading will use the following general criteria:

- Design Process: level of exploratory openness (creativity), discipline of inquiry (logic and system, focus, depth), commitment, and effort
- Success of design scheme (unity/consistency between program, tectonics, form-space, experience, and site)
- Level of design development as demonstrated in final presentation.
- Representation and media capability in communicating architectural intentions
- Meta-cognitive skills regarding own design process, intentions, problem interpretation, work, results