“Children should not be able to draw from casual appearances of Nature until they had first mastered the basic forms lying hidden behind appearances.” - Frank Lloyd Wright ‘Taliesin Lectures’

Premise
A child’s imagination is one of life’s greatest joys. There is much potential in the creativity with which children engage space and this must be fostered. Friedrich Froebel, the father of the Kindergarten movement, created a series of 20 “gifts” to foster this creativity. Each successive gift represented an instance in the sequencing of a child’s development. Only after a gift was mastered could the child graduate to its successor. To its detriment, save the Montessori Program, today’s modern education environment does not hold true to many of the important nuances of Froebel’s gifts. The Montessori Program encourages children to develop their observation skills by performing a variety of self-directed activities. These activities are focused on the use of the five senses, kinetic movement, spatial refinement, motor skill coordination, and concrete knowledge that later leads to abstraction. The role of the teacher is seen as observer and facilitator, not autonomous lecturer.

Objective
The objective is to explore the interactive potential of architecture, design that is responsive to both its context and the user. The form is not static, designed for a particular moment, but able to evolve. This spatial interaction is inherent in Froebel’s second gift. Froebel considered this gift [consisting of a sphere, a cube, and a cylinder] to be the most profound of all. “To understand it was to understand Kindergarten.” [Brosterman, p.46] Learning is accomplished by way of comparison - the sphere with no flat planes, the cube with no curves and the cylinder being both flat and curved. This suggests a method for understanding the toy before designing its classroom.

Content
The kindergarten is the ideal environment to investigate the educational potential of architecture. The innate curiosity of the young child will serve as the precedent for our discovery process. The studio will work with a design methodology that has exploration at its foundation, able to evolve in order to build on the unknown rather than be limited by it. The studio will approach the site and program requirements with the same inventiveness and exploration. Our position is that a building should not remain static, but evolve and learn over time.

Method
The semester will be broken into four assignments. The first three assignments will graduate and influence the fourth and final assignment. The sequencing of the semester will follow the intent Froebel laid out in his gifts - mastering the first step before moving onto the next.

The first assignment will focus on the analysis of the spatial complexities of abstract paintings.
The second assignment will use the spatial analysis from the first assignment as the basis for the design of a toy.
The third assignment will look at precedent; specifically how the detail influences design as a whole.
The fourth assignment will be the design of a Kindergarten in Brooklyn, New York.
Each assignment will be elaborated on as the semester evolves.

“The nursery school teacher is in her laboratory... She opens her eyes and her heart to these young creatures, they who are opening the book of life, at an age where everything is still promises and laughter.” - Le Corbusier The Nursery Schools
Requirements

In addition to scheduled class times, there are specific lectures and reviews you will be required to attend. If you cannot attend one of these events, please inform me about it beforehand.

I expect everyone to arrive on time (having already eaten lunch). If you have to come late, leave early, or be absent for any reason, please let me know about it in advance. Except for a reasonable stretch break, library research, computer work requiring you to be in the lab, etc., I expect you to be in studio during class hours. If you need to work outside the studio extensively on any given afternoon, please discuss it with me at the beginning of studio.

I expect students to continue to work in the studio after hours rather than taking work home at night. This is the only way to develop a studio culture in which students are available to each other for in-depth discussion, critical review of work, and valuable encouragement and assistance. If you do not plan on working in studio outside of class hours for some reason, please talk to me about it the first day of class. I need to know the context in which you’re working in order to be able to most fully help you advance this semester.

No cell phones.

Note: This course is studio-based and involves intense and regular interaction between all students and between each student and the instructor. I generally like to talk to every student about his or her work every MWF unless we are visiting the site or having a group review. Please note that if we are having desk crits and I have not talked to you, you are not free to leave. Similarly, if I talk to you early in the afternoon, you are not free to leave until 5:30pm. (Often I will make comments at the end of studio based on what I’ve seen during the afternoon.)

More than two unexcused absences will result in a lowered grade (for example an A would drop to a B) and more than three unexcused absences will result in automatic failure. Please note that these requirements may be more stringent than those of the University or of other courses or studios within the SOA. Absences are excused only for medical conditions and personal or family emergencies. The Instructor may require documentation for any excused absence.

The studio will be taking a [highly recommended] site visit to New York City. We will be visiting New York City over our Fall field trip week, February 27- March 1. More details will come but the costs should be around $400.00.

Grading

Work ethic, intellectual rigor, and product are expected to be at a level commensurate with your year level. As in all other courses in the College of Architecture, work completed for this course must comply with the UNCC Code of Academic Integrity. You are expected to participate in this class in a way that exhibits that you clearly understand that your education is both a privilege and a responsibility and requires your full engagement – that it is not something you do for a grade, but something you do for the intrinsic value it adds to your life.

As in all other courses in the School of Architecture, work completed for this course must comply with the UNCC Code of Academic Integrity. You are expected to follow ethical practices in all aspects of your work within the University and the School of Architecture. UNC Charlotte strives to create an academic climate in which the dignity of all individuals is respected and maintained. Therefore, we celebrate diversity that includes, but is not limited to ability/disability, age, culture, ethnicity, gender, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodations, please provide a “letter of accommodation” from Disabilities Services within the first two weeks of the course. All such notifications shall be confidential between the student and instructor. The following grading scale will apply. Grades will conform to the university grading scale and will be based on progress as well as product.

Undergraduate

A Outstanding - Meets or exceeds stated requirements of the course; exhibits significant improvement in understanding and execution over the course of the semester; exhibits exemplary self-motivation, time management, and leadership skills; exhibits a desire to question and critique him or herself and to pursue new ideas and/or technical skills; contributes significantly and consistently to class discussions and activities
B Good - Meets stated requirements of the course (all work complete and on time); exhibits improvement in understanding and execution over the course of the semester; exhibits self-motivation and good time management skills; participates meaningfully and often in class discussions and activities
C Average - Meets most requirements of the course (most work complete and on time); exhibits limited improvement in understanding and/or execution over the course of the semester; exhibits average self-motivation and time management skills; participates minimally in class discussions and activities
D Marginal - Substantially fails to meet stated requirements of the course (work incomplete and/or late); OR exhibits little or no improvement in understanding and/or execution over the course of the semester; OR exhibits inadequate self-motivation and/or meaningful and regular participation in class discussions and activities; OR fails to substantially understand and/or execute the concepts and skills required for the course
F Failing - Fails to meet stated requirements of the course (work consistently incomplete and/or late); OR exhibits little or no self-motivation and/or participation in class discussions and activities; OR fails to understand and/or execute the concepts and skills required for the course

NOTE: A grade of Incomplete for an individual assignment or for the entirety of the class can only be issued if the relevant circumstances are discussed before a grade is assigned.

Graduate

A Outstanding - Meets or exceeds stated requirements of the course; exhibits significant improvement in understanding and execution over the course of the semester; exhibits exemplary self-motivation, time management, and leadership skills; exhibits a desire to question and critique him or herself and to pursue new ideas and/or technical skills; contributes significantly and consistently to class discussions and activities
B Satisfactory - Meets stated requirements of the course (all work complete and on time); exhibits some improvement in understanding and execution over the course of the semester; exhibits average self-motivation and time management skills; participates meaningfully and often in class discussions and activities
C Marginal - Fails to meet stated requirements of the course (work incomplete and/or late); OR exhibits little or no improvement in understanding and/or execution over the course of the semester; OR exhibits limited self-motivation and/or meaningful and regular participation in class discussions and activities; OR fails to substantially understand and/or execute the concepts and skills required for the course
U Unsatisfactory - Fails to meet stated requirements of the course (work consistently incomplete and/or late); OR exhibits little or no self-motivation and/or participation in class discussions and activities; OR fails to understand and/or execute the concepts and skills required for the course

NOTE: A grade of Incomplete for an individual assignment or for the entirety of the class can only be issued if the relevant circumstances are discussed before a grade is assigned.

Studio Culture

[1] Be on time to class. You should expect the same of me.  [2] You shouldn’t eat during class [it’s noisy and messy] but it’s fine to bring something to drink if you want to do so.  [3] The first time your cell phone rings during class, we’ll have a very unhappy discussion. Each time thereafter, you’ll drop one letter grade.  [4] All common workspaces and crit rooms are to be cleaned up at the end of each day. This includes pinning down your project.  [5] You may listen to music during studio workdays - headphones only, no audible music is permitted.

Students with Documented Disabilities

Students in this course seeking accommodations to disabilities must first consult with the Office of Disability Services and follow the instructions of that office for obtaining accommodations.

Bibliography
