

Thick Space Pedagogy: Activating the Space between Writing and Design

"Of all the things everyone does, how much gets written down? Between the two, the image, the phantom of the expert but mute body preserves the difference."

Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

A central feature of first year Transdisciplinary Writing is the close and necessary link between between a studio's design and writing instruction. Students in Transdisciplinary Writing are writing for the studio, working towards conceptualizing and describing their architectural design in rich, nuanced language. In this collaboration with the studio, Transdisciplinary Writing works against the very real condition of muteness that students sometimes experience upon crossing the threshold into the studio. As students become acculturated in the intense new language of architectural design, there seems to be a sort of loss of ordinary language that occurs as an effect.

In truth, the loss of verbal language may be a necessary condition of the design process, particularly for first year students that must acquire this design language entirely anew.

Transdisciplinary Writing functions in this space of loss, in a sense reculturating students to verbal language through writing so that they can also begin to understand, conceptualize, and communicate their work in the studio.

Walter Benjamin suggests that knowledge can only "stand up" through multiplicities, through all acts of knowing. My approach to Transdisciplinary Writing uses this space of deculturation and reculturation as an opportunity to enact the body as a site of learning and knowing. In action based exercises, students engage with the space of learning, whether classroom, hallway, or studio, moving, touching, hearing and transforming the space through use. These embodied exercises work to create a "thickened" space for learning that activates the chasm between writing and design. They make use of the friction created from the difference and specificity of the body as it comes in contact with space. This "thick space" approach links the writing classroom to the design studio by activating and extending the space of learning, reproducing the mute body as a differentiated site of design knowledge.

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