

MATERIAL ESSENCE
studies in tectonic Layering
a botanical research center

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MIT Level 2 studio Fall 2003

ASSIGNMENT 1: Site Readings / GLASS

This assignment is in 2 parts:

1. Site Readings

Reference: James Corner: Taking Measures Across the American Landscape

The landscape of the campus was conceived by Olmstead in 1902 and resulted in a first plan in 1921. This plan has remained largely in tact until the new masterplan of Michael van Valkenburgh in 1998. Parts of that new plan are being implemented incrementally with the new buildings currently being constructed on campus. see- the 1998 landscape masterplan.

The site for the project is at the periphery of the campus, adjacent to the lake to the southern edge. The proposition is to construct a botanical research center which, in part would replace but also enhance the greenhouse complex which is currently a part of the science complex- please see the program outline.

The "site" is larger than needed for the project so it represents a zone of activity - for considering how and where to build. Eventually, as part of your design strategy, you will make decisions about the nature of the architecture that compliments this place and how it is partly derived for you readings about the site, and partly from a larger conceptual proposition about the form and its materiality.

You can *read* this site in many different ways and the intention is to explore and develop your own particular interpretation. We are looking for a means to enter a discussion *with* the site which can become an entry point into the project. It is partly about developing an attitude but also about identifying the essence. Some sites are so specific that there is only one way to work it- but with the site at Wellesley there are multiple ways in which it can be read. You should not be simply recording what is there - but represent what you *see and hear*.

The task:

1. Site visit: Photographs, sketch, diagram, measure and / or write about the place. Document it well in a series of notes to yourself.
2. Using James Corner's work as a reference, develop a representation (or a series) using a combination of primarily drawings/ diagrams, photograph and collage. The representations, (which should be designs in themselves), should conceptualize and communicate your reading of the site. Suggested starting points could be to work around observations of:

space / boundary
contour / surface
scale
flow
metrics / modulation
texture / color
light / shade
sight/ line
geometry
typology,
orientation / cartography
traces / layering

2. GLASS

Research and select 5 IMAGES that represent innovative, inspirational or intriguing qualities of glass (or material with some of the properties of glass- plastics, fabrics, composites etc).

Research through publications, readings, architects works, art publications, product literature and so forth. Examples might be found through thinking about:

transparency
light
reflection
color
fabrication /assembly
lamination
scale
layering
casting
jointing
detail
products
contexts

Schedule:

Make a powerpoint digital file of:

Your selected studies from the site visit(s)

Your representation(s)

The images

For presentation and discussion in studio on THURSDAY OCTOBER 3