# Animating Experience in a Beginning Design Studio

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### Animating Experience

Greg Lynn's seminal work, Animate Form, described the potential in harnessing animation software to create new forms and effects. Decades after its publication, Lynn and his protégées have moved beyond fetishizing the tools of production to a focus on sensorial animate experience. Many tactics exist, and in a beginning design studio, sensation and atmosphere can be challenging ideas to represent. In one second year design studio, Graphic Interchange Format (GIF) images were used as a low-tech means of describing proposed atmospheres; working in Photoshop to create variegated lighting effects or movement of objects in space provided students with new tactics for exploring and presenting experiential effects. Especially in beginning design studio where students are familiar with Photoshop, but perhaps new to discussions about light and experience, GIFs proved to be a refreshing and valuable representational modality.

### Research Questions

What are alternative media for atmospheric presentations in a traditional design review?  Can designing animate form enable a different way of thinking about the architectural experience? Can GIF animations add depth to students' presentation boards?

### Project Summary

In a Cal Poly San Luis Obispo second year design studio, in the first week of class, students were asked to develop the design of a continuous, gradated path that would describe fast and slow movement through a GIF animation. Students sampled images of ocean creatures, which began their research for the studio program, an aquarium sited in Santa Monica, California. Through the initial one-week exercise, students gained valuable skills in animation that informed their final presentations. The GIF overlays on their final presentation boards enabled students to relay the animate experience of their designs, demonstrating changing lighting through and movement within the aquarium tanks.

### Outcomes

Although challenging to represent in a 2D poster format, the final presentations were engaging, dynamic and well received. The animations overlaid on the project boards enabled students to represent the sensorial qualities of the lighting and atmospheres of the proposed spaces. A number of students remarked that they plan to use the overlay technique in future presentations.  Although the animations required considerable design and production time, students who tested their overlays a week before the final review were better prepared for the technical challenges of projection. Yet the tactic proved to be a valuable pursuit both in terms of the development of technical skills and teaching the importance of atmosphere in design and representation.

# ANIMATING EXPERIENCE IN BEGINNING DESIGN STUDIO

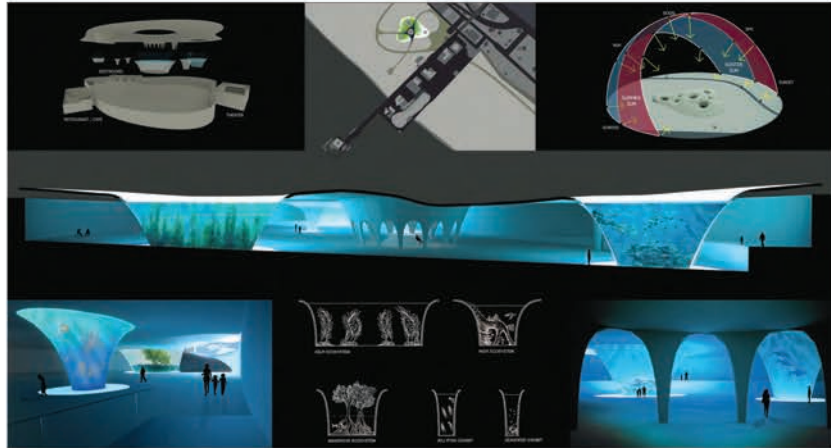

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Above and far left: Second year student, Zach Farwell, described the movement of light through water in rooms surrounded by aquarium tanks.



**Design Research in the Studio Context**