
Man-Made Landscapes: Synthetic Terrains

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RUNDOWN

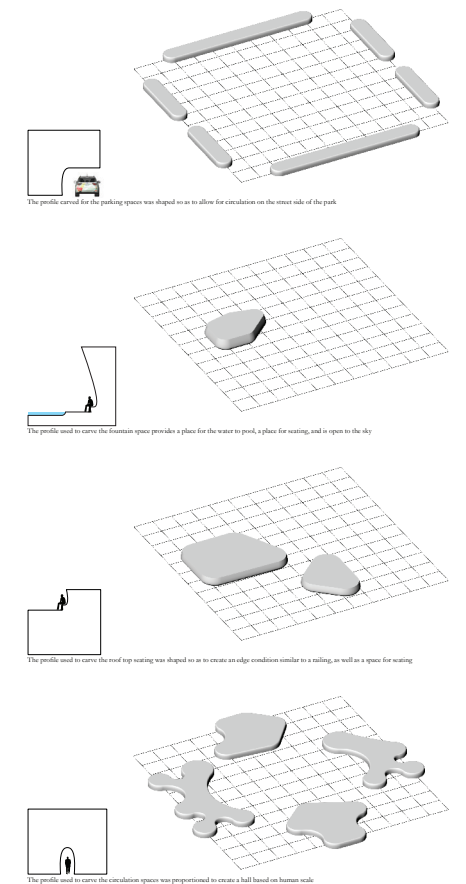
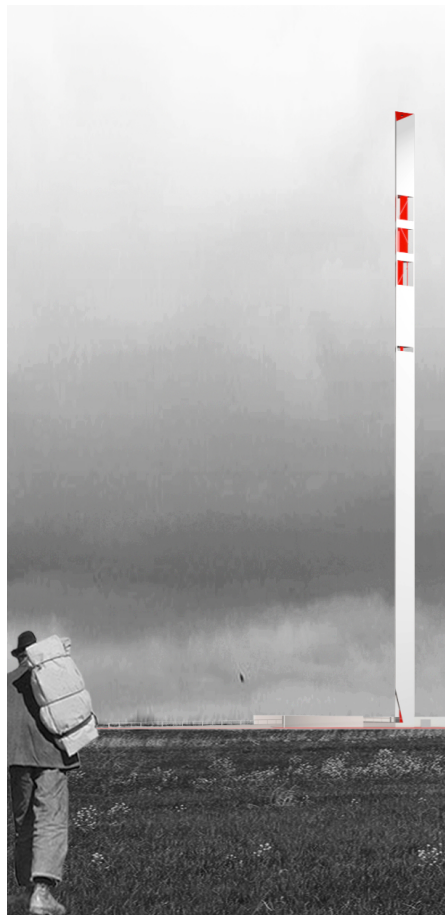
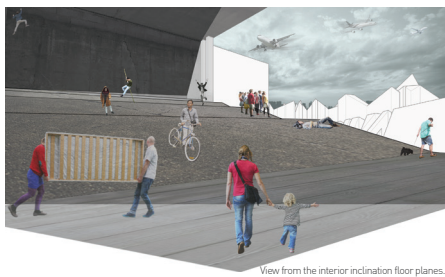
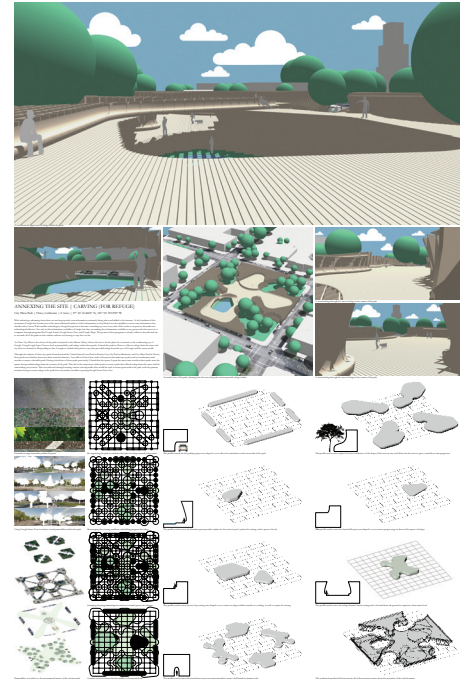
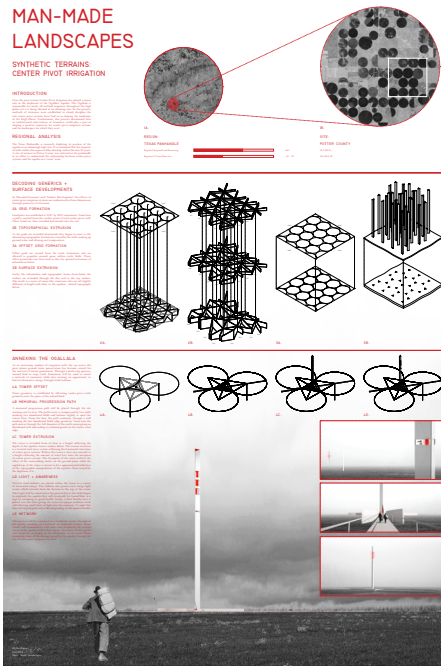
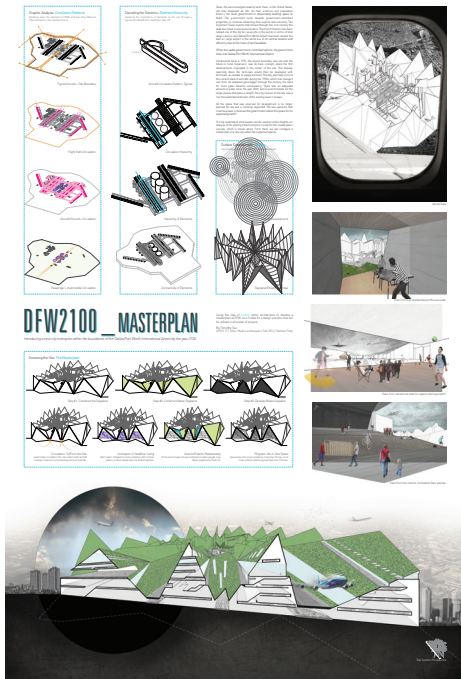
Synthetic Terrains is an ongoing seminar devoted to the synthesis of original research and design strategies through a close analysis of architecture's evolving development towards landscape and geologic form as a subject of influence for its formal and representational strategies. In a critical survey of the built environment, the seminar's pedagogical approach combines themed historical and theoretical readings, built and unbuilt case studies and process-oriented, analytical design projects culminating in a multi-volume graphic taxonomy documenting alternative architectural strategies that blend building and site.

PROCESS

One of the first objectives in the course is the creative documentation of 'generic' sites of interest in the man-made environment. An initial exercise challenges the students to adopt a set of real sites in the auto-oriented urban/suburban landscape. The diagrammatic vehicle for this exercise is the 'surface' and these conceptual elements are composed of natural and artificial topological layers extracted by each investigator. When pulled apart, the strata of each subject brings to light novel representations and observations of parts-to-whole relationships and events on the ubiquitous sites. By investigating the 'norms,' or general rules at play in the design of a particular synthetic terrain, the seminar considers the effects of re-purposing these disparate sites through the development of creative notational systems that abstractly describe the formal and technical impacts of 'man-made' traces on the site. Informed by speculations on the theoretical evolution of the urban 'surface' proposed by architects such as Alex Wall and Stan Allen, the students then systematically use notational systems, superimpositions, grid overlays and controlled geometrical manipulations to develop new spatial relationships that propose alternative methods for knitting together building and terrain into useful prototypes for a variety of landscapes.

PRODUCT

Following these exercises, the students are challenged to recompose their conceptually provocative work into a personally authored graphic volume that becomes the new medium for accelerating the narrative qualities of the design process. As a final project, the students implement the strategies documented within their manuals in an experimental architectural project that speculates on new forms of spatial concept, collective space and experience in the context of their sites.



STUDENT PROJECT BOARDS

Featured Students (from left): Timothy Tse, Dylan Rupar and Nicholas Hnastchenko + details of the boards