

DEWPOINT

STUDIO ANNOUNCEMENT | 2G1/3G4 Graduate Architecture Studio Fall 2007 | Malcolm McCullough



- goal:** How can design respond to the Great Lakes themselves? Why has so little cultural production interpreted this, the planet's largest body of fresh water? This studio offers practice at taking ideas about geographic awareness into a well-resolved proposal for a building.
- focus:** A sharper sensibility toward ambient phenomena has become basic preparation in architecture. Not only must design for a media-saturated age increasingly communicate in the background, but also design response to climatic alarm might involve delight (and not just duty) in making light, air, and water more its subject matter.
- metaphor:** A common measure of humidity, and a state where atmospheric becomes visible, "dewpoint" serves both as reminder of climate and metaphor for more abstract observations.
- material:** Water, which is newsworthy of late in Michigan, will be foremost among many materials considered in this studio. Embodiment, assembly, and weathering will inform all work.
- site:** At the mouth of the Grand, Michigan's best-known river, the city of Grand Haven provides a well-considered downtown vision as our base. In reworking its waterfront connection, this city seeks a more vibrant relation of figure and field. As an architectural challenge for individual student projects, the main link must be a small but identity-producing building, on less than half an acre at the prime intersection. For a group preliminary project, the surrounding 2-3 block area to the waterline invites operations of landscape urbanism. Meanwhile under the "2G1/3G4" shared studios' curriculum, our abstract "dual site," onto which the primary must somehow offer a fresh lens, is the unknowable immensity and fragility of the Great Lakes themselves.
- travel:** In Grand Haven the studio will meet with representatives of the planning department, downtown development agency, and arts council. An early semester trip will camp on the dual site, that is, at the beach. A midsemester review will be held on the primary site downtown.
- data:** Together with the city of Grand Haven, the Ann Arbor firm Johnson Hill Land Ethics, who wrote the downtown vision, has provided abundant background, and is receptive to this studio.
- program:** This project invites programmatic invention. Proposals are expected to combine elements of environmental art, conventional main street infill, and a small but prominent civic space for performance, exhibition, or assembly. While schemes must obviously avoid usual lakefront disneyfication formulas, likewise they are expected to avoid mainly sculptural "trophy buildings." The goal is to inscribe a structure that is distinct but not attention-seeking, imaginative in approach to landscape urbanism, contributing to local form-based codes, raising sensitivity to ambient experience, and memorable in the use of materials. Especially water.