

The Studio

PART 00: ANALYSIS OF SITE & PROGRAM

DUE Ready for January 12. Final (adjusted) presentation for January 30 @ 2:00 PM

OBJECTIVE The objective of *Part 00* is to consider the impact of two essential forces shaping the design of every building: program and site conditions. In fact, function and context have traditionally been two of the most popular design methods followed by architects.

The VAS studio asks you not to give in to what site and program demand from you. On the contrary, it is of particular interest how VAS looks at, analyzes and understands these conditions. Does VAS imply a particular ‘re-construction’ or ‘re-conceptualization’ of the program in line with its critical resistance to contemporary customs? How does VAS see the role of the ‘institution’? Are site forces constrains to follow, reject, or resist? VAS must be present in your interpretation of site and program. The fact that you will be doing the context and functional analyses simultaneously allows you to apply VAS to both at once, while learning their natures and relationships.

NOTE: since you will be doing a large part of this assignment without much knowledge of VAS, you will have to do your best based on the assigned readings and the VAS manifesto (syllabus).

SITUATION *There are three fundamental directions or foci in which one’s life may advance: doing, having, or being.*

We live in a world that expects from us continuous productive or consumption activity. Be it at work, in the market, or at school, we are being asked to do more and more. Doing, it seems, is the ticket to success. After all, the saying

goes, you haven't seen anybody getting places by staying sit on their butt. We love to boast about how much we have accomplished and, better still, how much there still remains to do! Who can really deny that we are competing with each other (and with ourselves) as to who is the one most overwhelmed with work? So, doing, getting-things-done is the mantra running our daily lives. We accordingly pack our days from dawn to dusk with activities aimed at achieving maximum benefit. And, naturally, we transfer this lifestyle to our kids' whose schedules are so busy with extra-curricular activities (designed to put them ahead in adult life) that they have no time to ... play! Our 'try-to-keep-busy' stoic attitude also cuts into our leisure time (i.e., we come back from vacation more tired than we left), the gym (Oh, boy! Do you know how much I lifted today!? ... and that's nothing to what I still have to do in the coming weeks according to my new work-out routine), and even spiritual practices (i.e., guess who is getting more enlightened, righteous, or closer to God?).

Of course, the strife for doing is only one side of the coin. The other side is the simultaneous expectation for uncritical consumption. Buying, getting, using up, having are not just legitimate ways in which to spend our free time, but a socially accepted (and surely needed) mechanism of psychological compensation. And more, much more. In fact, it has lately taken on patriotic value: the best contribution a concerned citizen could do right after 9-11 (as requested by the President himself) was ... to go shopping! The message is clear and loud. If we are not busy doing, then be busy consuming, but be busy. Don't stop! Just keep on going.

Indeed, living in America today means to be 24/7 busy. So accustomed have we grown to this situation that even when we are not busy we feel in the need to fake that we are. Who hasn't found oneself simulating to be busy at somebody's gaze? It is as if the more it is demanded from us, the more we do, the more we buy or have, the busier we are, the higher is our self worth and placement in society and, supposedly, the better we feel.

Those people, practices, activities, or beliefs not fitting in this picture are quickly spotted and discredited. In our extreme neo-puritan ethics, hanging-out, idling, not doing are seen as parasitical, aberrant if not plain subversive acts. Social labels and judgments are readily available to explain these non-sense attitudes: ignorance, psychological disturbance, immaturity, naïve idealism, religious fundamentalism, leftist anarchism ... We just need to keep the system going and for this, we are reassured over and over again, we must have the productive and consumption machine running undisturbed (now globally). Never mind the results of these actions.

Doing and having have won the day.

PROGRAM The *Tao Metaversity* is a building program with few precedents in the West. What is it? *Meta* means, in addition to, beyond. *Tao* means, the way. This is an learning environment that integrates the knowledge our species have accumulated thus far *and* what is presently unfolding. Yet it goes beyond. In fact, its job is not about getting ‘knowledge’ (for that would sooner or later fall into the trap of ‘having’) but instead in pursuing the study and development of *being*. It is an educational institution devoted to assist students in developing ‘*being*’. The curriculum and pedagogy focus not on acquiring but on experiencing.

Architecture is to become a sanctuary for guiltless idling, a place to find, enjoy, inquire, and expand being. It is an education that silences the pressures to get and do, providing students tools and methods to notice, study, and evolve their own functioning self in the context of intersubjective sharing and review. The place will foster and celebrate not-doing, not-having, stopping, letting be, listening. As such the building will provide with a necessary retreat from real world dis-ease and promote healing, both at the individual and social levels. It will be a place where people go to stop, find, investigate and share themselves in the here and now of their lives. It is an urban retreat dedicated to support a committed study of being. In this sense, the *Tao Metaversity* is sacred space.

The program and other relevant information is available on the [VAS FTP site](#), please, download the files. Other references are also available there.

PROGRAM STUDY You will investigate the program by *developing it!* This is an unique opportunity. Not too many times we get to think and decide what a new type of institution ought to be like. In order to do so, first you will consider the ideological position of the *Tao Metaversity* in light of its own statements, precedents (which you will seek) and Voluntary Simplicity (which you will read). This means you may need to construct the spatial requirements and be ready to explain why. Questions you may ask are: How does the integrative philosophy and curriculum translate into actual operation, functions, and spaces? If it’s so revolutionary, shouldn’t the program be revolutionary? If so, what does *that* mean? How do you make it so it’s appropriate and consistent to what the institution professes? How does the *Tao Metaversity* foster Voluntary Simplicity ideals? How does your program compare to precedents? What is/are the most unique/important aspect(s) of this institution? Please, use the extra material available at the [VAS FTP site](#).

Product: Once your programmatic study has been done, you will summarize your investigation in diagrams, text, and images as necessary. A list of spaces w/qualities for all 3 buildings and gardens is expected. Format and media up to you. *Due: Monday 12 January (large group work)*

Following, you will use diagrams to investigate two different programmatic dimensions. These two diagrams should work as an overlay sequence in 11"x17" prints. Use appropriate labeling and color-coding as necessary:

Conceptual Program diagrams: study the program through a hierarchical division of the program (e.g., major areas).

Spatial Relationship diagrams (including indoor-outdoor): Within the established order, proceed to define the type of spatial interactions between program elements.

Product: Digitized diagrams (if they are not already in electronic format)

Due: Monday 12 January (large group work)

SITE

The building site is in the Sugarhouse shopping district, strategically located between busy corporate office towers, freeway exit, and shopping malls and, on the other hand, the quiet and private Pearsley Hollow park. The available lot is presently empty and directly south of the park. Site information is available on the [VAS FTP site](#). This site demands considerations of space, scale, adjacencies, materials, circulation, traffic, accessibility, visibility, orientation, uses, future growth, etc. In addition, the architectural/landscape qualities of the lot itself deserve analytical consideration.



Your approach to the site should open new insights. The existing urban, architectural and social conditions offer you the opportunity to reflect on your VAS conviction, which, actually, should frame your understanding of the site.

SITE STUDY *Visual Essay:* First, go and visit the site **alone**. Experience it directly with your full being. Become aware of how each sense open a different gate to experiencing it. Touch, see, walk, smell, jump, kick, taste ... Don't indulge in analytical elaborations that remove yourself from the actual experience of the place. Be conscious of the forces affecting you and the your surroundings by feeling them. Think in order to help you become aware but not to elaborate impossible to respond hypothesis. Open to what is present there. Don't bring in what is not there. Avoid asking "why" and instead choose to remain aware, observant, active, sharp. During this personal visit, you will take **photos** of the site that (a) offer defamiliarizing (i.e., mind-expanding) interpretations (i.e., impossible to grasp intellectually but full of beauty) and (b) address your emotional impressions (e.g., feelings of mystery, warmth, aversion, roughness, cold, boredom, excitement, etc.). There is no right or wrong way of doing this. Use a 3.0 Megapixel camera or better (or scan photo at 150dpi).

Product: compose (don't manipulate at all unless absolutely necessary: for example, cropping) these photos into one large sheet. You should use at least 18 photos. The format is 11x17 sheets to be printed. *Due: Mon 12 January (individual work)*

Documentation: This time, go as a group, and after developing a clear methodology, proceed to document actual conditions of your site (photos of elevations of adjoining buildings, views and viewpoints, etc). Make measurements and notations of objective conditions as necessary. Get lot info and plot maps as necessary (Google Earth is a good place to start). Some info is available on course FTP site.

Product: photos, plans, elevations, plots, etc. *Due: Monday 12 January (large group work)*

Analysis: What kind of natural, socio-cultural, economic, ecological, microclimatic, and political zones overlap on it? This place demands considerations of space, scale, adjacencies, materials, circulation, traffic, accessibility, visibility, uses, and a full array of environmental issues. Develop a methodological strategy to aboard the multidimensional nature of your study.

Product: diagrammatic, orthographic, conceptual, or tectonic AD models and drawings as well as notations to carry out and communicate your analytical work. Format and media is up to you *Due: Monday 12 January (large group work)*

VAS Site Partis: Define your attitude/position towards contextual pressures over your building. You need to have 3 different readings.

Product: use 2D and 3D notations, diagrams and models as necessary to explain your 3 positions. *Due: Friday 30 January (small group work)*

SITE &
PROGRAM
JOINT STUDY

You will complete your programming and site analysis by doing these two last diagrams at 1"=32' scale.

Site-Program Scale diagram: Study in plan the size and scale impact of the program on the site. *Due: Monday 12 January (large group work)*

Conceptual Massing diagram: 3D investigation of the design opportunities of your VAS Program Parti in combination with your VAS Site Parti. Could you condense it to a few key sections? *Due: Friday 30 January (small group work)*

Produce digital versions of all these diagrams/models as necessary.

SHOW

You will discuss your program and site studies in a 20 minutes presentation. Allow for a 10 minute discussion afterward. You are also to submit an organized digital version of your work and place it in the studio FTP site as specified.

TEAM

Large Group = 4/5 students *and* Small Groups=2/3 students

GRADE

10 % of the course grade

ADVICE

Simplify ... Choose to Simplify !