

Pulsating Elan

By Eric Goldemberg
Principal, MONAD Studio
www.monadstudio.com
eric@monadstudio.com

Associate Professor
Digital Design Coordinator
FIU Department of Architecture
Florida International University

PROGRAMME

1- Lecture + 3-day Design Workshop / December 16-18

Students enrolled in the Pulsating Elan Design Workshop will be introduced to design sensibilities involving the expression of underlying rhythmic effects that reveal pulsating spatial qualities, both at the scale of the human body and at the scale of a small pavilion installation. It is expected that the workshop generates a series of design iterations that will be evolved towards fabrication strategies in the Spring.

The design experience will transform 2-dimensional perceptual rhythmic fields derived from interpretative music analysis into proliferating three-dimensional formations that retain the perceptual abstraction but afford multiple scales of operation ranging from body prostheses to architectural spaces.

3D software: Maya

2- Construction of an installation in Brno during the Spring

A select group of resulting geometrical constructs from the workshop will be subsequently evolved towards the construction of a small pavilion/installation during the Spring in Brno, in a site to be determined and with the support of the School of Architecture. This design development and fabrication process will be led by Eric Goldemberg in collaboration with a group of students and faculty.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Rhythmic perception as the generator of moods

“According to Lyotard in any given rhythm, the condition for repetition - formal identity and regularity - must somehow be vested in a matrix object whose aim is to collapse such regularities and smash such identities in its own drive toward “bad form”. The beat itself, composed of both extinction and repetition, is the form of this “bad form”. It is the violence lying in wait for form, as it is the form of violence.”

- Rosalind Krauss¹

Music experienced live can trigger all sorts of bodily reactions and moods that transport the mind to zones of pure sensory activity, rendering the body a conduit of multiple micro-transmitted signals of pulsating input that send shivers down a listener's spine. MONAD Studio's interest in tackling this very physical experience at the scale of the human body is coupled with design morphologies that further evoke rhythmical, intensely sonic pulses in order to create tension between the musician's postures and the prosthetic musical instruments. The architecture projects by MONAD Studio motivated by harnessing sonic mayhem through three-dimensional form represent a radical shift in practice; a move towards the creation of material environments that cultivate feedback. A reciprocal relation between subject and object motivated by the enhancement of rhythmic moods in the perceptual field, this technique adopted from the sonic world unlocks new potentials for design to engage directly with the ever-changing postures of the human body.

Rhythmic perception as the generator of moods

Rhythmic effects accentuate the afterimage of detailed ornament as a trace, an index of activity registered upon architectural membranes, which codify spatial transformation and generate spatial moods. The Miami-based practice of MONAD Studio's partners Eric Goldemberg and Veronica Zalcborg is characterized by a relentless pursuit of rhythmic effects in architecture. They are interested in highlighting conditions of rhythmic perception by creating spaces and artifacts and installations that engage with our innate capacity to receive and process sensate matter that is highly articulated in series and aggregates of units that measure simultaneously space and time.

The pulsatile quality of spatial atmospheres

Pulsation applies to sound and rhythm as it does to architecture, where a pulse provides a guideline for articulation, a thread to pull, which pushes back and pushes forward, a locus to navigate around and through.

Rhythm appears as regulated time, governed by rational laws, but in contact with what is least rational in human being: the lived, the carnal, the body. Time and space, the cyclical and the linear, exert a reciprocal action, they measure themselves against one another; each one makes itself and is made a measuring-measure; everything is defined by cyclical repetitions through linear repetitions.

Rhythm is born of moments of intensity, incommensurable accents that create unequal extensions of duration. Whereas meter presumes an even division of a uniform time, rhythm presupposes a time of flux, of multiple speeds and reversible relations that can be calibrated to define a specific spatial atmosphere.

Feedback as the visceral experience of atmosphere

"The reverberation infused into experience produced by guitar feedback is a major milestone of heavy rock music, from Black Sabbath to Godflesh, from Jimi Hendrix to Throbbing Gristle. One can say that turning up as loud as you can and allowing the harsh feedback to envelope a crowd is the essential difference between playing a song and performing it "

- Andrew Santa Lucia³

MONAD Studio's architectures act as a momentary testimony to a guttural technique of using destabilizing forces in feedback within their representation, their drawings and sonic artifacts, to

fundamentally move out of different stages in projects and into newness – only possible by enhancing experience through a shaking-up of the foundations of perception and design.

MONAD's projects incorporate the fundamental reverberations implied by their physical spaces as a sort of emergent form that affects the singularity of their drawings and installations to become a project in and of themselves – autonomy through codependency with reality.

Feedback fills the spaces between the forms, the notes. The first generations of electric guitarists considered feedback to be bad, a technical mishap to be avoided. Jimi Hendrix discovered ways to use it as a musical expression in its own right, glorified in his Woodstock performance of "The Star Spangled Banner", the moody and spacey "Pali Gap" and the war-evocative, wah-wah infused wails in "Machine Gun". If the amplifier is loud enough, its sound can physically shake a guitar's pickups enough to produce a current. That current gets sent to the amp, which then vibrates the pickups harder, which sends even more current to the amp, which in turn produces even more sound. This feedback loop builds rapidly, getting louder and louder. Hendrix was one of the first guitarists to think of his instrument as a way to modulate an electrical signal first and foremost. He didn't just pluck and strum the strings; he scraped them and swatted them and played with their tension. And he produced his most distinctive sounds by letting the amp itself vibrate his guitar's pickups. This frictional empathy between the body and the instrument can be seen in MONAD's generous folding of shape and event through rhythmic feedback that embody the actual discipline of architecture, which is a convoluted mess of outside influence, inside drawing and in-between mediations, in service of creating a proposition of characterized existence, a new atmosphere.

Through collaborations with musicians, composers and luthiers the partners at MONAD Studio have been able to develop projects that add more dimensions and qualities to the perception of space; their sonic installations and 3D printed music instruments activate relations that define new possible applications for architecture as a medium for the transmission of sensations. Aural, visual and tactile senses are activated by the morphology of their pieces, generating a network of social interaction that augment the role of architecture from background to active fodder for sensory activity.

The contribution of the sonic dimension to an architecture of moods is exemplified by the interest of MONAD Studio in coalescing the physical sensations of the experience of music with the precisely shaped and scaled profiles of their artifacts that became highly charged functional and aesthetic extensions of the body; creating an entirely new domain of design where architecture and music intersect to engender enigmatic objects of projective desire and evocative thrust.

The intimate space surrounding the body is the most immediate concern for this new domain of design. Mood emerges from the oozing sensations enacted by provocative prosthetic adaptations, leading to innovative modalities of performance encoded in enigmatic, yet precise sonic architectures.