**Introduction**

Generally in architecture we view technology and appearance as necessary but mutually exclusive concepts. Technology is traditionally sided with engineering, with structure, effort and work, while appearance is sided with façades and ornament, with accessories and even beauty. In classical theories of design we denote this opposition with the terms *ergon* and *parergon*, meaning “work” and “by-work.” Simply put: structure is doing the work, while ornament is doing a side job, it’s an “add-on.” This division, which lies at the core of Alberti’s *Ten Books of Architecture*, is still the standard way of conceiving the architectural profession, and often with devastating consequences: structure refers to engineering, beauty to art, and the gap between them gets wider and wider. It would not be far-fetched to speak of a chasm.

We, however, are not going to accept this chasm as a fact of life. Instead of a gap between the two, we will try to create overlappings and, even more ambitiously, try view them as converging at a point where structure becomes mega-ornament and ornament mini-structure. Oddly enough, one encounters in the long history of architecture only a few attempts to explore such an overlapping middle zone. For instance, Art Nouveau tried to accept and mix both in the most extreme forms, showing structure with its rivets and joints while the curves swerve over ceiling and walls, irrespective of the borders that the structure tried to establish. More radical, and more successful, was the Gothic with its obsession for line work (tracery), with ribs bending and curving toward and away from one another, as easily forming structural nets as decorated patterns. Another example we find in nineteenth-century England with its obsession for what they call “constructive polychromy,” commonly known as the “streaky bacon style,” where the layering of bricks was used to show courses of differently colored and textured bricks and stone. Such ideas were based on the work of theoreticians such as John Ruskin and Gottfried Semper who stated we should understand walls as veils or garments, and acknowledge the deep relationship of their textile nature with the tectonics of structure.

**Techniques**

Ruskin and Semper had a very important point with the interrelated qualities of textile ornament and tectonic structure, since weaving, braiding or knitting should be understood as embodying both poles of our problem: a) as techniques of *appearance*, since they deal with color, figures and images; and b) as techniques of *assembly* just like carpentry, bricklaying or casting. The word “techniques” is crucial here. We find techniques everywhere, in cooking, in drawing, in dancing, even in rhetoric. In the three studios dealing with our topic of FIGURING we will be making extensive use of techniques. In fact, we will be studying techniques of design before we get to issues such as program or site. The first half of the semester will be dealing specifically with techniques and methodologies. There are a few aspects of these techniques that should be mentioned before we discuss the content of each studio separately.