MATERIAL DIVERSIONS : OFF-THE-SHELF
School of Architecture / College of Design / Georgia Institute of Technology
Research Workshop - Spring 2020 - Fridays 9AM-12PM @DFL

Open all students; limit of 14 students
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Course Description:

MATERIAL DIVERSIONS is a space for experimentation. A space for Action Design where we connect our head with our hands and our hands with the materials that build architecture. It is through this intimate encounter that we can understand, learn and unlearn, maybe then innovate.

As part of Material Diversions, OFF-THE-SHELF places the focus at the intersection between regimentation and freedom, critical dichotomy of our contemporary culture and life. Most of the materials we build with are standardized. Standardization enables a shared technical language, the simplification (order) of complex worlds, interchangeability of services and parts, affordability of products through economies of scale... but many times this means flattening repetition, prescribed application, the perpetuation of mediocre or obsolete practices, or the disappearance of improvisation and play as part of the design process. Standards -whether inherited, enforced or agreed- can be at times liberating and at times suffocating, but despite their normative condition, standards are there to be updated, challenged and reimagined. A flexible space for customization, experimentation and reinvention that can inform the next generation of standards is very much needed.

Research Methodology:

With this framework, through analyzing the material nature, production methods and typical applications of ready-made constructive units, alternative uses to the prescribed ones are tested, structures built and spaces imagined without the constraints of specific programs or sites.

Through an iterative design process of making like sketching, students develop from experiments to prototypes of discovered solutions, understanding the limitations of the materials and products they work with while exploiting their untapped possibilities. Empirical work is carried out both as scientists and jazz artists -carefully monitoring each step and using improvisation as creative tool- encouraging productive discovery from experiments as a way of inspiration and evolution of the work.

From physical construction, to digital scanning, to audiovisual documents and instruction manuals, media -the necessary ally for design production and dissemination- is also understood as site for creative exploration.

Course Requirements:

This course welcomes any student who has the ability to observe, question, react, test, fail and persevere; who is able to venture into the unknown and enjoy the space of uncertainty; who is able to work autonomously while sharing ideas and actions that build a collective project; and who is willing to have active participation in this adventure in the class and through collaborative online platforms.