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UNPACKED:

DESIGN GENEALOGICAL STUDIES
SYLLABUS & COURSE DESCRIPTION

JESSICA D'ELENA

Your Design Family Tree

Department of Visual Studies
Hours Tuesdays 1:00pm-4:00pm
Length 12 weeks

Research the family tree of your influences and interests connected to your architectural design practice. The “tree” should be far reaching and complex, covering a wide array of cultural activities and issues. Start with a contemporary architect (or architects) that you think you relate to. Expand it to include contemporary and historical figures/movements from the world of art, architecture, product or interior design, fashion, film, music, and performances, places (houses, cities, gardens, landmarks), books (literary, philosophical) and then oddities like specific objects, tools, appliances, personal experiences etc. The ideas represented in your genealogy should range from popular to avant-garde, from subculture to high-culture, from popular to obscure and esoteric, and everything in between.

How to succeed in this course: It is critical that you allow yourself a little personal exposure. Do not try and present a picture of your influences you think illustrates what a “cool” person/designer you are. If you do not research yourself and your influences with absolute honesty you will have a difficult time identifying a compelling narrative with which to work out a design strategy to represent it. The objective of this course is to discover what YOUR aims of discovery as an architecture student are; this often means pulling from personal sources and identifications less significant or even silly to others. As my grandfather Jim used to say, “Fuck ‘em.”

The course will be organic in nature. We will meet weekly in an open forum to discuss, argue, give feedback to and embrace the ideologies and work each student has developed. I will serve as facilitator and participant in class crits, however, this class is, for the most part, run by you. A large portion of your grade is determined by class participation. Ask questions, offer feedback, make an effort to investigate what it is your fellow students are getting at. This is where the real research and discovery will reveal itself.

The loose structure of the class will be as follows:

PART ONE - Research/collection

PART TWO - Organization

PART THREE - Narrative Development

PART FOUR - Design

PART FIVE - Structural Development

CRIT ONE

Present initial research, material etc. for any of the areas above that you identify with and any relevant others. Keep track of all your sources, you will be using this material throughout the semester. Bring in at least twelve images that represent the key areas of your Genealogy; place one influence per 8.5x11” sheet.