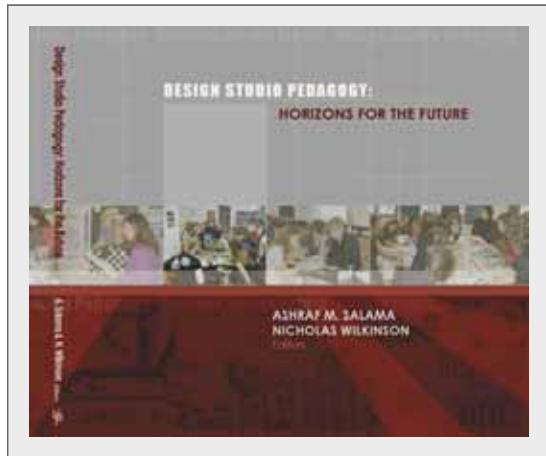


## DESIGN STUDIO PEDAGOGY: HORIZONS FOR THE FUTURE

By: *Ashraf M. Salama and Nicholas Wilkinson (editors)*

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*Design Studio Pedagogy: Horizons for the Future* fills an important void. As pointed out by the editor/ authors Ashraf M Salama & Nicholas Wilkinson, in their introduction, it has been 15 years since a significant book on the subject of teaching design studios was published. Divided into 6 sections, an introductory section and then 5 sections called chapters, the book covers theory of studio instruction, theory of

student learning, thinking and decision-making, community design and digital technologies. Each chapter/ section begins with some commentary by the editors and is followed by articles written by a variety of authors, some of whom present a theoretical position on design instruction, but most of whom describe one or more examples of design studio instruction.

The power of the book comes from its compilation of a large number of examples of studio teaching, each written with a clear explication of the position toward instruction taken by the instructor. Because the pedagogical intention of each teacher is made explicit and the methodology clearly laid out and illustrated, one is able to develop a clear vision of the variety of approaches (design-build, urban design, the use of materials and details at the architectural scale, design using computer/ virtual representation of the site, installation art, service-based learning), as well as the overall pattern of similarity in studio teaching from the text (e.g. the use of student teams of individuals working together, and strong instructional framework given by the instructor). Since the articles are limited in

length (no doubt necessary in order to include so many views), the reader however, is typically left desiring more information on the student work. Without more descriptive material, it is impossible to know whether the examples shown actually represent the work of the entire class or only one outstanding student or student group. The success of each approach cannot be assessed independently of the author's view.

Numerous discussions about design instruction and the theories that inform them are dispersed throughout the book. Addressing greatly diverse topics, these range in quality from those that provide very new information and approaches (the article on emotions by Austerlitz and Aravot) to those that address familiar issues in a way no different from 20 years ago. While in one sense it is valuable to see so many positions discussed all together, on the other hand the reader, perhaps simplistically, wishes for a strong position to be taken, similar to the single-minded approach taken in the book edited by Thomas Dutton, *Voices in Architectural Education: Cultural Politics and Pedagogy* (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1991) that provides clarity and unity.

Seen in the context of the recent JAE Journal on design and research (September 2007, 61: 1, edited by George Dodd and Jori Erdman), *Design Studio Pedagogy* comes across as less interested in theoretical debates but more concerned with Practical approaches to pedagogy. The text is framed by two respected and familiar voices in teaching, Habraken and Sanoff. Nonetheless, the appropriate selection of these authors begs a critique of why their advice is still relevant today and what has

changed or needs to change to make their views central instead of at the margin. That is where the issues raised in the JAE issue on design and research, namely the transformation from an approach that was largely influenced by "critical theory" to a concern with the practice and implementation of architecture, could be revealing. Engaging with the current discussion could explain what changes in viewpoint and instruction, no doubt represented in subsequent chapters, are necessary to achieve the orientation to everyday life and to ordinary people implied by Habraken and Sanoff. In this way what might seem an apparent lack of coherence in the book would be revealed as various options for a new direction.

*Design Studio Pedagogy* clearly delineates the many approaches to studio teaching taking place now. By revealing the challenge of theoretically addressing the rich diversity of approaches to instruction, *Design Studio Pedagogy* demonstrates the need for rigorous research on studio teaching that engages issues of description and evaluation so that we can know what instructional techniques are worth pursuing in what context.

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For a complete professional biography, see contributors to this issue pp.7-13.