HOW TO BUILD FOR CREATIVE LEARNING?  
— A SCHOOL FROM BENCH TO BUILDING

Schools are building types that reflect the development of educational systems and cultural movements. In the coming years our methods of education will change in ways that are now unimaginable… or are they? The question this studio would like to ask is what education in the future might look like. What might be the alternative to an education model that has remained largely unaltered for the last century.

_Schola_ means the pleasure of having “free time,” “idleness, doing nothing.” In this studio the idea is to create a school that follows the German _Gesamtschule_ where all ages are educated together. The school would fuse traditional education with new inventions that bridge the solid and ethereal, tangible and digital, crafted and hi-tech, man-made and natural, mundane and sublime.

This studio collaborates with the Sustainable Cities Year (SCY) 2011-12, run by the Sustainable Cities Initiative (SCI). SCI is coordinating projects with Springfield, OR, the partner city for this year. SCY represents a multidisciplinary research, policy, and teaching effort to address issues related to urban environmental, economic, and social health. 

The building site, in Springfield School District 19, is a recently purchased property in the southeast area of Springfield referred to as Jasper Natron. This property purchase is intended to serve future school district facility needs, eventually to include the development of a new school. The property is surrounded by residential and rural lands. Students will study the site and surrounding neighborhood and perform the analysis required to provide appropriate services and transportation infrastructure for a new school.

The spatial program will be approx. 40,000 square feet. This will allow students to work in all scales of architectural complexity and a wide range of spaces up to thoroughly developed details. Because the qualities of interior spaces have a critical effect on the learning process, the studio will emphasize fine details, build-in elements, furniture, materials, color, texture and surfaces.

Central points of this studio include the relationship of inside and outside, the effect of light and colors, the functionality of the inner and outer areas described in detail. A challenge will be to investigate how to depart from the traditional school structure, which keeps the hall and circulation area separate, to create more fluid _Erlebnisraeume_ (experiential spaces) instead. These may be transitional spaces between the interior and exterior rather than confined interior spaces. Students will be asked to develop spatial qualities by simple means. Beyond its functional and economic requirements, the place should foster both individual development and community and should be the basis of a dear memory in life.

The first part of the program will offer an opportunity to consider the larger context of both past and possible future models of education in terms of their impact on real environments for learning. We will look at related architectural design concepts and strategies and at the influence of contemporary educational ideas and practices on architecture. This is a design for education that will address both the mundane and the extraordinary and will be a springboard for the rest of the studio. The second part will be devoted to a thorough design in all scales.

Studio Structure: (weekly focus topics)

Fall term: Master planning phase, case study, and reading list (2-3 weeks). Design of the project up to the design of major spaces, circulation, structure, light, and development of area topics.

Winter term: Development of the building and its attributes (facade, materials, interior elements).

Fieldtrip and Workshop. In October the studio plans a workshop: “Thinking about Schools.” Students will orient themselves not by publication, by reference, but by sketching, by sight, by habit, by experience. The workshop will be led by guest professor and architect Thomas Hille, from Seattle, WA, and the author of the book _Modern Schools_ — we plan on more…