VELOSCAPE

“Bicycle riding is faster than a walk, slower than a train, and slightly higher than a person.”  David Byrne, Bicycle Diaries

The history of modern architecture can be tied to an obsession with speed. From the Futurists’ fixations with a technological society to the drive-through diners, gasoline stations and truck stops scattered across the American landscape in response to the Interstate Highway, technological infrastructural advances alter our perceptions of distance, time, and place. Today, an emerging set of transportation alternatives continue to influence our perception of the infrastructural landscape, including President Obama’s call for high-speed rail, Detroit’s development of electric and hybrid cars, increased funding for public transit in cities, and local and regional movements to encourage bicycle transportation. Each proposes a new speed, linkages, programs and ecologies with which to understand and navigate the landscape and its built environment.

In an age preoccupied with high speed and fast communication, this studio will focus on a slower speed: the bicycle as regional transportation. How can we take a proactive approach to envisioning the architectural potential of these new landscapes? What are the potentials in “soft” infrastructures? What are the opportunities, and limits, of speed?

Students will begin by interrogating questions related to circulation at multiple scales, the measurement and representation of motion, precedents in the built environment, and the relationship of the bicycle to the body. Students will be responsible for developing a organizational taxonomy to formulate concepts, a mutable language sufficient to adapt to distinct terrains. The focus of the studio will be to design the architectural infrastructure for a new regional bicycle system: a rest stop. Each rest stop will be highly calibrated to its specific site, while simultaneously considering the impact on the collective network, and will include a bike repair shop, overnight accommodations, information center, small grocery store and kitchen and exhibition area. Sited within Oregon, new routes could have an economic impact on communities formerly bypassed by speed. Pioneer trails and exploration routes could reinvigorate local histories. In addition to scenic sites, the studio envisions ignored, obsolete and degraded landscapes as equally fruitful opportunities for engagement.

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