Above: Details by Berlage, Maybeck, Koolhaas, and Herzog + de Meuron

Arch 407/507
Architectural Design and the Architectural Detail

Format: Lecture and Seminar
Prerequisite: Coursework in the history of Modern architecture is recommended
Credit: 3 hrs
Meetings: M, W 8:30
Grading: Pass/No Pass only

What does “scale” mean? Why does it matter? What is the difference between architecture and furniture? What is “organic” design? Is good architecture simply a question of designing a building that is sustainable, functional, and socially responsible? What else is required, if anything, to make it a work of architecture? This course seeks to use small elements, details, to answer these larger questions through the exploration of issues relating to the nature of joinery, craft, and materials. The premise of the course is that details are neither merely technical solutions or the extension of larger ideas of building into its small-scale elements, but are the result of an always necessary and at times autonomous design process that parallels but does not duplicate the design of the larger building that contains them. It will deal with technical questions, but in an aesthetic way. Examples will be drawn from contemporary Modernism but will include a variety of nineteenth and twentieth century buildings as well. While lectures will be wide-ranging, student work will be more narrowly focused. Each student will research and report on the design and construction and detailing of building or group of buildings. Evaluation will be based entirely on the student’s project. There will be a short reading each week and 2-3 individual meetings with the instructor in the course of developing the project.

There is no required text but the course will draw on Professor Ford’s recently published Five Houses, Ten Details and his forthcoming The Architectural Detail.