BEAUTY AND ETHICAL FUNCTION

This is a studio about environmental performance--performance of the building envelope and the life cycle environmental performance of building materials. It is also a studio about beauty and the performance of beauty, especially the kind of beauty that is directly connected to the ethical function of the building. Can the things that are right (the things about the building that are most in keeping with some shared values, perhaps valuing life, refinement, light, wellness, biodiversity, the long-term) also be the things that are most beautiful?

CARBON CONTEXT

Scientists identified 350 ppm as the proportion of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that is manageable without catastrophic consequences. Atmospheric carbon dioxide was recently measured in the tropics at 400ppm. The built environment is responsible for more than half of US annual carbon emissions. At the same time, forests in the US are responsible for sequestering about 12% of annual carbon emissions.

WOOD and ATMOSPHERE

In this studio we will operate at the intersection between biogenic carbon storage and the atmosphere with a focus on the qualities and potential beauty of the atmosphere and the biosphere as architectural materials, connecting processes of design and innovation with the science of sustainability.

QUESTIONS

What is a new architecture that is positioned purposefully in global carbon cycling? How can this new architecture manifest the potential of biogenic materials (wood) and of the material nature of the atmosphere to shape the built environment?

How can we use unusually rigorous design (obsession with experience, detail) in the context of equally rigorous environmental ethics (a very long view) to make something unusually beautiful?

PROGRAM

Site and program will be offered in fall 2014. The program will be a 10-35,000sf building with a site and function that can serve as a vehicle to develop the questions described above. There is the possibility of embedding this studio within a like-minded architecture firm.

STRUCTURE

fall 2014: seminar (timber/carbon/site/program)
winter 2015: schematic design, optional arch 4/507 advanced technical seminar on wood chemistry for product innovation.
spring 2015: comprehensive design/rigorous technical development