

# Darlings

**There are certain things in architecture that are beloved. They endear themselves to us. We, as a discipline, claim them as our own and guild them in our disciplinary halls. They are our *Darlings* and they exhibit intellectual stamina by virtue of their histories, and yet are compelling with the promise of future offspring. Darlings are disciplinarily proper. They simultaneously secure the perimeter of disciplinary history while also marking its core. Domes and columns, for example, are Darlings.**

**CLARK THENHAUS**

California College of the Arts

## **ON THE CALL FOR PAPERS: TYPOLOGY AND INSTRUCTION**

The call for this session implicates the ‘instructional’ or the recipe for making high art as possible fodder from which deviation might occur, thus introducing a tangle between the discipline and the individual—between innovation and invention; between the considered study of something in relation to the past and the rarely seen ‘big bang’ of architectural becoming. Through the lens of this implication—the instructional and the deviant—one plausible corollary within architecture is typology and form. Typology can, in many ways, be understood as the instructional, or a recipe for formal, spatial, or organizational solutions achieved in the past as proper responses for the present. In fact, this is similar to the way that Quatremere de Quincy and JNL Durand authored ideas on typology; De Quincy through ideas of imitation, and Durand through a comparative analytical model for the systemized production of architectural knowledge. On the other hand, typology today can be understood as a measuring stick—a historic norm from which to measure deviation. Darlings simultaneously uphold particular architectural genealogies while not being so faithful to them as to prohibit stepping out on established formal or spatial norms and conventions. Darlings are so endeared to the discipline that their instructional genealogies offer some of the most potent ingredients in the production of new architectural knowledge by virtue of deviation and variation. These Darling typologies are fodder for the willful re-authoring of formal, aesthetic, and spatial qualities in contemporary work. While Darlings continuing to endear themselves to us, they also achieve their ‘darlingness’ precisely because of their susceptibility to adopt new expressions.

## **CAST OF CHARCTERS: A BRIEF HISTORY**

To properly socialize recent work with historic typologies, Quatremere de Quincy, followed by Francois Blondel, JNL Durand, Alan Colquhoun, and Aldo Rossi will provide us with proper introductions. And yes, close reader, there are others such as Colin Rowe, Fred Koetter, Anthony Vidler and others, but for this writing we will remain in the company of those aforementioned.

Rather than a scholarly history of each person, a few quick power-packs will assist in establishing a framework within which to concentrate more contemporary discussions. What de

Quincy identified, more than anything else, in advocating the supremacy of Greek architecture in the face of archeological discovery of Egypt, was the idea of rationality through typical and repeatable, referential, or imitable conditions. This is precisely why de Quincy idealized the Greek temple as the perfect extension of the primitive hut—the hut is the model where the trees are archetypes to columns, as the pitched thatch roofing is to a pediment. Thus the types (columns and roof) are susceptible to change through processes modified by geographic or cultural circumstance. De Quincy claimed types to be bound to reference but with a capacity for change by virtue of climate, culture, or construction.<sup>1</sup> The same can be said for the dome, with its model found in the primitive rounded twig huts and subsequent early domes in the Syro-Palestinian region.<sup>2</sup> Where de Quincy saw models with repeatable or imitable types, JNL Durand saw something else—something particular to the namesake of this of conference. Durand understood typology (though he never called it that exactly) as an analytical means for producing and establishing architectural knowledge. From this architectural knowledge, architecture itself was, as intended by Durand, accessible to all by virtue of the systemization of building classification and organizational schema. In both cases so far, de Quincy and Durand, we can see a relationship between specific types, instruction, and deviation implicitly courting us. In fact, what Durand identifies is that the same—or nearly same—spatial solutions are achieved across diverse and non-contiguous cultures, leading one to believe that function is the primary determinant achieved through an instructional solution common to all similar building types.<sup>3</sup> But, the astute reader will recognize that I have proceeded without proper chronology. And this mis-step is important to remedy here, for it introduces Francois Blondel. This introduction helps to alleviate the party-ending or book-closing reaction to functionalism by instead favoring character and expression. Blondel identified 64 genres of architecture and from this articulated a particular aesthetic character for each.<sup>4</sup> Through visual acquaintance with a building Blondel asserts that one should know what its purpose is by virtue of its character—a term that has taken on new meaning among a generation of new formalists. E.H. Gombrich echoed Blondel with expressionist theory, claiming a building expresses its essence as a virtue of what it does.<sup>5</sup> This kind of architectural parlance obviates a different kind of instructional set, one which depends on massing, fenestration, material, façade order, public address, and repeatable features that are the same as those found on other similar types. Thus, we have moved from imitation to the production of knowledge to legibility by way of architectural character as underlying instructional sets within typological thinking. This provides the Darlings with a framework in which deviation can be properly addressed.

However, in what might seem a lengthy jump from imitation, knowledge, and legibility to design process, we nevertheless remain on the typological tracks of the instructional—poised, we hope, to arrive a few steps of deviation soon. In recounting Colquhoun's work on typology and design process, he claims "those in the field who were—and are—preaching pure technology and so called objective design method as a necessary and sufficient means of producing environmental devices persistently attribute iconic power to the creations of technology..."<sup>6</sup> in this scenario, if one were to subscribe to a technologically driven objective design method, the subsequent line of questioning would necessarily linger around 'how was 'it' made? In asking such questions, anything of technological process rises to the status of icon as a condition of technological instruction, but not by virtue of an architectural outcome or genealogical traits. If, however one rejects this assertion, the questioning becomes less concerned with how it was made than with 'what does 'it' do' or 'what is its relevance'? This drives both intellectual and experiential content away from technological protocols and instead encourages conversations and experiences to do with qualities associated with a genealogical type and cultural place.

This shoulder-rubs against Rossi's claims for reference and tradition as conditional to an instructional set. In particular, he turns attention to the city, thus scaling up time and space as well as the 'object' of consideration. This necessarily enfolds process, but in dissimilar way

to an objective design method. Here, process is an accretion of forms achieved from negotiated interests over longer periods of time, yet maintains certain defining and organizing characteristics.

### **DARLING TYPOLOGIES**

With 902 words under our typological history belt, I will now turn our attention more squarely back to Darlings. First, it can be said that Darlings, or more accurately, the contemporary cohort working on them, are decidedly blasé about the technology inherent in considering new expressions for the Darlings. If, here, we were to expand our typological scope beyond classical architectural types, we could include other contemporary architects similarly challenging known associations of familiar things, such as Adam Fure's Rocks, or Jason Pyane's Disco Balls, that push novel readings of known objects outside of an architectural typology in similar ways that the Darlings can within architectural typologies. This blasé attitude towards technological demonstration now largely shared by an emerging field of designers eschews technique or technology as a sufficiently valid medium to frame ideas of deviation around. Instead, typological genealogies and definable features are meaningfully picked up with an intention to offer the Darlings new formal, spatial, and material expressions. This is an important note for two reasons. First, it signals repose from a 'pure technology and objective design method' approach underpinned by digital technique or fabrication technology as a leading discussion or source of relevancy, while simultaneously and obliquely re-visiting ideas particular to Blondel regarding character. Second, it inherently prioritizes working within genealogies where intellectual content is steeped in history, but worked on through contemporary means of expression, or which "operate with facility across the empirical realms of material and digital experimentation, but [that] locate intellectual discovery in dialogue with scholarly histories of techniques and precedents."<sup>7</sup> In this way typology today can be understood as a surrogate medium for architecture through which formal transgressions are willfully enacted on historical genealogies, but intelligently grounded through those very genealogical histories. This suggests notions of cultural infidelity in which particular types, materials, or organizations can meaningfully assimilate into other cultural contexts, be they geographic, political, or disciplinary—or among generations within the discipline. This kind of infidelity—itsself a form of deviation—to technique, tradition, or technology is precisely what endears the Darlings to us. It is where the production of architectural knowledge through the spirit of innovation and expression can be carefully measured within deeply rooted historic types in the discipline of architecture without being revivalists or historicists.

School, hospitals, office towers...these are not Darlings. These are Brutes; the city planning slugs and policy makers of modern architectural typologies complicit in bond issues, building codes, and the community politics of making buildings. Darlings can be worked on independent of bureaucratic regulation...its part of their compelling allure, and its what makes them ours. Domes, columns, arches, dormer windows, turrets, the front porch, gable roofs, belvederes, bell towers, arcades are Darlings. Particular to them is their character giving qualities within larger constructs, but also the continual re-visitation from generation to generation, each one upholding and advancing the bandwidth of the typology while searching for new formal, spatial, material, or cultural expressions. They are typologies with problems lacking fixity, or solvency—marked by their intellectual expansiveness for variation and experimentation without sacrificing contributions of new knowledge and experience. Deviation is requisite to the production of new knowledge of the Darlings because they are marked by instructional genealogies from which each successive generation—or iterations within generations—can act on them with varying degrees of defiance, deviation, or variation. Most recently, a generation of contemporary architects interested in experience, character, and post-digital materiality has again re-visited disciplinary interests in the Darlings.<sup>8</sup>

## DARLINGS DISCLOSURE

It is important here to disclose an oblique position with regard to this panel's call—not a counter-position, just one that occurs at an acute angle by virtue of terminological difference. Preference is given in this call to terms like error, wrong, and misbehavior. However, it seems likely that to this we, or I, seem compelled to add the prefix 'willful'. Typological transgressions are not the result of accidental 'glitches' but rather arise from, and in fact require, disciplined intentionality with careful execution in order to substantiate the breach of typological contract. The distinction is important. For, to wander our way through an application of techniques in a hunt for visual-formal effects, like texture mapping or discontinuous pattern-mapping over some alibi form, is a digital project hangover still mildly intoxicated by its own internal protocols and subsequent production of effects. Whether they be 'elegance' or 'op', they do not quite seem to rise to the level of deviation, but rather are at risk of falling to the bottom rung of the disciplinary ladder where visual effects are merely a first step to more pressing concerns—in other words, expertise is requisite to successful deviation. This is not to say that there is not some interesting work being done in the realms previously mentioned, merely that what makes such work interesting is what belies the visual glitch. What typological transgressions offer in general, and among the Darlings specifically, are considered and intentional deviations from established knowledge, traditions, tropes, and canons without sacrificing disciplinary genealogies and contributions.

## THE FIRST DARLING: THE COLUMN

This paper opened with casual mention of the column in the introduction. Let's return to this Darling now, followed by the dome darling a bit later, with an understanding that deviation exists as transgressions and infidelities to the established aesthetic and cultural canons. Thus, rather than an exhaustive survey, brevity on the history of columns and domes will afford more word-count room for contemporary exemplars under the assumption that reader is well familiarized with architectural discourse and canonical references. The primary instructional kit for a column is rather simple—a vertical line longer in the Z-axis than in its width. Despite its origins, there is no requisite that the column support anything structurally—just think of victory columns, such as Trajan's Column. The column in this case supports cultural ideals and supports symbolic values. From this essential recipe, variations in form, articulation, and material expand the columnar palette of expression. Regarding form, the basic vertical line can become most easily a mass, historically composed by stacking carved stone one atop another, or even more historically, as a monolithic stone. Columns can be conceived as a surface, such as Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson Wax building or the Barcelona Pavilion by Mies Van der Rohe, and columns can be understood as a singular object, like a victory column, or as a field, such as a hypostyle hall. Two recent examples, among many others, demonstrate interests in developing new expressions for this historic Darling. Michael Hansmeyer's Columns riff on the hypostyle hall + cultural ornamentation by creating a field of highly ornamented columns. The level of detail and articulation in the Columns offers new formal and spatial expressions within a rather familiar column form. Where this work deviates is in its excessive ornamentation of the shaft, a space normally reserved for expressing verticality and ascending ornamentation to the column capital. As the entire column becomes adorned with intricate detail, the associative measure of columnar parts is disturbed, yet not so much as to disassociate entirely from a column. Where Hansmeyer employs novel and intricate ornamentation over a more familiar columnar form, Heather Roberge uses the column typology within which form, structure, and clustering signal the column as both individual object and spatial field. In juxtaposition to Hansmeyer's Columns, Roberge's En Point columns eschew surface intricacy and ornamental fineness by instead favoring larger formal and spatial qualities of individual columns and their group-structural relationships within a collective clustering. The typical proportions of the column are both abstracted and inverted in En Point as the top portions fatten out and

the bases dramatically taper to seemingly unstable points. The materiality of *En Point* harkens the industrial qualities found generally in Messian columns of planar material sincerity to steel or chromatic effects, and in this case, sheet aluminum. Using sheet material in the aesthetic composition of the overall form of each column drives visual and spatial engagements away from the types of intricacy common to the digital project, like Hansmeyer's work, and instead leverages the appearance of tautness while encouraging the blurring of scales between an individual columns form and its relationship within the clustered field of many, in which the removal of one column causes the totality to fall over. Unlike many other sheet material projects, however, *En Point* manages quite well to achieve a sense of voluptuousness and volume. In part this due to the treatment of the mix of angled and rounded column corners whereby the rounded corners evoke more volumetric spatial effects not generally found in sheet material assemblies and the inverted tapered forms encourage people to move through the columnar field. In both cases, these explorations of the column typology are by no means subservient to a proper sampling, copying, or remixing of historic source material. Instead, they use an architectural language endemic to a particular type to investigate new expressions for an old typology within a present discourse. "This 'present' includes much of what was previously thought to belong to a superseded past, and it may be that the power of architecture to communicate at all relies on its ability to understand and transform its own language."<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps a third reference could include the work of Thom Moran and Meredith Miller's *Between You and Me* or Moran's *Some Of Us* installation in New York City for the 2015 Architectural League Prize. Here the Caryatid column is considered. Through 3D scanning Moran himself and some of his friends, then recomposing and combining the full size scans with cylindrical forms, columnar objects with recognizable human postures and protruding



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appendages in the figure of arms introduce a humorous take on the Caryatid. Rather than the high-res tessellation of a digital model, however, Moran introduces a post-digital material effect of tessellation using crinkled aluminum as a finish material that further introduces unique spatial effects of reflection, lensing, and distortion.

### THE DOMICAL DARLING

Another Darling typology deserves some attention here. The dome is a Darling that, like the column, has been nurtured by successive generations of architects, or even artists as in the case of Sol Lewit's *Stacked Dome* series of the early 2000's. Where the vertical line serves as a parti for the column, a hemisphere may be said to do the same for a dome. If we accept this as a premise, then volume is inherently introduced into the spatial and instructional milieu. Historically, the relationship between the plan and the volume of a dome were a problem of

Figure 1: Michael Hansmeyer, *Columns*. Heather Roberge, *En Point*. Thom Moran & Meredith Miller, *Between You and Me*.



projection, and this, ultimately, yielded a few organizational tropes. In particular, centralized, cruciform or linear organizations became the primary organizational plan types, often marked by circles or ovals in plan that project vertically into and onto domical shapes. As nicely articulated by Robin Evans, E. Baldwin Smith, and others the role of projection within domical constructs has a significant history—one which can't possibly be repeated at length here. However, in briefly insighting this history, we can begin to ground the work to follow in the latent 'problems' or domical lexicons that exist in the dome typology between plan and form.

Before proceeding, it will be useful to introduce a new medium—context generally and the pastoral specifically. This is a context decidedly unfamiliar with the dome typology, but as we've seen types can exhibit cultural and contextual infidelities. Though the pastoral is not where one generally finds domes, the aesthetic qualities of such landscapes are surprisingly advantageous for such an encounter. It follows that domes are most often encountered as rotund crowns atop civic, political, or religious buildings common to more densely populated situations. Thus, domes and the American prairie have not been properly introduced, much less properly socialized with one another. In many ways this all makes perfect sense. The histories, myths, significations, politics, and narratives of domes and the American prairie, while each compelling in their own right, have such few causes for shared interests. Yet in speculating on their contact with one another inherent qualities of each are enhanced, even exaggerated, by the other's presence, each seeming to re-author the other.

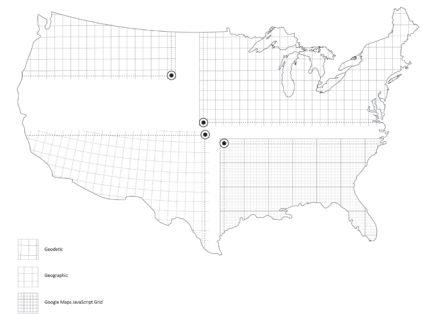
Caught between the banality of the remote and the sublimity of the strange, the pastoral can more easily be seen as a mixed milieu of avant garde and kitsch, surrealism and politics, and folklore and technological sophistication than it can be said to lack interesting cultural readings. A common reference to such landscapes, both generally and specifically, is 'the middle of nowhere'—someplace far away and not so important, especially for architectural experimentation or production of new contemporary architectural knowledge. But, it makes me wonder where is the middle of nowhere? Or, inversely, where is the middle of here—here, as in this country? Locating centers within boundaries is itself a spatial problem. At the scale of a nation, it becomes increasingly problematic.

"The perplexity of living might be interpreted through a theory of the uncanny that destabilizes traditional notions of center and periphery—the spatial forms of the national—to comprehend how that boundary that secures the cohesive limits of the western nation may imperceptibly turn into a contentious internal liminality that provides a place from which to speak both of, and as, the minority, the exilic, the marginal, and emergent."

As it turns out there are four middles of 'nowhere', or rather, four middles of here and they signal a unique place for architectural experimentation in service of new architectural knowledge through double deviation—one contextual, and one typological. Two conditions assist in determining where the middle of the USA is; geometry and contiguity. Depending on whether or not one includes the curvature of the earth matters, as does whether or not one includes Alaska and Hawaii. Thus, the four middles of America are found in Bella Fourche, South Dakota; Lebanon, Kansas; Meades Ranch, Kansas; and Lawrence, Kansas. Interestingly, writing this text on a PC, the center of my Google Earth will be in Lebanon, Kansas, but if I were writing this on a Mac, my Google Earth middle would be the Lawrence, Kansas site. This has to do with how the two programmers wrote the java script and while the big picture ramifications of this are almost totally insignificant, the geographic oddity of it seems compelling enough to allow architecture to call more attention to it. It should be noted that the context of these American middles do not in themselves substantiate or offer relevant contingencies for architectural form to correspond with or derive techniques from, rather the inverse is a more intriguing possibility in which these pastoral middles are conceptually re-authored by the introduction of the domes. Context becomes contingent on its architectural introductions, not the other way.



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Figure 2: Shingled Dome Rendering imagined in South Dakota.

Figure 3: Four middles of America.

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A *Project Four Domes* implicates these four middles of America by marking these remote, pastoral center points with free standing domes atop earthen mounds. Disembodying the domes from an institutional underfoot allows them to be characterized by formal, spatial, and sceneographic qualities rather than through a pre-determined lens of a cultural or political institution, thereby emphasizing the material and spatial qualities of architectural form. One may recall the Roofless Church by Phillip Johnson or Sol Lewit's Stacked Domes as precedents. Each of the Four Domes borrows from a traditional plan type associated with domes—centralized, cruciform, linear, or informal—but achieves a volumetric outward address that is not immediately understood in relation to its conventional plan organization, a first sign of typological deviation. By working with conventional planometric organizations, but deviating from their logical projections (logic being based here on historical precedent) by virtue of willful formal and compositional sensibilities, the four pastoral domes offer new formal, spatial, and material expressions for familiar plan types. At each of these American middles, along with the domes, is proposed a hill. The hill produces an interiority generally not experienced in domes by lifting one vertically into the volumetric center of the dome. Thus the hills are differentiated from the inherited topography and shift the common interior experience of a dome from one of looking up at to one of being more fully embraced within.

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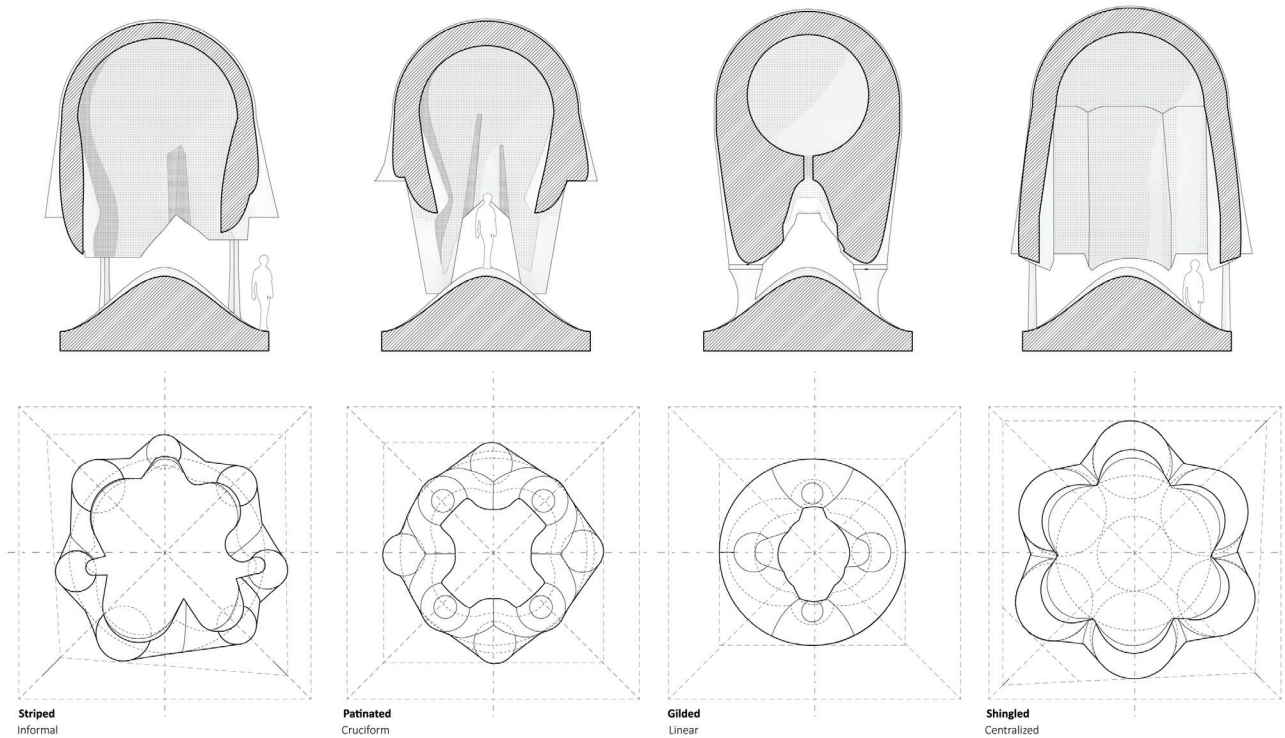


Figure 4: Shingled Dome physical model detail.

Figure 5: Four Domes plans and section drawings.

The materiality of the domes considers material realism and temporality in architectural representation. Textural patina, shingles, gilding, and gilded stripes borrow from precedents, yet speculate on material in relation to seasonal and durational change by introducing mild confusion as to whether they are historic domes or futuristic ones. This is nothing to do with romanticizing the effects of whether, rather tests ideas of material realism at the scale of the architectural model as a way to disturb otherwise easily identified timelines.

**STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND 3 PROTOCOLS FOR ENCOUNTERING A DARLING**

If we accept typology as a condition which offers some common standard for both protocol and evaluation—an instructional norm or trope—then typological deviation nicely



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accommodates the production of new architectural knowledge as well as it does to clear room for pushing new genealogical, formal, spatial, contextual, or representational agendas marked by careful distancing from established standards. The key here is that deviation can be measured (qualitatively or quantitatively) against an established canon or convention while remaining within the characterizing boundaries of a given typology. It is here that I claim careful consideration of deeply rooted architectural types, the Darlings in particular, suggest a meaningful means for producing architectural knowledge that moves away from technocratic insularity as well as elides a historicist retreat to mashups, remixes, copies, or sampling. By working on the things—the types—we as a discipline hold dear—the Darlings—through carefully considered typological deviations, not only can new architectural knowledge be produced, but architecture itself can convene new audiences and acquire new social salience. The Darlings, thus, have the capacity to alter the character of the Brutes and in this way Darlings offer a promising area of study for the advancement of architectural knowledge that has the capacity to inflect internal problems of typology and deviation onto broader systems of building making—be they political, cultural, bureaucratic, or economic.

How many first and second year architecture studios prioritize the Brutes...how many first or second year studios ask students to design a library, a school, a museum? It seems likely that concentrating on Darlings, and their capacity to effect the character and composition of associated programs or types they come into contact with, is a more compelling point of departure for an architecture project. Thus, it is important to remember three things upon encountering a Darling.

1. **Never baby talk a Darling.** They are discursive and progressive and therefore not to be spoken to like a child, nor seen as cute, nostalgic, or romantic.
2. **Always ask its age.** When and where matter, but when matters more than where.
3. **Never copy a Darling.** Darlings are not part of the copy, remix, mashup culture but rather reside within a genealogy and thus share references but are constituted by measurable difference that push new associations.

Figure 6: Four Domes physical models





## ENDNOTES

1. Christopher Lee, *The Fourth Typology: Dominant Type and The Idea of the City*. Course reader, Harvard GSD. Fall 2012!
2. E. Baldwin Smith, *The Dome: A Study In The History of Ideas*. Princeton University Press, 1950..
3. Christopher Lee, *The Fourth Typology: Dominant Type and The Idea of the City*. Course reader, Harvard GSD. Fall 2012
4. Ibid
5. Alan Colquhoun *Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture & Historical Change*. The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and MIT Press, 1981.
6. Ibid
7. Bryony Roberts, "Beyond the Querelle" in LOG31 *New Ancients*, Anycorp 2014. 14
8. This references a number of recent exhibitions, including the 2015 Architectural League Prize and En Point at SCI-ARC by Heather Roberge as well recent journal publications such as LOG 31, LOG33, and Project Journal #5.
9. Alan Colquhoun *Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture & Historical Change*. The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and MIT Press, 1981.