
Sympathy & Surface: Constructing Sullivan's Final Treatise

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"Sympathy implies exquisite vision; the power to receive as well as to give; a power to enter into communion with living and with lifeless things; to enter into a unison with nature's powers and processes; to observe—in a fusion of identities—Life everywhere at work— ceaselessly, silently—abysmal in meaning, mystical in its creative urge in myriad pullulation of identities and their outward forms."

-Excerpt from *A System of Architectural Ornament According to a Philosophy of Man's Powers*, Louis Sullivan, 1924.

The work presented herein was produced in the Fall of 2014 for the seminar *Sympathy & Surface; in depth & difference* conducted by Andrew Lucia in the Department of Architecture, Cornell AAP. These milled prototypes mark the historic making and construction of the final illustrated plates from Louis Sullivan's 1924 treatise, *A System of Architectural Ornament According to a Philosophy of Man's Powers*. These prototypes are an initial test before the eventual casting via the lost wax process utilizing 3D printed technologies.

The Visual Representation seminar for which these plates were produced examined the act of seeing and was fundamentally a study into the organization & order of light. The graphic nature by which Sullivan drew these final ornamental plates lent themselves to an examination of surface and material via light-based artifacts (in this case stippled shadow

maps that were hand-drawn in pencil) while merely being suggestive of a geometric shape, surface, and boundary. The negotiation of these suggested surficial artifacts presents itself here in the final construction of these ornamental plates.

Through Louis Sullivan's final treatise concepts of ecology and organicism were threaded in relation to their Romantic origins while broaching topics of idealism and materialism; the illustrated plates were probed as a thematic platform into issues of geometry, pattern, the structure and order of ambient light, material organization and surface quality/ construction.

Additionally, initial core principles were expanded upon via systems and information theories, while positing environmental experience as an act of sympathy, or mutual engagement of the observer and the material observed. Here, the course re-positioned the act of experience as an informational field-based enterprise; experience in these terms is inherently relational and sympathetic.

PARTICIPANTS

The following undergraduate and masters students at Cornell AAP partook in the historic creation of these plates, correspond to the images at right (top to bottom, left to right). A very special thanks is given to those who enthusiastically made this historic undertaking possible.

Plate 8: Nathan Powell, Relicque Lott, James Hoffman

Plate 10: Snigdha Agarwal, Hon Chiu Alfred To

Plate 11: Eduardo Reims & Yuchen Xiang

Plate 12: Jamie Shee Li Chow, Seo In Hwang

Plate 13: Nicholas DeMaio, Lucas Greco

Plate 14: Allen Phan Chhav, Whitney Liang

Plate 15: Edbert Yan Ho Cheng, Hyemin Jang

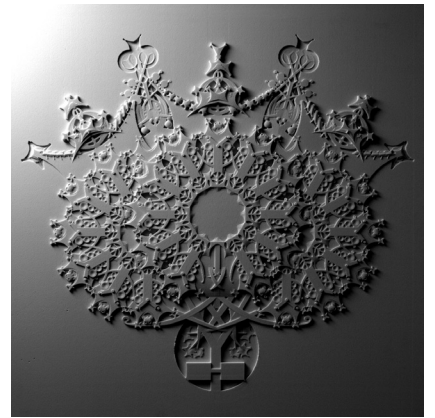
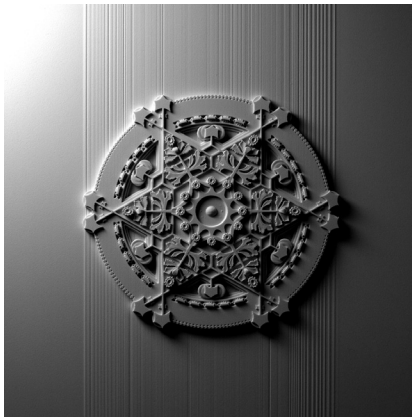
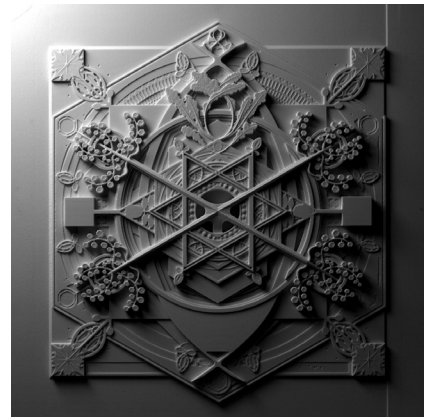
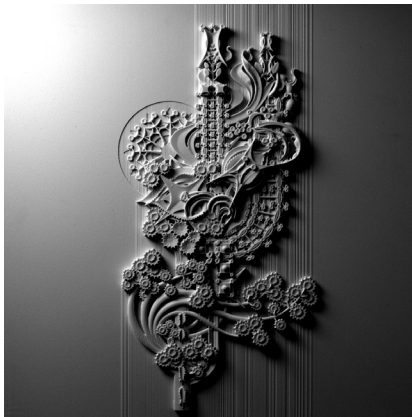
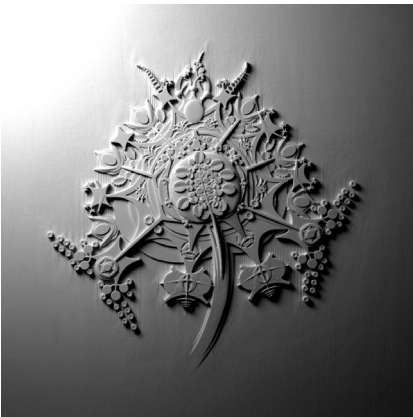
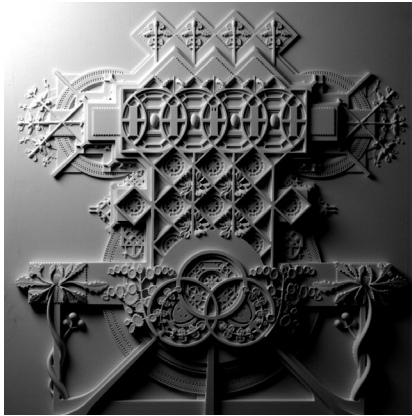
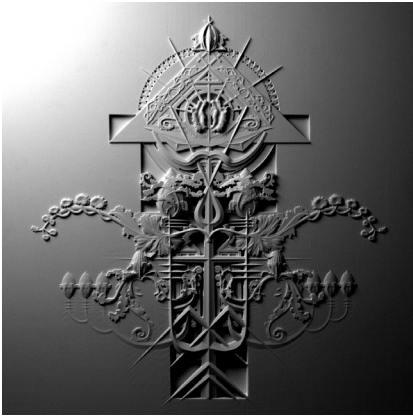
Plate 16: Ross John Amato, Joseph Kennedy

Plate 17: Jacqueline Haynes, Debra Chan

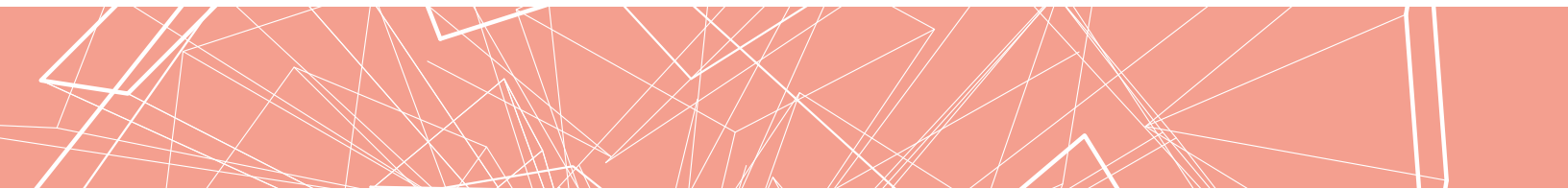
Plate 18: Jordan Berta, John Stuart Pidcock

Plate 19: Michael Raspuzzi, Erica C Alonzo

Plate 20: Yen-Ju Tai, Isidoro Michan Guindi



A SYSTEM OF ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENT
Plates 8 through 20, milled prototypes.



HOUSING