
Parking[day] 2013

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This pedagogic approach focuses upon the importance of exploration and “making” as a form of applied creative thinking to building sustainable communities. Scholars, practitioners, and schools like Daniel Winterbottom, Steve Badanes, and Yestermorrow understand and published built projects demonstrating the importance of making or building our landscapes to both engage the public and provide cultural expressions. We build on these ideas to educate our students about making as a (sustainable) design method for applied creative thinking. This design process and pedagogy for making landscapes encourages the combination of analytical and imaginative thinking that adds value to urban landscapes and surrounding communities. In our instance, we created projects by digital technologies and physical design-build processes to strengthen the connection between the legibility and identity of places and the people who interact within them. This synthetic approach offers the opportunity to create functional surfaces and systems through both systemic computation and expressive articulation of physical form while better enhancing a community with great places.

A two-year effort, 2012 + 2013, engaged studios in making temporary synthetic landscapes to explore social, political, environmental, community engagement, and sustainability aspects of what landscape architects and architects do. To explore this

approach towards making, using a defined urban site, faculty and students of the UNLV landscape architecture and architecture programs participated in PARK(ing) Day - an annual, global event where people transform ‘parking spaces’ into temporary public parks. We worked with UNLV students to transform Downtown Las Vegas parking spaces into temporary, identifiable places. Students integrated social, cultural, economical, and ecological aspects in design using digital fabrication and recycled materials.

Pedagogy focused on making encourages applied and imaginative thinking to generate community-based solutions. This method lends itself to temporary installations, completed in a short time. Short time cycles allow students to reflect and grow from lessons learned. This approach reinforces the value in physical making to engage and empower students to generate and communicate complex ideas. These efforts are design activism; an expected outcome of this exercise is to have students engage public spaces to see it as an inherent component of environmental design. From surveys, we find students’ value this applied creative thinking process and how it can be used to create civic engagement, community, and design activism. They learn how to integrate physical and digital tools with material waste streams in a viable design process that incorporates digital fabrication, design-build, and community-based design.

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