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Migration flock of Danish Starling.

Towards a Figural Field; Multi-unit Housing and the Problem of the Brick

In Colin Rowe's 1983 article 'Program vs. Paradigm' he describes the two prevailing approaches to urban design which we will use as an analog for the design of multi-unit housing: 'a plan without a program' and 'a program without a plan.' *A plan without a program* is a formal-typological gesture placed on a site without regard for contextual specificities (e.g. geographic, cultural, scalar, etc.). *A program without a plan* is a project driven by research, data collection, and consensus followed by a design leap that is somehow legitimized by the analysis. Paradigm is formal; designed from the outside-in. Program is relational; designed from the inside-out. Rowe concludes 'that a reliance on either program or paradigm is impoverishing' and that a hybrid solution must be sought.

The ambition of this studio is to confront the tension between module-aggregation (program) and the unified-form (paradigm) to produce an architecture of the Figural Field. "If we think of the figure not as a demarcated object but as an effect emerging from the field itself – as moments of intensity, as peak or valleys within a continuous field – then it might be possible to imagine these two concepts as allied." ¹ Polymorphic in its reception, the Figural Field generates an aberrant multiplicity of readings, privileging experience over Gestalt, and the temporal over the instantaneous. Its directed indeterminacy has the capacity to translate the generic into the generative, and to paraphrase Stan Allen, to hold in delicate balance variation and repetition, individual and collective.

¹ Allen, Stan. "From Object to Field." In *Architectural Design* 67, 24-31. 1997.