

Velocities: Dromological Spaces

Winter 2018 Research Studio – Mason White

“On the one hand, the railroad opened up new spaces that were not as easily accessible before; on the other, it did so by destroying space, namely the space between points.” – W Schivelbusch (1986)

“[R]esearch on dromology, on the logic and impact of speed, necessarily implies the study of the organisation of territory.” – P Virilio (1999)

The Velocities research studio is invested in our culture of acceleration and how it is reforming buildings, cities, and territories. This research studio will consider the spatial impact and social influence of modes of mobility on architecture and environments.

The logistics of movement assumes considerable place in our environments, but often it is simply engineered for efficiency. Instead, this research studio will antagonize mobility systems and technologies toward novel social possibilities. How can the culture of velocity inform new programs, projects, and platforms? From pedestrian-oriented design to droneports, contemporary questions arise of the opportunities afforded by mobility-centered programs and design. From hoverboards to snowmobiles to driverless cars, new and old mobility technologies produce alternate modes of navigating territories, but also new territories and infrastructures themselves. These technologies carry with them a politics of globalization and smoothness, while others resist it. Additionally, cultures frequently adapt and customize mobility technologies and their infrastructures. Systems of movement embody cultures and patterns of inhabitation, from the advent of the car in North America, which spawned suburbia, to Japan’s high-speed rails, to indigenous means of wayfinding on land, water, and ice. What new architecture and infrastructure might emerge in the wake of these technologies?

The studio group will consider the writing and thinking of figures including Reyner Banham, Bernard Cache, Keller Easterling, Marshall McLuhan, and Paul Virilio, among others. In support of research-based design projects, the studio will utilize dynamic forms of representation, such as “living” drawings and animated models. Research will examine mobility systems across multiple scales—from the scale of the territory to the local node, in order to understand their spatial, cultural, and social impact. The studio structure intends to create a seamless transition between the research and thesis term. Program, context, site, and scale(s) are to be determined as the research progresses. Interested thesis students with a desire to supplement the studio’s foundational provocation with parallel and related investigations are encouraged to join.