



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for the
Built Environment

B.Sc.(Hons) in Built Environment Studies
BEN 3101 – Design Workshop
Occurrence B – An *Other* Design Studio

Unit Coordinator:

Perit Ella Fleri Soler

Tutors:

Perit Ella Fleri Soler, Perit Peter Brincat, Perit Patty Grech

Specific Instructions:

Date Assignment Set: 23rd September 2024

Submission Date: 12th November 2024

Presentation Date: 13th November 2024

Deliverables: Digital presentation/printed material, physical models, constant weekly developments and participation

Participation: This brief is solely the basis of the Design Workshop that is fully developed through the Design Studio sessions. The Design Studio sessions introduce the full scope of the brief systematically and guide students in achieving learning outcomes through weekly milestones. They also present the theory required by the Design Workshop task not covered in study units. The Design Workshop sessions combine lectures, class discussions, student presentations (pinups), and feedback sessions. Students' participation in all components is essential to design development. Students must follow peer feedback throughout the session and recognise and take on board aspects that apply to their design process. Students have to carry out each weekly task and follow instructions for weekly submission of materials. Weekly Design Workshop reviews are as valuable as the final one as they offer an opportunity to present work and gain timely feedback. For this reason, attendance is mandatory for the entire duration of the Design Workshop sessions. Poor attendance will impact students' progress, results, and ability to develop expected deliverables at the required level.

Credits Assigned: 3ECTS

Method of Assessment: <https://www.um.edu.mt/courses/studyunit/BEN3101>

PERIT ELLA FLERI SOLER

PERIT PETER BRINCAT

PERIT PATTY GRECH

RETHINKING THE DESIGN STUDIO

“Sites of education are places to exercise new ways of thinking”
- The Architectural Review, 2022

The academic year of 2024/2025 might be the last for University of Malta students at the Faculty for the Built Environment building which has housed Malta’s architecture students for decades. In this state of transition, the space of the design studio will shift - from the old, to the temporary, to the new. This shift prompts us to reflect on *‘what is the design studio?’* and if rethought, *‘what might the design studio be?’*

The exercise of Rethinking the Design Studio will evolve over 2 Acts; BEN3101 B (3 ECTS) and BEN3102 B (3 ECTS) are two Design Workshops for third year architecture students in the B.Sc.(Hons) in Built Environment Studies programme which will run in Semester 1, one after the other, each lasting seven and eight weeks.



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BRIEF

BEN3101 B - AN OTHER DESIGN STUDIO

B.Sc. (Hons) Built Environment Studies at University of Malta BEN3101 Occurrence B

PREMISE

An *Other* Design Studio is a design workshop which takes a reflective approach to leverage new realities for the design studio typology.

To think through the Design Studio as an architectural typology is to move beyond solely the realm of the building. **The Design Studio typology** can be thought of as two-fold: there is on the one hand the **tangible structure** that presents itself through some form of **spatial manifestation**. As Malta's only school of architecture, the Faculty for the Built Environment in its building form presents one iteration of such spaces, yet there exists **"a constellation of different sites for learning, from rainforests, to classrooms, to cities"** (The AR, Education issue, 2022).

On the other hand there is the **intangible structure of people, processes and events**. In the design studio students explore ideas which are assembled, dissected and tested against peers, tutors and critics; **"student work is both constructed and taken apart in the space of the crit"** (Eleanor Beaumont).





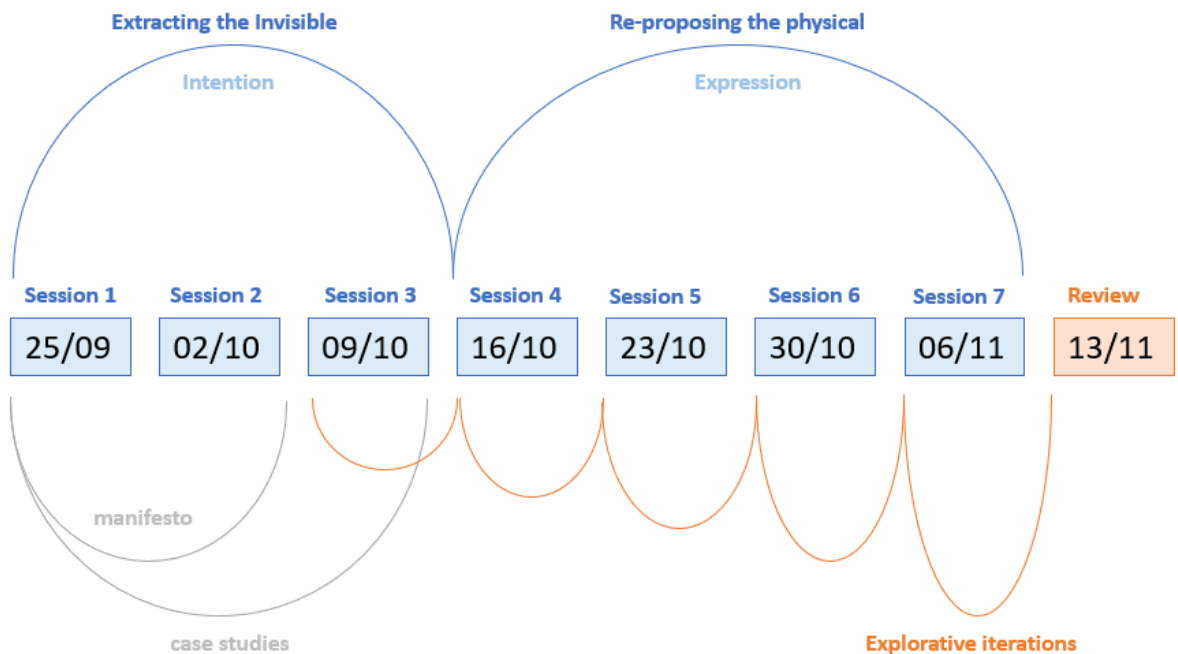
Floating University Berlin

TASK AND PROCESS

"Our proposal for architecture is a new generation of old typologies."

- *What is architecture?* - Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, Atelier BOW-WOW

Rethinking the design studio typology necessarily infers shaping both the tangible and the intangible. The workshop sets out to work through a creative process which extracts the **invisible** to shape an **intention** and then explores an **expression** through a **re-proposing of the physical**. In this workshop, an *other* design studio will be explored and brought to life by each participant. The specific user, program and respective requirements will be developed by students in reaction to the workshop discourse.



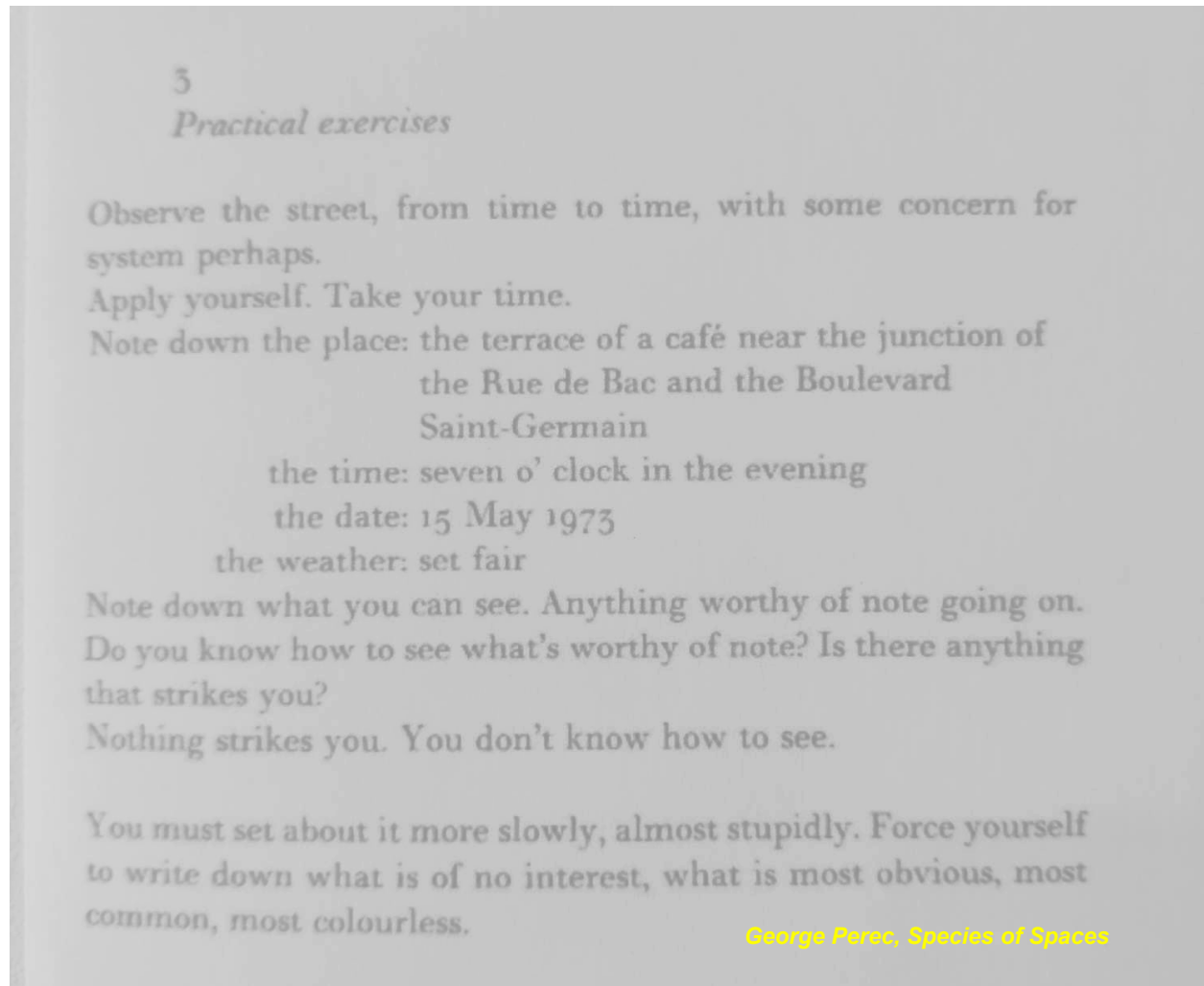
To extract the invisible we begin by asking questions;

What is architecture?

What is the design studio process?

In what forms has the design studio been manifested?

This genealogical approach, implies returning to roots, as though learning to see for the first time. To extract the invisible from the visible is to seek not only what spaces look like but to ask 'what do they do?'



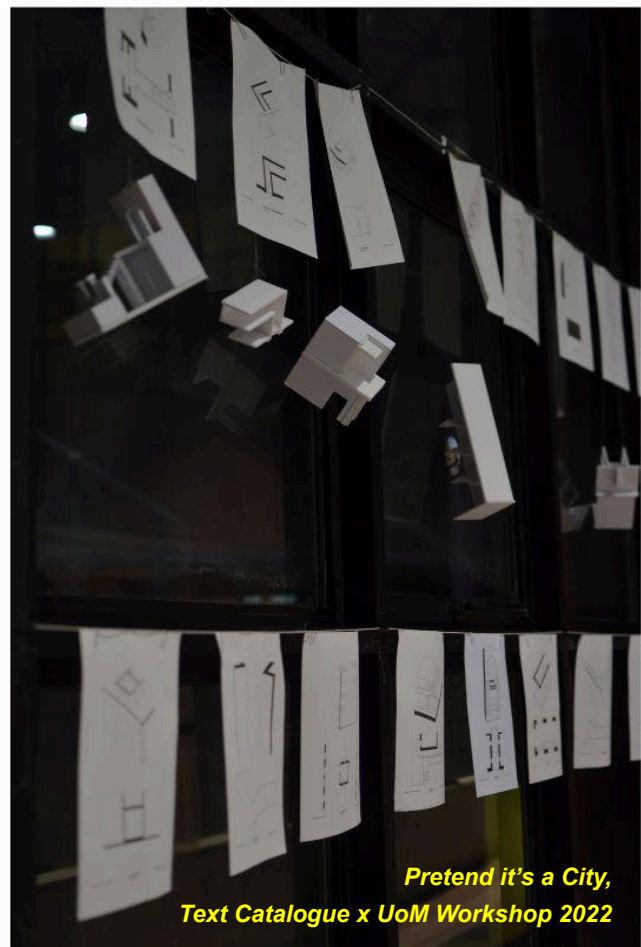
This initial phase of the workshop involves the process of **situating our practice**. By reflecting and taking stock, we build from the ground up the context to which our new explored expressions of the design studio typology will respond - this is expressed through the '**manifesto**' which is a **proposition or a thesis**.

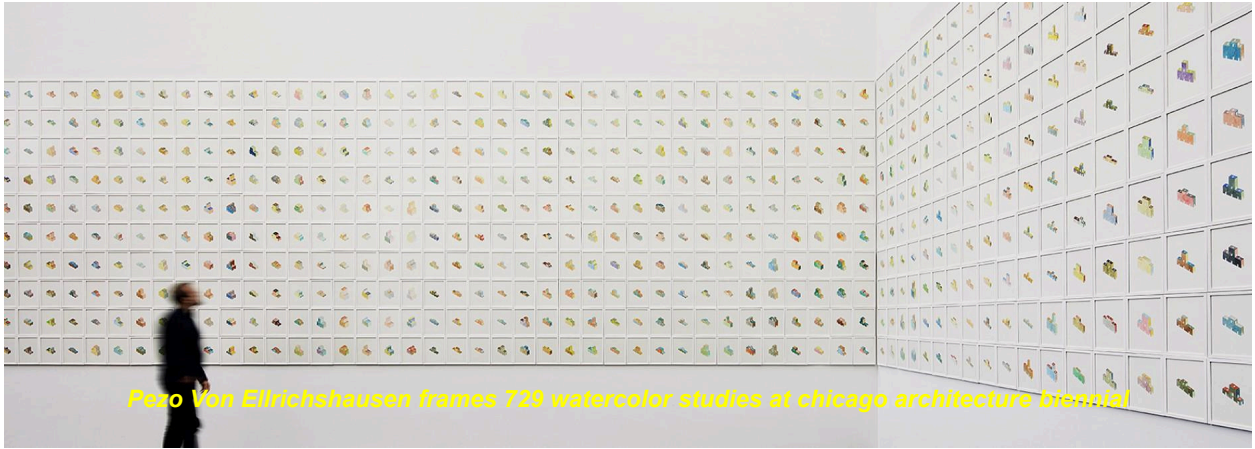
The '**site**' in the design workshop will feature as an additional parameter to respond to. It is assigned to each project not as the primary shaper of the typology but as a 'collaborator' with the manifesto and research foundation. **The site will allow us to test iterations in place and to allow for proof of concept. The site will be investigated as a space which is alive - our inquiry will go beyond the physical aspects of the landscape.** Students will explore methods of observation and documentation to unearth the intangible aspects of the space - the emotional and the lived experience.

“The elements of architecture are not visual units or gestalt; they are encounters, confrontations that interact with memory.”

— Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*

The second phase of the workshop will follow an **iterative process** explored through key design tools and production methods including **working models, video / film, isometric architectural drawings, AI imagery and text**. The iterative process will allow a steady workflow where developed material will grow consistently - each phase of the process allowing for refinement, adaptation and transgression. The final outcome of the project in this sense is inherently born of and tied to a body of work.





Pezo Von Ellrichshausen frames 729 watercolor studies at chicago architecture biennial



OUTCOME

The workshop promotes a bottom up approach where the phases of the project development along the way are not just seen as a means to an end but are given importance in their own right. In this sense, **the outcome of the workshop is rooted in both the theoretical and the practical dimensions of the architectural project.**

Through this design workshop, you will define your idea of **creating architecture through research and experiment**, and in response to the topic and process of the brief. You are required to produce an architecture that results from your specific engagement with the area of research and given parameters. Whilst this architecture will be conceptual in nature, it must be studied and presented as an idea which can be planted to grow roots and realised through further development. **The architectural concept should be studied spatially, formally and materially using the design tools and representation methods specified by the design workshop. Whilst specific technical details will not be requested, students are expected to display an understanding of the basic mechanics and formation of their proposal.**

The design workshop process will involve elements of group work intended to shape each participants' personal and individual development of their design studio. The final project presentation will be individual and involve a digital submission and verbal presentation coupled with demonstration of the workshop output as explored through the iterative process. The final proposal will likewise be presented through mixed media according to instructed formats as guided by the design workshop, including **working models, video / film, isometric architectural drawings, AI imagery and text.**

Whilst you will be assessed on the final iteration of such outputs, **you are encouraged to retain and document your journey to support the final result.** Beyond the merit of assessment, the final body of work is reflective of the collective's inquiry into the area of research, and such documentations are to be digitally archived for potential future use.



CLASS ETHOS AND AFFECT

“Before practising meditation, we see that mountains are mountains. When we start to practise, we see that mountains are no longer mountains. After practising a while, we see that mountains are again mountains.”

-Thích Nhất Hạnh

The design workshop is intentionally structured to encourage reflection which can be built into the design process. **‘Slowing down’ the design process can offer a means of confronting it.** Allowing time for research will not mean delaying the project, it will mean approaching it differently. In the first sessions **theoretical foundations will be set up to address new ways of working.** Think of this studio as a place we enter and create together. **“By slowing things down and looking until we “forget the name” of the things we are looking at, we will exercise the use of time to think together and participate in a shared exploratory process that ends in an assemblage of individual projects in dialogue.”** (MIT Architecture, Spring 2024). Listening and making collective agreements will be important to this process. To facilitate this, each student is asked to join the workshop prepared to participate and record details, ideas, and notes from our meetings. Weekly, we will work together to adjust exercises and set goals for the process of the studio.

STUDIO CULTURE

In keeping with the spirit of our architectural inquiry for this workshop, over the 7 weeks that the programme unfolds students should explore means of establishing a robust studio culture. This means seeking ways of establishing the studio on official studio days where a space will be made available to us but also beyond. **In testing what the design studio is, this will open the doors for deeper reflection and experimentation.**

Although final project outcomes will be individual, throughout the workshop you will work both collectively and independently. Tasks will be assigned both individually and to groups and students are expected to collaborate. The workshop will simulate the format of the **design collective**, where **participants’ personal observations and research developments serve the opportunity for the team to advance as a whole.**

On occasion, class pin ups will follow a process of ad hoc sampling, meaning students will be called to present work at random. Selecting projects for discussion is seen as a means to mediate discussion in ways relevant to the whole class. When your work is not discussed you are still expected to engage in **peer review and dialogues** and to **allow the group discourse to shape the course of your works’ development.** Students’ projects are not in competition with one another - contrast and difference in perspectives and variety in trajectories are encouraged to contribute to the deepening and enriching of the collective’s inquiry into the area of research.

The workshop will **value the role of criticism in shaping student's thinking and making** under the specific challenges and provocations of the brief. In this workshop criticism will go beyond the tutor-student dynamic and will be encouraged through peer-review.

The goal of **criticism is to both recognize and clarify the qualities, struggles, and elements at work in a student's process or project**, and to assist in defining ways to strengthen or direct the work. It is encouraged that everyone practises criticism constructively. The workshop method and the method of critique are meant to guide the student in developing tools for working independently on design, to court their own ideas and develop a robust process for making, while producing critical distance from their own work. To that end, it is encouraged that students take the time to discuss their work with each other in the studio. ***"The studio is a dynamic place of exchange. Ideally, it is a place for deep, reflective, meaningful, and at times, heated debate. Be aware of which voices are being heard, and when to make space so more voices can be heard."*** (MIT Architecture, Spring 2024). Students are expected to work together to actively construct and maintain the studio as a space of mutual respect: ***"A place where anyone can relax and be fully self-expressed, without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe" for any reason - "a place where the rules guard each person's self-respect and dignity and strongly encourage everyone to respect others"*** (Advocates for Youth).

FORMAT

The workshop will unfold through a 7 week programme within a studio environment commencing on Wednesday 25th September 2024. Examination will be conducted in the form of a formal digital submission coupled with physical and related verbal presentation of students' concept proposal for an *other* design studio as explored through the design workshop process and brief. Students' final projects are to be presented according to the instructed format which will involve development of video/film, AI visualisations, working models and isometric architectural drawings.

Assignments as presented throughout the weekly workshop tutorials and reviews, as well as the final presentation, are expected to reflect the learning outcomes. **Student participation in weekly tutorials is essential, and 20% of the final grade will be devoted to student participation and interim submissions.** Unless otherwise agreed in advance, tutors will not engage with students outside of set workshop tutorial times and furthermore reserve the right not to engage with students who do not present the interim deliverables for that particular week, to be set as a class on a weekly basis. Interim deliverables are to be submitted online through VLE or as otherwise instructed, and students' attendance on studio days is obligatory as instructed. Studio hours are from 8am - 8pm, every Wednesday.

OUTLOOK

The outlook of this workshop is to develop students' approach and ability to consider an *other* design studio typology through both its tangible and intangible aspects. Students will learn how to engage with reflective and critical processes of research. They will use that foundation to formulate a position and prompt a design process in response to a thesis or proposition. In parallel site analysis will be focussed on the emotional and experiential reading of the place - whilst calling for contextual architectural responses, the site is to be engaged with as a proof of concept to test architectural solutions to theoretical propositions. This workshop will underscore the importance of developing both the theoretical and practical dimensions of the architectural project. Outcomes in the form of spatial and material ideas are to be understood and assessed as inherently linked to and born out of theoretical foundations, ultimately framing the research process as a tool for design.

This workshop does not intend to provide a singular perspective or recipe on how to make architecture. The discourse of the workshop aims to sharpen students' awareness, for their own design work, and aims to broaden their exposure to the various possibilities of how an architectural idea can be explored to theoretical and practical ends.

Each student will be expected to present the following skills in order to successfully pass this workshop:

1. An ability to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions in order to make and present sound judgments within a structured discourse relating to architectural culture, theory and design.
 2. An understanding of the relationship between people and buildings, and between buildings and their environment, and of the need to relate buildings and the spaces between them to human needs and scale.
 3. An understanding of the methods of investigation and preparation of the brief for a design project.
 4. An ability to generate design proposals using an understanding of the current boundaries of professional practice and the academic discipline of architecture;
 5. An ability to create architectural concept designs that satisfy aesthetic, experiential, and basic technical requirements;
 6. An ability to apply a range of communication methods and media to present design proposals clearly and effectively;
 7. An understanding of the alternative materials, processes and techniques that apply to architectural design and building construction;
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REFERENCES & READINGS

<https://www.whatisarchitecture.cc/>

<https://www.designboom.com/architecture/chicago-architecture-biennial-pezo-von-ellrichshausen-watercolors-finite-format-09-15-2017/>

<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/serpentine-gallery-pavilion-2012-herzog-de-meuron-and-ai-weiwei/>

<https://academic.oup.com/book/777/chapter-abstract/135418202?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

<https://socks-studio.com/2011/10/31/francois-dallegret-and-reyner-banham-a-home-is-not-a-house-1965/>

<https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/is-everything-architecture>

<https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/the-crit>

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<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/849>

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<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/serpentine-gallery-pavilion-2012-herzog-de-meuron-and-ai-weiwei/>

Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2012 by Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei



ASSIGNMENT 1

1.1! LOOKING IN AND LOOKING OUT

PART A - Prepare your response to each of the following questions in a text, not exceeding 50 words per question, and include an equivalent image for each respective prompt. Text and Images to be prepared according to the instructed format.

- I. What is architecture to you?
- II. How does it display itself in the current local context?
- III. What would you need to learn to be an effective architect?
- IV. How can the design studio process be adapted to help you achieve this?

PART B - What is an architecture design studio?

- Choose a design or architecture school that inspires you
- What is their design workshop process?

Prepare your response in a text not exceeding 50 words and present a corresponding image.

Your image may take the format of a photo or an image which you produce by hand, on the computer, or consider working back and forth between the two.

No scale

Due: Submissions are to be made online in line with tutor instructions and work will be displayed and discussed in class on Wednesday 25th September.
