03 Port San Luis Harbor Pier

Assignment 01: Becoming Acquainted

Port San Luis Pier, along with regional structures such as the San Luis Obispo Mission, the Octagon Barn, the Dallidet Adobe, the Madonna Inn, and the Morro Bay Power Plant, constitute a special category of architectural works—not the centerpieces of the Western Canon like the Pyramids, Pantheon, Chartres Cathedral, the Eiffel Tower or Mies’ Seagram’s Building [one of the first great skyscrapers], but the fringe of the commonplace, frequently referred to as vernacular architecture. The vernacular may take many forms—infrastructure like bridges or electrical towers, the industrial like factories, kitsch like ice cream trucks, or miscellaneous things like plows, billboards, skateparks, or parking structures. Beginning in the 1950's design critics and theorists began to look at the incredible record of works “just around the corner”. Often repositories of craft, care, and understanding of particular place, they are alternative realities to learn from.

Port San Luis Pier is one of our greatest local vernacular assets. Its historic record, scale, locale, materiality, and myriad array of human actions offer much to learn from, but more importantly a challenge to attempt to record, recall and recollect.

Frequently, a designer will find the need to make a field visit to record a place the impressions and information needed as the basis for design actions. While one’s own abilities of recollection are critical, the ability to gather an insightful set of recollections is best activated by direct action and engagement with the setting. We are going to use a new ‘real’ for a few weeks as a basis for our next expansion of skills and design exercises, the Port San Luis Pier.

Learning Goals & Objectives

- Learn various means of recording a place
- Implement the recreation of an existing place through drawings and models
- Understand the development what is essential by exercising judgment on a situation and project context
- Begin to understand the profound meaning that lines entail—representations of reality and intent
- Continue to develop hand drawing skills and craft
- Develop watercolor tonal capabilities for recording shade and shadow.
- Work collegially in teams

The fickle coast of California
Photographs by Michael Lucas | October 27, 2013
Visiting The Pier
We will engage the Pier on Sunday October 25 in assigned groups from your lab. Working in your assigned team, you are responsible for compiling an adequate record to graphically represent and recollect the Pier for your assignments over the next weeks.

Team Efforts
Each team will record field dimensions for an assigned component of the Pier that the entire team will use for subsequent orthographic and compositional exercises, as well as a final Gallery display; ‘Field dimensions’ mean taking holistic and complete dimensions of pier width, height, width and depth of each element/thing encountered, location of surface material changes, piling, railing, and deck board locations, description and location of various devices [small cranes, dumpsters, etc] buildings, docks, stairs, the end canopy and other structures- all dimensionally relative to each other. The main deck underside should be also recorded as best as possible; not all areas below deck are accessible. You should attempt a measure of the water level relative to the deck surface.

Interiors of commercial and office structures do NOT need to be recorded, as this would be disruptive. The west end of the pier is complex and consists of several structures gathered under a larger canopy. The structures must be measured as best as you are able. You will need to compare your measurements with adjacent teams on common elements and come to compromise and agreement.

Individual Efforts
• Minimum of 4 sketches, approximately 10 minutes each. Use careful gradations for shade and shadow.
• Minimum of 2 watercolor images, approximately 15 minutes each, on watercolor paper or in your sketchbook
• Minimum of 10 photographic images 5 in color, 5 in black and white
• Minimum of 5 rubbings of surface textures, 2” square or larger
• Minimum of 5 gestural sketches, each abstractly describing the motion of a person’s (or animal) activity on the pier. Think of the arc of the fisherman’s cast, or the complex series of careful motions in cleaning a fish.

Walk and spend some solo time on the entire length and depth of the pier and below pier; and journal what you personally see.
**Team Efforts**

**As-Built Drawings**

As a team, you will draft 1/4"=1'-0" orthographic drawings of the existing Pier—called As-Builts in practice. Each person on the team will take responsibility for one of the drawings, but they must be well coordinated between the set of drawings. As a team you should create a floor plan, structural framing plan, east elevation, west elevation, cross-section, longitudinal-section. We will first create these drawings on tracing paper with only the major elements. We will then coordinate your base drawings with your neighbors, until overall dimensions have been reconciled between all students in all sections.

By Friday of the first-week, you will have a revised, coordinated set of orthographic plans drafted on vellum, showing both major and minor elements. These drawings should use lineweights, and should be crafted at a high level.

**As-Built Model**

As a team, you will create a study model at 1/4"=1'-0" scale of the existing Pier. This model should include major elements, such as buildings, the extents of the pier deck, guardrails, pilings, beams, and joists. The deck and structures above the deck should be removable. This will allow us to look at the primary structural elements (pilings, beams, and joists) separately. The study model should be made of cardboard and other inexpensive/free found materials. You may use tape and hot glue.

For Friday of the first-week, your first draft of the study model is due. You will have a revised model due the following Monday.