

Good Evening [*]

I'm Jeremy Kargon, a contract lecturer here at IAP this year. For the few of you who don't know me from Studio III, or elsewhere, I'm an architect in private practice here in Baltimore. And I have to confess, I'm excited to be teaching the Materials course.

Actually, all the other faculty here keep thanking me. "I'm so happy you're here -- instead of me" said one teacher. Another said: "I hear you're teaching Materials -- my condolences." [*] As far as I can tell, the last guy who taught this guy is now buried beneath Meadowlands Stadium in New Jersey. Or something. Maybe he shot JFK...

And we all know why they say those things. Most "technology" courses in the Masters of Architecture courses taste like bad medicine. They're supposed to be good for you, like structures, but then you never want to see the subject again. In fact, the problem is that in Professional Practice, the chances are you *won't* see many of these subjects again -- except *this* one. "Building Materials" is something you'll see again and again and again. If you want a job, you need to know detailing.[*] If you want to design, you need to know your material palette.[*] And if you want to be an Architect... well, nobody seriously thinks you can build a building *without* materials, unless you're Lebbeus Woods[*]. And even he's getting things built these days.[*]

Now, what I want you to get out of this course may be different from what those other instructors expected. In fact, you'll get all the nitty-gritty that we need to tell the accreditation committee. We have a great textbook [*] whose only fault is its monochrome illustrations. But the book does break down the different building materials into sets of systems and lays them all out for you to absorb. So you'll be reading the book pretty thoroughly throughout the semester.

But if that's all this course should provide, we might as well go home now.

(Don't get up!)

[*] My own hope for this course is that you'll see our interaction here each week as a sort of philosophy seminar, the topic of which is an Architect's Feeling for Materials. We'll have the *knowledge*, but I want to engender a love for that knowledge, too. And we'll be doing that in several ways.

[*] In class, we'll be making use of a lot of media resources -- you know, "video" -- that depict technical information. How does a steel frame go together? How is concrete poured in a foundation? For those of you without practical backgrounds, these videos will be crucial for your learning in lieu of actual on-site experience.

But we'll also be seeing video material which depicts the participants involved in construction: The Owner, The Bank, The Public, and The Architect. Et cetera. As you'll learn the

further you get into the profession, the interaction between those playing these roles has as much to do with the final product as do the technical decisions we make as Architects. In fact, the societal dimension -- in the form of codes, insurance, and zoning -- has a *determinative* impact on the material make up of our buildings. We'll be learning about that, too.

Today's video is, on the other hand, even closer to pure Philosophy: [*] Louis Kahn, who died in the mid seventies, was almost notorious for his long-winded sermons about Architecture and its Constituents. The film is about him and his buildings, and about some of his sermons.

As many of you may know, as an architect Kahn was known for his superb -- and imaginative!-- handling of materials, especially concrete. Together with his primordial handling of his buildings' plan forms, Kahn's use of materials embodied a sort of "inevitability" about how materials might be chosen and how they might be used.

His most famous sentence was this: [*] "I asked a brick what it wanted to be... and it said, 'An Arch.'"

Now, we won't be talking to too many *bricks* this semester, but I want you to at least talk to yourselves about the materials and details which you'll have before your eyes. If you want to know the essential idea behind a design, ask yourself: How did the putting together of the building determine the the Architect's choices? You won't get all the answers this way, but you'll get answers when the getting is good...

The last aspect of this course will be, I hope, the most important. I believe that first hand experience of good architecture is the best way to engender what elsewhere I've called the "Ethos of Architectural Thinking." And I'll be taking you all out in the field to see first hand some of those excellent buildings.

This is what we'll do: We'll arrive on site, during class time, and we'll be taking close looks at a building's material systems and its details. I'll ask each of you to sketch out certain details. But I'll ask *not* to record your "impressions" or your "artistic feelings" about the moment. Instead, I'll ask you to use your sketching to record the information you learn by looking closely at the detail, so that the act of looking and the act of sketching will be together an act of critical analysis.

This is the way Architects work; they work by sketching. They use their sketches to convey their ideas to other Architects and to record their thoughts for their own use. They use their sketches as tools for the process of understanding their world.

Now, I have to keep you honest. After we sketch out our details on-site, we'll go back to the studio and we'll review all our efforts together. I'll have actual working drawings of the buildings so that we can compare our sketches to what was actually designed.

(So we'll be keeping the builder honest too -- I can't prom-

ise that what was designed was actually built. But we'll find out.

Our final project for this course will be your own detailing of your own design. For folks enrolled in Studio III, you'll be asked to prepare wall sections of your second studio project. We'll study together the technical issues of your design, we'll find solutions -- and we'll document those solutions. Those of you not currently taking a Studio Course can use a previous studio design. Either way, we will be getting our cuffs dirty with some decent looking details and sections.

So together with the textbook's overall survey, this is the crux of the course. If you can analyze what you see, you can learn to detail. If you can detail what you design, well, then you're an architect. There is a line of employers waiting out there to hire intern architects who juggle the different systems together and create a single detail that works.

* * *

My students from Studio will recognize what comes next, but I do have go through the "boilerplate" of administrative issues:

In general, your take-home work for this course will be only reading -- and not a **lot** of reading, at that. The handouts describe the course requirements fairly specifically: *You have to do this, you have to do that, you gotta do this...*

Essentially, you DO have to *show up*.

This is your time. So I want you here, every session. This class starts at 6pm, period. I will take attendance.

Eat beforehand. I'll expect all of you to stick around 'till 9pm, unless I say otherwise. We'll have breaks, we'll have videos, we'll have fun. But don't wander off without my permission.

* * *

A few more logistical arrangements. The handout includes a general syllabus, but I will be giving specific assignments on a session-by-session basis.

Who does NOT have home access to the Internet? ***

Assignments and most readings will be available on-line on the course web-site, the URL for which is available in the handout. I have set up a course web site on my own, professional web-site: www.JKargon-Architect.com. There's a gateway to the courses on my own homepage, and you can quickly find the material you want organized by class session number.

The web site itself will grow with the work you do. I will post throughout the semester examples of your projects for mutual discussion and for comments by folks outside our

community. That's why I'm requiring an 11X17 sketch pad and some pens or pencils. I want you to document what you're learning while you learn it.

* * *

Now I have a bit of a scheduling glitch already. I won't be able to be here the expected date of the Third Session, Wednesday, September 12th. And that 3rd Session is a good one, with in-class discussion of foundations and site planning for Sustainability. I'd like to reschedule that date. What are our options?

* * *