

# SummerBuild: An Exploration into the Pedagogical Value of the Architectural Installation

**Robert Trumbour**

Wentworth Institute of Technology

**Aaron M. Willette**

University of Michigan

Since its contemporary instantiation via Kurt Schwitters's Merzbau (1923-1943), the medium of architectural installation has proved to be a powerful agent for a variety of interests, be they formal, material, praxial, or pedagogical (or any combination thereof). SummerBuild is a project that aligns itself primarily with the latter, pedagogically leveraging architectural installation as a means to organize and interrelate frequently disjointed academic topics. Through the format of a 10-day intensive design-build workshop SummerBuild used the design and production of an installation artifact in a New England coastal village to engage participants in a collaborative design process that combined design computation; site inquiry and regional culture; formal investigation; prototyping; project management; and full-scale fabrication.

Architectural installation is a medium particularly sympathetic to the desires and format of SummerBuild and similarly positioned workshops, straddling the tenuous boundary between the design object and design space. Arguably it is this grey zone that makes it such an ideal format: being smaller in scope than a building allows true gains to be made within the multitude of constraints imposed by the workshop format (time, facilities, varying levels of participant skill level, etc.); while being more akin to architecture than a designed object allows for workshop participants to correlate those gains to architectural practice. Thus the pedagogical challenge inherent in engaging architectural installation lies in determining which gains becomes the focus of the activity and how they are used to inform the design practice of the participants in a meaningful manner.

As its name implies, SummerBuild posited the act of making as an immediate means through which design practice was to be engaged. While material and tectonic languages were constantly at the forefront of the majority of design discussions, other design methods were investigated in parallel to making: the site was examined through standard analytical means and the region's rich material/economic heritage; design computation was introduced to explore the integration of formal intent with fabrication logics. Each method was introduced to the workshop as a means of understanding making, pushing participants to synthesize design approaches often treated incongruently in the traditional design studio.

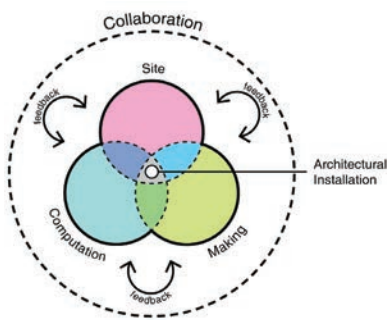
While the installation produced at the workshop's conclusion may not exhibit the formal or material complexity the medium is associated with, its success instead comes from its ability to coalesce computation, site inquiry, and making. SummerBuild situates its pedagogical objectives in-between the scales of object and space-making, integrating discrete aspects into a unified whole in order to provide a diverse range of learning outcomes for workshop participants.

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### Pedagogical Model



### Premise

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### Site Inquiry

The research into site conditions integrated a full range of scales and influences ranging from cultural and historical forces to the directly observable temporal dimensions of climate, scale and patterns of use.

### Design Computation

Software was introduced to participants as means of quickly working through iterations of complex material assemblies, allowing the fundamental material logic to be expanded beyond its default condition.

### Making

Prototyping and material assemblies occurred alongside sketching during the design process, giving workshop participants the direct feedback only possible through working at one-to-one scale.

