

OTHER

FITS

THE REAL LIVES OF THE IMAGINED USER

Architectural production presupposes a recipient of its services. Often this takes the form of the generic user. Architects go about assembling and arranging vast caches of matter in the name of this shadowy specter, giving substance to a figure that may have never existed. The roots of this conspiracy might be traceable to the classical footing of architecture as a humanist discipline. Through its abstracting rhetoric of standards, codes, and intuition, architecture plays its role as a domain of techniques for inculcating habits of liberal subjectivity. As Mabel Wilson argues, this effort to fit the discipline's products to a universal subject has "consolidate[d] a European worldview" and thereby defined its margins.

Turning to scholarship in and on the margins, this seminar argues that the construction of the standard, to which architecture repeatedly appeals, relies on the management of deviance, risk, dirt, and other genres of queer fit. Adopting disability and feminist scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's

language of "fitting" as a dynamic relation between subject and world, the course explores fitting as a way of thinking through the control of liveness from the body to the body politic. Through some exercises in research, critical thinking, and speculative creative fitting, the course will harness the play between the generic and the aberrant across varying paradigms of fit, from the statistical averages of user surveys, to the racialized personhood of property claims, to climatic norms in thermostat settings. Each mode of fitting unfolds another site, instrument, or practice through which the user, as both a normative function and generative enigma, gets written into the production of space, always with the possibility of other sizings.

Students will identify and research an existing instrument of fitting, and then develop their own counter-fit, a subversive reworking of its norms and standards, through pattern-making, fuzzy measurement, parody, and other mis-fitting techniques.



Instructor: strat coffman, stratt@umich.edu
Meeting times: Wednesday, 8:30am - 11:30am
Location: In-person, 2204 A&AB
Office hours: Tuesday, 10am - 11am

Left: Images from *Measuring Space and Motion* (1944) and "Factory of the Sun" by Hito Steyerl (2015). In addition to reading, we will be dissecting work of other media.