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Form in Motion

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Form In Motion
Since I've been in school, my biggest obstacle has been a bad habit of over-thinking decisions. I think "paralysis by analysis" is the clinical term. The symptoms vary between patients, but are frequently slack jaw, blank stare, empty page, and cluttered desk. In serious cases, subjects have been known to experience bouts of deliria and to repeat the phrase, "Yeah, but what's it REALLY about?" Most students I know have experienced this malady to some extent during their education. Is there a cure? Not that I am aware of. It's been said that the goal is to learn to think and make simultaneously, but is this realistic? The brain is a mysterious place during periods of creativity. Inspiration may be analogous to sleep and love, in that it becomes more elusive the more deliberately you pursue it. Much to the chagrin of teachers and students, there appears to be no way to teach creativity. So how do we clear this gap between the idea of a project and its execution? I don't know. It's a risky, messy leap to take, but somehow people like it. To anyone stepping up to the ledge, be warned. Hesitation only increases anxiety, which ally leads to bad decisions. So if you find yourself staring with fear across the chasm, it may be useful to step back and take a deep breath. There are things in this world other than architecture. Ask anyone. Just an athlete.

Any athlete will tell you how difficult it is to do something and think about it at the same time. They have a remarkable strategy for handling such mental demand; they practice. The concept is simple: jump enough hurdles, swim enough laps, swing enough bats and pretty soon your body will do it almost automatically. That leaves the mind free to do deal with anything that comes up unexpectedly. The legs know how much power it takes to get the body up into the air. They know how to contract and then extend to land again in stride. In pressured situations, it's usually best to just shut the mind down and let the legs do what they know how to do. This level of skill is not bestowed upon anyone at birth. It is only achieved through patient, persistent practice.

Design is not a purely repetitive or mechanical endeavor. Each project is unique, though each is accomplished through a set of skills. We draw and model. We build arguments. We take and give criticism. None of these actions alone constitutes what design is or how it occurs. It grows out of an interaction between these factors and many others; as well as ourselves and those around us. So finding a proper place to start can be a difficult proposition. This is where the metaphor of athletics helps me. While creativity can't be taught, it can be practiced. Often the only way to break out of mental ruts is to shut the mind off and make something. Architecture is subjective. It involves a lot of thought, but is ultimately an act of production. It is an art, so don't be afraid to make something. It's okay if it's illogical. Even the best architects can only make decisions based off of intuition and experience, because there is no right answer. It can be boring, painful, and dull, but sometimes you just have to put in the legwork and let the ideas sort themselves out. Your project might be brilliant or it might be a mess. Get over it. Forget the arguments for a while and follow your gut. Wherever it takes you probably won't be too far from where you were going anyway.