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Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich
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Designing Architecture > A Manual

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His doctoral dissertation on the subject of technique and form in the theory of architecture was awarded the ETH silver medal. From 1982 to 1987, he was assistant professor at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, and from 1987 to 1994 associate professor at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. In 1994, he was named Assistant Professor of Architecture and Design at the ETH Zurich. His research activities deal with contemporary developments in urban design. Using various case studies from Europe, Asia and the USA, metropolitan areas are investigated in view of their physical structures.

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While an architecture student, Jesse LeCavalier was the recipient of the John K. Branner Traveling Fellowship and the Norman Patterson Prize. As a student at Brown University, he graduated magna cum laude and received several awards. Aside from his current research and teaching, he is also a contributor to various architectural publications, including the Swiss journal *archithese*.

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Jörg Stollmann is currently directing the Master of Advanced Studies program MAS UTDT on urban design under Prof. Marc Angélil at the Department of Architecture of the ETH. His research is focused on aesthetic, spatial and social strategies of normalization in architecture and urban design. Several of his design research studios have been published.

Jörg Stollmann practices architecture with his firm INSTANT, founded in 2002 with his partner Dirk Hebel. Recent projects include the award-winning project *United_Bottle*, the international traveling exhibition *Inventioneering Architecture* and the pneumatic installation *On_Air* in Berlin. In 2007, INSTANT received the Van Alen Institute Fellowship Award, the Red Dot Design Award for Best of the Best Conceptual Design, and the LANXESS Award in Singapore.

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Marc Angélil and Dirk Hebel

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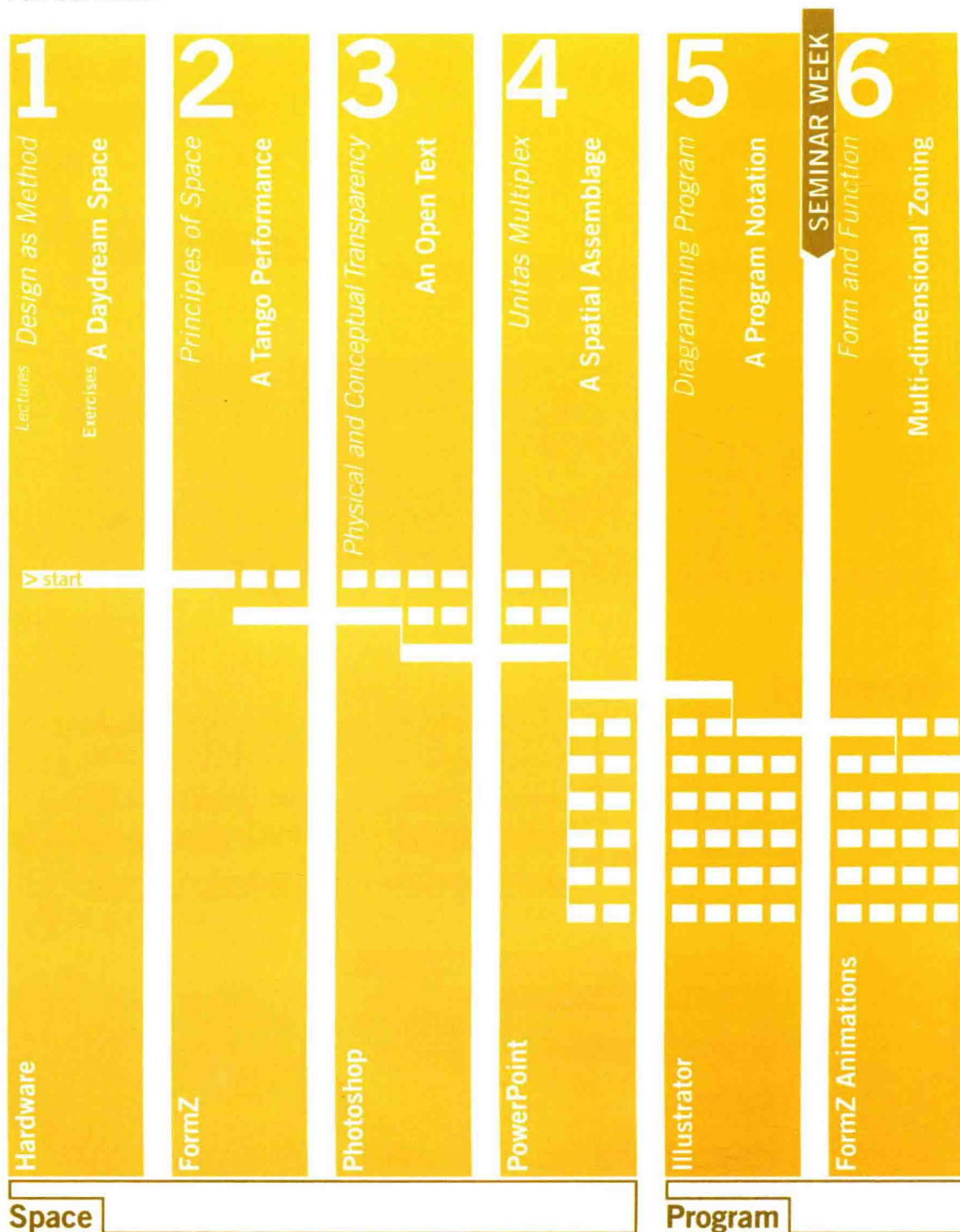
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Inchoate Deviations

Transformative Processes

Marc Angélil, Dirk Hebel

> **MA:** As our experiment in architecture pedagogy might be considered a work in progress, we agreed to engage in a series of dialogs – a type of *entretien* between collaborators – in order to open up new perspectives and, most importantly, to challenge the routine of the well-oiled teaching machine that we had created and that was running on its own momentum, so to speak. So, let me begin with a first provocation. When you joined our team several years ago, you courteously implied that it was time to investigate new avenues of thought and to deviate from the methods outlined in our first book on teaching, titled *Inchoate. An Experiment in Architectural Education*. Your assessment took two lines of attack. First, the theoretical framework of our operation seemed to support a certain category of institutional discourse, the domain of the so-called critical project – with a bias in favor of rational interpretation, analytical method, and academic corroboration. Instead, you argued for a projective practice as a potential trajectory for teaching. Second, the physical outcome of the students' work – despite the emphasis placed on the design of processes – gave the impression that a specific formal vocabulary or style was proactively being advocated. Instead, you made a case for a performative rather than formal approach to architecture. Although initially painful, both observations touched upon issues that had entered our teaching methods inadvertently. What was most bothersome about the critique was that it pointed to a trap into which we had fallen, while trying too hard to swim against the current. Our teaching accidentally propagated an *architecture with a capital A*, *architettura maggiore*, or *major architecture*, as some would call it. This is exactly what we wanted to avoid. Our didactic matrix, as you implied, was somehow reinforcing an understanding of architecture as an institutional body and a formal discipline, unwillingly reinforcing the status quo. Had we reached an insurmountable barrier or dead end? Were we going around in circles? And, it is in this regard that an opening was made, subjecting our teaching to a series of displacements – from which one could not emerge unscathed. The solution to our predicament seemed quite simple at first. Rather than opposing the established order of things, we embraced it wholeheartedly – but with a twist: by proposing a way of working both *with* and *against* the procedures producing this order. These procedures – the operative mechanisms of everyday practice, the median standard and