

Zenithal Light



Chiat/Day Building, Los Angeles, Frank Gehry with Claes Oldenburg & Coosje van Bruggens, 1991 | photo: Grant Mudford

“Something that has not often been considered at all, or has at least been seriously neglected, is the quality of light. What do we mean by the quality of light? Light is a phenomenon that human beings need to use constantly.”

Part of a lecture given by Alvar Aalto at the annual meeting of the Swedish Society of Industry Design, May 9th, 1935.

Special Topics in Construction seminar that focusses on zenithal light. Thru the use of natural light ‘from above’, one can introduce unexpected and surprising concepts of architectural spatiality. These sources of light, freed from the building facade constraints, allow for particular formal freedom. A zenithal light strategy allows for a more controlled light. In other cases, zenithal light is the only option to bring light to central spaces away from the edge of the building. Zenithal light may connect spaces on different levels by lighting vertical voids in the planimetry of a building.

The course aims to identify zenithal light qualities, and how it impacts the overall spatial experience and defines atmospheres.

Students will be presented to a vast overview of precedents of zenithal light sources throughout architecture history. Student is expect to develop skills in capturing lighting design concepts thru model making and representing spatial lighting concepts thru drawings following industry standards.

Course will consist of lectures, discussion upon material presented and development of weekly students assignments.

Medium to large scale physical model building and photography are required skills (no 3D rendering tools will be used for presentation). Technical 2D representation will have a critical role in the development of weekly assignments. Autocad proficiency is mandatory.