

Balmer / Swisher

Diagramming the Big Idea

Methods for Architectural Composition

Becoming an architect is a daunting task. Beyond the acquisition of new skills and procedures, beginning designers face an entirely unfamiliar mode of knowledge: design thinking. In *Diagramming the Big Idea*, Jeffrey Balmer and Michael T. Swisher introduce the fundamentals of design thinking by illustrating how architects make and use diagrams to clarify their understanding of both specific architectural projects and universal principles of form and order. With accessible, step-by-step procedures that interweave diagrams, drawings and virtual models, the authors demonstrate how to compose clear and revealing diagrams. Design thinking defines a method for engaging the world through observation and analysis. Beyond problem solving, design is a search for possibilities. Mastering design thinking begins with learning the fundamentals of visual composition. It embraces the ability to synthesize deductive and imaginative reasoning, combining both shrewd scrutiny and fevered speculation. Design diagrams make visible the abstractions that order the built environment. Premised upon the Beaux-Arts notion of the architectural parti, Balmer and Swisher adopt the 'Big Idea' as a foil and as a suitcase to organize fundamentals of architectural composition. The goal of this book is to make explicit to students what they are learning, why they are learning it and how to internalize such lessons toward their lifelong development as designers.

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