

***UNUSUAL STRUCTURES***

**(JUST FOR FUN!)**

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**DEMONSTRATION/DISCUSSION**

**This module is part of the both the Architecture Series and the Construction Series. It is to be presented in one session as part of the Architecture Path or the Construction Path to just entertain the students and educate them that people come up with all sorts of creative ways to build structures. Some of the examples are whimsical, some really strange, some really tacky, some historical (Angkor Wat Temple in Cambodia) and some are serious designs which were executed in simply baffling but beautiful ways!**

**Educational Goals**:

Students will:

* See that all building projects are not serious even if they do provide shelter—see the mushroom house.
* Learn that whimsy can come into play in design—look at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in L.A. or the Puzzling World in New Zealand.
* Learn that design can have a language and make commentary on the culture it is placed within—what is the bank building in Lithuania saying? That the bank is strong or that it worships money?
* Also see that serious designers break out of the box to develop designs which are astounding—see the concert hall in Spain…what is holding up that arched roof?
* Be challenged to think differently about design….and make it fun, like the hanging house in the forest in Canada.
* Think about expressing individual creativity and actually building something from it
* Become excited about design

Ov**erview**: This module consists of a power point with several photos showing widely different building examples, with designs which range from very strange, to fun, silly structures, to startlingly beautiful designs for serious clients. It range includes kitsch and context, whimsy and social commentary.

This module, being part of the Architecture Path and the Construction Path, is mostly meant to be read aloud, viewing the pictures, and discussed as a group.

**Content:** The main content focuses on the idea of answering a design problem with sometimes less-than-serious solutions. The designs shown herein can all be construed as actual building solutions with real uses, but shows that designers sometimes have a great sense of humor, or are interested in making a comment on society, poking fun or trying to raise social consciousness. Some solutions are just…different.

**Time**: Approximately 1-1.5 hours.

**Materials Needed**:

* Computer and Projector

**Directions**: Very simple…run the power point on the projector, follow it, ask questions about what they are seeing, and ask questions. If desired to make this a serious module, the Mentor should foment discussion of each of the photos, to ask questions such as “what does this design communicate?” or “what do you think the designer had in his mind?” or “do you think this building is beautiful or just very different, or just strange? Why?” If it is just for fun, let each slide present to the students a world of wacky and tacky designs along with great design, all of which are not conventional and which represent a different design approach.

**Topics to Discuss**:

* + Mostly, this module is for fun. The curriculum in Jr. ACE is usually in depth and fairly detailed, so it was thought that a module which looked at the lighter side of design and construction, would be good to have for comic relief. Look at the cowboy boot bathrooms in Seattle and try not to laugh. Puts a new spin on peeing in your boot (you would have to be a cowboy to know about that!)
  + However, there are still issues to discuss. The Mentor might bring up questions for the students, if they are fairly bright, addressing how they think some of the buildings were built, as some of them defy gravity, like the leaning tower of Wanaka, New Zealand. What is holding that up?
  + Other questions could be addressed to what the designer might have been trying to say with their design, as some of them seem to have a social commentary. An example of this is the contemporary art gallery in France. A head with the art gallery on top…what does that communicate to the people who see it so prominently placed on the street?
  + One of the best lessons from this module, is that if a person thinks of something truly creative and is not afraid to build it, then it can be done. Also that sometimes the simplest need brings the most creative solutions which go way beyond the norm. Good examples of this are the house between rocks in Portugal, the house made of glass bricks in Canada (can you imagine how *light* that must be inside—delightful!), and the conch shell house in Mexico (what craftsmanship—a labor of love!). Not limited to these, but good examples nonetheless.
  + Don’t be afraid to just be amazed, disgusted, surprised, or whatever, and to laugh at some of the designs, and be amazed at others.

M**entor Notes**: Just have fun! Do not make it too serious. Use this module as a break during the Scale Model Building or Design Vignettes to lighten the seriousness of the class, or if the students are getting bored. Or use it more seriously, but still fun, to see how the students perceive the language of design to say something about the culture the designers live in.