Atmospheric Animations: Speed Tectonics
Fall 2017 | Instructor: Catty Dan Zhang

Speed opens a way into the entirety of the contemporary world and offers a key for reading it. — Paul Virilio, “Paul Virilio interview with Jerome Sans”.

Gino Severini remarked in his Futurist Manifestos The Plastic Analogies of Dynamism that “speed offers an altered perception of all types of phenomena”, from physical to social and beyond. Empowered by technological innovation, both the spatial and temporal data of swift movements could be fathomed with high accuracy and fine details. Nevertheless, the experiential aspects of mobility still have great challenges being either quantitatively measured or qualitatively described. Through a design-driven process, this class investigates how the power of speed mediates vision from a human-centric perspective, and how such shifted perception might transform the notion of designing architectural spaces and urban forms.

With off-the-shelf technologies that are available to capture and analyze motion, students will revisit Futurist discoveries in speed. This includes the visual patterns revealed in the work of Giacomo Balla from 1911 to 1914 on the abstraction of speed. Students will then develop extensive kinetic machines as new medium for capturing elements of speed. Spatial information will be captured through 3D scanning technologies. Through the action of looping, sweeping, layering, omitting, and scaling, participants in this seminar will customize “speed scanners”. These perceptual scans will hybridize drawing, fabrication, and projection techniques.

This class consists of technological and theoretical lectures and hands-on workshops. It welcomes all students who have interests in technology and making, and are passionate about motion graphics, robotics, and interactive design. Basic scripting skill is a plus but not required.