Abstract...

Freehand sketching has traditionally been used as a medium for the exploration of design solutions by architects and designers, especially at the early stages of the design conception. This medium has inherent qualities that seem to favor design thinking and spatial form generation. Through the discussion of the complex visual and psychological processes that are involved, this report will offer an opportunity to better understand and reveal a small portion of what happens during the early design stages.

Sketching provides a two dimensional medium for the creative search. The intentional production of ambiguous, tentative and vague images, allows the designer to avoid making detailed decisions about the spaces and concentrate more on the general issues, and establish the character of the design. These images subsequently communicate back to the architect, providing him with new ideas, hints and possibilities, which are then traced or sketched over the last image. This happens in a to-and-fro manner, constantly oscillating between the two. By engaging with the sketch and the media in this manner, this process of design may be described as an interaction of 'moves' and 'arguments'. It is through these thought processes that the mind, together with the media, is able to logically tackle and develop a design issue.

With the advancement of technology and the emergence of a new type of media in the digital form, new tools and aids become available to the architect in his search for an architectural solution. The digital media, with immersive design systems in particular, may now provide the architect with an opportunity to create design sketches in an internalized, three dimensional environment; as opposed to the internalized, two dimensional hand-drawn sketch medium. Are we then faced with a situation where the digital medium is going to completely replace traditional methods of design and the freehand sketch in the process? Perhaps the issue is not about the replacement or casual preference of one medium over another. As we will discover, it is the inherent design dialectic that architects seek, and the media becomes the vehicle through which creative design solutions are engendered.