Sketchup

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I discovered Sketchup almost ten years ago when I was working towards my Masters degree in Architecture. It is a flexible program that we were encouraged to use for schematic design (at first), because its graphic output was not as polished as 3D Max or AutoCAD/Revit. The beauty of the program was that it was FAST! Other modeling software required boatloads of information about the design, and was something that happened on the back end of the design process after sketches, detail drawings, study models, and final physical models were completed. Sketchup gave us the flexibility to 'design in the computer,' which was not always a popular choice among the faculty. Though it does not replace hand sketching as a medium for design, it does act as a powerful tool to quickly visualize massing, scale, and context of a schematic design.

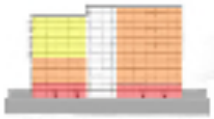
Sketchup is a free download (Google purchased it some years ago, and it became free) Sketchup Pro is several hundred dollars, and allows for many plugins that facilitate final presentation graphic needs, such as light rendering, texture rendering, etc. These are quite powerful, and create fairly convincing results.

What Sketchup is particularly good at is allowing a designer to quickly determine scale and massing. One must be careful of the 'Sketchup Effect," as quickly building are popping up with an iconic Sketchup look. It is easy to tell that certain buildings have been designed, at least conceived, in Sketchup. It is also very easy to learn to use the program. Basically, all shapes are made on a two dimensional plane, then extruded. The program allows you to 'eyeball' extrusions and dimensions, or type in specific numbers for exact dimensions. Any 3D modeling

program can be tricky, but Sketchup seems to be the easiest to navigate, as the pan and orbit tools (especially with a conventional mouse) are pretty straightforward. I did not use any videos or tutorials to learn the program, though I am certain that there are thousands that exist. I think that people pick up Sketchup pretty quickly. After the initial navigation is mastered, it is fairly easy to negotiate. It is always a good idea when learning to use a new program to have students model something that already exists, rather than creating something new. Modeling an existing building will teach many facets of the program and inspire confidence and a good comfort level among students.

I could definitely see this being fun for high school students to use in an art classroom. As mentioned above, as an introduction, I would have the students model an existing, well-designed building, by providing them drawings of plan, and elevation. After students complete this assignment, they should have a very good working knowledge of the program, and at that point, would be ready to use the program to model something of their own creation. I think that students would enjoy creating three-dimensional models, and animating a 'fly over' to create a short video to present to the class. Sketchup would be a very useful tool for a 3D design class, or a computer graphics class, and just a lot of fun for students in a general Art I classroom. My hope is that I can share the importance of place making and design with young people so that they may learn how our environment shapes us all. Sketchup is one of the many ways that I can begin to do this in the classroom

GREENVILLE AVENUE



SECTION LOOKING NORTH

SOUTH ELEVATION

EAST ELEVATION

WEST ELEVATION

NORTH ELEVATION

PARK LANE STATION

This transit oriented studio focused on redeveloping a blighted neighborhood north of downtown Dallas that is on an elevated rail line. The project considered the major thoroughfare, Greenville Avenue, a park, and mixed use development.