



## PARSING TOKYO

A SHORT FILM PROJECT | Tokyo University of Science + University of Minnesota | May-June, 2009

To first-time visitors from the west, Tokyo often challenges one's preconceptions regarding urban activity, density, spatial arrangement, messaging, and material constitution. Roland Barthes' *Empire of Signs* chronicles a foreigner's personal astonishment about many aspects of post-war Tokyo that defy conventional, western readings. His accounts often focus on particular physical manifestations of cultural phenomena, such as "Pachinko," "The Station," and "Inside/Outside."

Even to the Japanese, however, Tokyo is such a complex, multi-layered environment that it still holds many surprises. Depending on one's birthplace or hometown, parts of Tokyo may even feel like exotic neighborhoods in foreign cities. A question the westerner eagerly poses to the native Tokyo-dweller is: "Does Tokyo represent the future of Japan, or is it simply a unique condition within contemporary Japanese life?"

As occupants of this elusive territory, your assignment is to create a short film that analyzes and represents a particular aspect of Tokyo that interests you. This aspect should relate to the physical manifestation of a cultural phenomenon; like the Barthes examples above, your video essay should portray the material realities of immaterial influences. You should also seek to convey the unique qualities of Tokyo in terms of architecture, urban space, atmosphere, mobility, communication, public vs. private domains, the influence of technology, material details, or other such themes.

Your film should be about two to three minutes in length and at least 640 x 480 in resolution. It may be comprised by video footage as well as still photography. You are encouraged to consider spatial, material, and phenomenological subject matter at multiple physical and temporal scales. Audio will also be a critical component to your piece, whether recorded from the source or added as another layer.

This will be an individual project, but you will work in multi-national groups for the purposes of discussing your work and touring the city together. Please select an area from this list as a starting-point for your group (or suggest one of your own): Ginza, Yurakucho, Yushima, Kanda, Shibuya, Omotesando, Harajuku, Yanaka, Ueno, Yokohama, Shimokitazawa, Daikanyama, Naka-meguro, Tsukiji, Shinjuku

You will present your films on Saturday, June 6 at TUS. The following guest jurors will be present: Takayuki Miyoshi, Architect for Toyo Ito, Barcelona office; graduate of Hiroshi Hara Lab, Tokyo University Osamu Nishida, Manages own architecture design office, Yokohama; interested in small urban spaces After the review, your films will also be uploaded to Youtube and posted on our collaborative blog: [www.archfloat.wordpress.org](http://www.archfloat.wordpress.org)