



The hook

Description

The world is not assembled from blocks. The way we make things such as buildings is more â??like weaving a pattern from ever unspooling threads that twist and loop around one another, growing all the while without ever reaching completion.â?• Thatâ??s [Tim Ingold](#)â??s account of the process of making. Itâ??s about knots rather than building blocks, an appeal to architectureâ??s origins in the making of tents.

A knot is where a cord or length of fibre hooks onto itself. Under tension the knot tightens its grip. There are other helpful descriptions of what knots do, such as **to engage**. To engage is to â??bind by a contract or formal promise â?;To cause to be held fast; to involve, entangleâ?• (OED). Mechanical components also engage: â??interlock *with*, fit into a corresponding partâ?• (OED). Itâ??s what gears or cog wheels do. They interlock so that one part moves another, kinetic energy gets transferred. Engagement is a process where surfaces meet, they bond, transfer, adapt, adjust and their interactions get fine tuned.



Engagement has currency in contemporary art, entertainment, the mass media and education. How do artists, actors, directors and educators engage their audiences? How do they hook audiences, bind them to the subject matter or perhaps entangle them in it, enter into a binding contract of mutual support, amongst themselves and with the performance, and encourage audiences to transmit and circulate energy?

How to bind people's attention to your media content

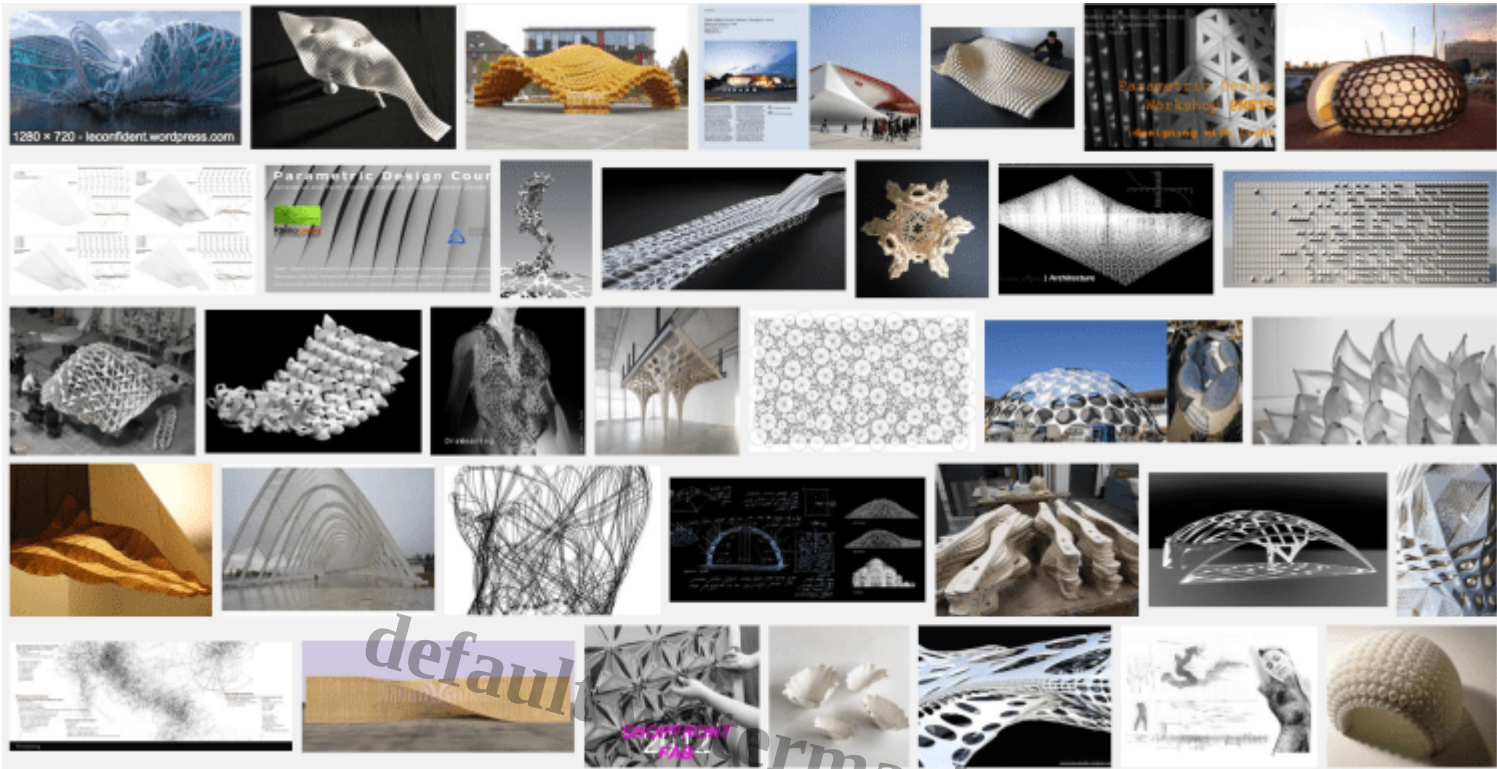
1. One method is to deploy **exaggeration**. There's some neurological evidence to support the tendency for people to be fascinated by exaggerated shapes, faces, compositions, colours, sounds and overstatement, e.g. overstating the case for knots. See blog post [Exaggeration](#).
2. Another technique is to remind audiences from time to time that whatever you are presenting is after all **not for real**. This is the gist of Brechtian theatre: to take audiences behind the scenes, to alienate the familiar by jumping out of the immersive reality of the drama, as at the end of *Mrs Brown's Boys* or *Miranda*, where the camera pulls back to show the studio setting or the actors break out of character and into a song though this can occur throughout, as in Brecht's play *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. (See [Youtube trailer](#).) It's to expose the tangle of cables and ropes holding up the scaffolding behind the sets, curtains, and green screen.
3. A third approach is to keep audiences in **suspense**. Keep them hanging (as if from a cliff), to delay gratification. (See post [Delayed gratification](#).) The knotting metaphor again comes into play here: the threads are left untied, the knot tying the two ends of the rope together remains secure, but the rope starts to creak, the fibres snap and unravel and ...

References

- Brecht, Bertolt. 1964. A short organum for the theatre. In J. Willett (ed.), *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*: 179-205. London: Methuen.
- Ingold, Tim. 2013. Of blocks and knots: Architecture as weaving. *The Architectural Review*, (October)26-27.

Notes

- See blog posts [Audience disengagement](#), [Lego logics](#), [We are all entertainers](#), and [Back of shop](#).
- I discuss the mechanical and philosophical operations of the *wedge* in [The Tuning of Place](#). It's related to blocks and fine tuning.
- The image above is of some filming in a square in Warsaw, taken last summer.
- Tim Ingold presented an engaging lecture here in ESALA yesterday about the knot.
- Celebration of the knot looks a bit like philosophical justification for parametric architecture, much of which is fibres and threads, though I don't think Ingold intends this. Here's a random selection of parametric tangles from Google Image.



Category

1. Architecture

Tags

1. audiences
2. Brecht
3. cinema
4. engagement
5. exaggeration
6. film
7. knots
8. suspense

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