

Columbia University GSAPP
Fall 2014
Advanced Studio V
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TEMPORARY – THE NEW PERMANENT

Pop-up City 2.0

The Proposition

This semester the studio will explore the architectural potentials of accommodating the temporary and the provisional within a building that is also stable and permanent. – but rather than create “Flex” space we will aim to generate “Flux” space.

Instead of intervening within the agnosticism of universal space or succumbing to the straight jacket of conventional modularity of long span structures, we propose to explore an activated architecture where new types spaces and spatial relationships, both interior and urban, are enabled by formal strategies comprised of moving elements, dynamic structure, variability of enclosure and shifting porosity.

While our research will include examining relevant precedents such as Mies’ concepts for Universal Space, the work of OMA, Archigram and Tschumi’ among others, it is Cedric Price’s Fun Palace first proposed in 1961 as a vast cybernetic and interactive cultural complex that will be our most significant reference.

Our revisiting of the concepts and architecture of the Fun Palace as an icon of 20th century architecture is intended not only to provide inspiration for the studio but also to provoke a comparison and critique for our own updated 21st c. concepts and proposals for Pop-up City 2.0.

A Primer

In 1999 a savvy California marketing group called Vacant conceived of a new marketing strategy for both new and established retail brands by capitalizing on the consumer desire for the novel, the spontaneous, the limited edition, and the exclusive by making temporary use of available and underutilized real estate.

Vacant’s conception of the Pop-up Shop to provide an affordable and short term opportunity to fledgling enterprises and to enable entrepreneurs to test the product, the market, the demographic and/or the location has now become become a permanent fixture of retailing strategy relying on what trend watchers have identified as a collective desire for “Massclusivity” and “Planned Spontaneity”.

While the original idea was based on the short term availability of vacant storefronts it soon evolved to include freestanding transformable structures including readymade shipping containers. Due to their provisional nature these were often installed in public spaces, unconventional locations or even derelict sites. Serving as temporary catalysts they also provided the opportunity to simultaneously exploit the potential of specific urban conditions and create new forms of engagement with communities or diverse audiences.

Over the past decade the Pop-up concept that has given way to Pop-up shops in airports, hotels and suburban shopping malls. While the freestanding shipping container once selected for its sustainable attributes as a reusable and recyclable unit as well as for its portability, scale and modularity, has now not only become ubiquitous but also a cliché.

Today, mega brands such as Starbucks have adopted the shipping container as a marketing

device that serves to signify the brand's purported allegiance with an environmentally conscious consumer demographic while expanding its market share through its new concept Container Architecture 'drive thru's'. At a larger scale developers have also latched on to the shipping container aesthetic of improvised collective Pop-up communities in order to attract a certain demographic or 'community' of creative and entrepreneurial tenants.

An example of this is the new "SuperPier" under development on the Hudson River in Manhattan. Inside the 6 story high, 560,000 sq. ft. existing pier structure a new Pop-up environment is planned with over 450 stacked shipping containers called "Incuboxes". These neutral re-purposed containers once deployed in the interest of experimentation and alternatives to the status quo retail space, have become a commodified signifier that has tethered the mutable and the temporary to a fixed and static position.

The Potential

With failure comes opportunity. Unfortunately the SuperPier's fixed arrangement of "Incuboxes" and "Anchor" spaces has come to resemble the shopping mall it purports to supplant, while the modular container that was once an enabling showcase for creative temporary ventures has not only become a cliché but has now 'boxed in' the potential for more innovative spatial occupancies and configurations.

The positive take away from the SuperPier model resides in the recognition that Pop-up "culture" has not only evolved to include Pop-ups of all kinds: from Pop-up restaurants & bars to Pop-up pools, cinemas, museums, libraries, galleries etc. but that the "clustering" of different types of Pop-up programs is the logical next step and one that has the most relevance here in terms of architecture and urbanism.

The Premise

The premise for the studio is based on identifying and tapping into the value of clustering the provisional and the temporary. Pop-up City 2.0 is a new type of cultural complex that hosts of an ever changing panoply of temporary programs and events. The cluster of simultaneous and overlapping provisional programs including leisure activities, entertainment, events, exhibitions, performances, commerce and various combinations of all of the above and more, are intended to serve a broad demographic, create a new community of active participants all the while activating its surroundings and local context. While in many respects the convergence of these programs have affinities with the Fun Palace, it also recalls the Happenings and guerilla tactics of 1970's that have continued to evolve today into the practice of temporary public art installations in non-traditional locations and the colonizing of provocative urban sites. In this case our site is a derelict urban block along an underutilized area of the waterfront in a resurgent Red Hook in Brooklyn.

The Proposal

The studio will embrace the concept of a dynamic architecture as the key concept for their proposals for a Pop-up City 2.0. The intention is to not only generate variable and unique spaces but also new spatial relationships that foster collective engagement and bridge architecture and urbanism through strategies that intelligently, systematically and methodically transform the Permanent to create the Temporary.

Studio Schedule Key Dates

First meeting: 09/05 at 2pm, Avery 300

Research and conceptual introductory exercise 1-3 weeks

Mid-term review: 10/20 1-7pm, Ware lounge

Final review: 12/8 1-7pm, Ware lounge