

CourseNo: ARCHA6672_001_2013_3

Meeting Location: [AVERY HALL 300](#)

Meeting Time: T 09:00A-11:00A

Instructor Information: [Alberto Foyo](#)

Variations on phenomenology: Genetics & culture of the courtyard dwelling typology

The course will be analyzing the ‘courtyard dwelling typology’ as a phenomenological case study that throughout history has embodied equally universal and local values at both the architectural and the urban-civic levels.

This seminar has two parts:

-During the first part of the semester there will be a series of lectures and debates about the genetic endowments and the cultural achievements throughout history of the courtyard dwelling at both the morphological and syntactical levels (object vs. fabric).

-During the second half of the semester the class will be divided into two groups; one group will collectively come up with a conceptual design for an urban enclave in the ‘first world’ utilizing the courtyard typology and the other half of the class will be doing likewise but in a ‘third world’ enclave.

The first world group will design an urban enclave in the borough of Queens following the principles of the courtyard typology and specifically addressing the notion of private, semi private, semi public, and public space in the city. The objective of the design will be to come up with an alternative to the purely residential detached and semi detached typologies prevalent in this area of NY. The proposal will aim at increasing the existing density; both the physical and the cultural density by introducing a new zoning ordinance that would challenge the front and rear yard requirements while increasing the open space ratio and secondly by allowing for work-live use group and occupancy.

The third world group will design an urban enclave in a slum zone around Rio de Janeiro. Also based on the courtyard typology, the design strategies of this group will be placed on self reliance, autonomy,

community involvement strategies, informality, economy of means, low tech construction techniques, and phasing.

The concept of running these two interventions simultaneously with frequent bis a bis pin ups is to re analyze and compare throughout the semester the notions of civic life, architectural presence (public appearance), and human comfort as they relate to two very different contemporary social and physical landscapes.

“the aspects of things that are most important to us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity.” Ludwig Wittgenstein

An introduction:

The courtyard dwelling typology constitutes a good pedagogical tool to revisit and re analyze the relationships between the private and the public domain, between the creation of objects and the creation of fabric, and between the understanding of tradition and the understanding of innovation. These relationships inform and affect our basic comprehension of the urban- civic environment at the morphological and syntactical level.

Throughout history the courtyard house has been used as a generator of urbanism in multitude of cultures including China, The Middle East, Mediterranean Europe, and the Americas. In our contemporary era, as we try to regain the lost silence of the private domain, the main characteristic of the patio house remains the severity with which it marks the separation between the public realm and the private realm; between the inside and the outside. It does so with a wall enclosure that effectively adds to the house one more architectural room with a window to the sky. The courtyard is thus certainly not only a matter of visual privacy, but also of acoustic privacy and of allowing for a multiplicity of atmospheric-architectural conditions to happen throughout the day as the natural light bathes and bounces off the enclosure walls. Whether to defend the crops, to define the garden, or to establish a focal point, an enclosed space visually connected to the sky dome brings about a sense of intimacy to domestic life; an intimacy that is usually erroneously associated with an introverted life style that gives its back to the outside world. Surely the walls grant a sense of protection to the dwellers but more importantly they bring about a sense of inhabitation where the dwellers feel that they belong to a particular environment more so than the environment belongs to them; an intimacy with an accent on

interiority.

When the courtyard house multiplies itself in order to produce a community, the same walls that help preserve the privacy of domestic life also serve to define the streets that constitute the public living rooms of the community. In the same way that the inner face of the wall promotes intimacy the outer face of the wall delineates and promotes public and civic interaction. Thus, the house wall, in one single act, addresses and defines both the private and the public realm with a clear sense of simplicity, authenticity and economy of means.

Establishing the parameters; A revision of concepts

- Introversion & extroversion
- Private & public
- Comfort & conformance
- Prototype, type, & stereotype
- Inhabitation & exhabitation
- Morphological & syntactical
- Object & fabric
- Integration & segregation
- Interventions & installations
- Land form & land settlement
- Tradition & modernity
- Garden city & suburb

A historical overview

- Troglo-ditic proto courtyards
- The rural origins of the courtyard house A matter of self defense
- The four great oriental agricultural- river basin cultures and the birth of

urbanism

- The classic period
- Islam- The Oriental middle ages
- Early Middle Ages and High Middle Ages
- The Iberian Peninsula
- Americas
- 20th century
- The contemporary denial of civic public space

The making of place: Spatial relationships from the inside out & from the outside in

Whithin

- The courtyard
- The room
- The circulation within the dwelling
- The domestic furniture

Without

- The semi private space
- The semi public space
- The public realm
- The street
- The urban furniture

The perception of place: Climate & light as design tools

The courtyard as landscape & as garden (agriculture); the city as landscape & as garden (agriculture)