

The Imperatives of Urbanism

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Spring 2015

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Introduction

The seminar course will examine the urban problematics defined by architects from the 1970s to the present, inventorying the conditions they believe to impact urban form, disciplinary debates, and the role of the designer. From the Culture of Congestion to the 'plurality of design approaches' today, the course will probe the concepts architects have developed to give form to the city.

Course Objectives

This seminar will examine the imperatives offered by architects for large-scale commissions. The course will study their forms of reasoning, expressed through texts and proposals. Upon completion of the course it is expected that students will have greater familiarity with the recent terms that architects have argued to be at stake in the debates of urbanism and architecture.

Structure

The initial course meetings will consist of presentations of urban design and architecture case studies. The last several meetings will involve student presentations.

Issues and Themes

The course will introduce proposals from the 1970s to today that are representative of major themes in the field of urbanism, including: architecture (i.e., a single building) as an instrument of urban design; appeals of social improvement, such as enhancing a sense of collective identity and public stability; analytical reasoning as the basis of arguments to redefine urban programming; claims of the autonomy of urban form; the politics of urban form; and environmental imperatives including the advocacy of sustainable landscape architecture.

Course Requirements

1. Term Project Proposal

The intent of the term project is to develop an alternative interpretation to the received understanding of a built project and its urban effects. Select one of the primary readings as a framework to analyze a building or building complex. Select a project that is an unlikely candidate for analysis for the chosen text. Use the text as a means to identify and describe under-recognized or underappreciated aspects of the design, providing an original reading of the project's urban dimensions. In that regard, you're encouraged to select a text that at first glance appears to stand for urban ideas that conflict with the generally accepted design attributes of the project. This will enable you to better 'see' the project in a new light and to structure an analysis that challenges the generally accepted terms of the form.

(So that is to say, avoid using a text by Stan Allen to interpret a project by Stan Allen, for example.)

Please structure the proposal in the following format: in the first 1/3 thoroughly explicate or restate the text's claims; in the second 1/3 describe in detail the key formal attributes of the project; and in the final 1/3 use the text as a lens to develop an original interpretation of the formal features of the project.

The purpose of the exercise is to identify positive attributes to the design, advocate for the architects intentions, and offer by way of the building analysis new insights about urbanism as a practice.

A maximum of 1,500 words with annotated diagrams. Submitted by email.

Due: 6p the evening prior to the presentation date

2. Presentation of the Term Project – Course meeting of Week 6

10 minute maximum

Presented from a written script with image slideshow including annotated diagrams

3. Term Project

The term project will consist of an extended interpretation of the selected case study. A maximum of 2,500 words with annotated diagrams.

Due: Date TBD

Submission Requirements

It is a requirement of this seminar that all students submit course materials digitally by the end of term. Please follow this procedure in digitally submitting your work:

Email the proposal and final term project on their respective due dates. All students must submit required assignments as .pdf files.

Readings

Readings will be available on the course site at the start of the term.

Note: Emphasis will be placed on the collaborative formulation of ideas. To promote the collective process and the sharing of concepts, please know that any insight, observation, or comment made in the context of the course will be considered to be authored by the group rather than any one person, and available for use and interpretation by all.

Course Schedule and Primary Readings

Week 1 **Introduction Course Overview**

Week 2 **Obfuscation and Irrationality - OMA**

Rem Koolhaas, "Skyscraper Theorist," *Delirious New York* (New York: Monacelli, 1994,), pp. 110-131.

Rem Koolhaas, "Europeans: Biuer! Dali and Le Corbusier Conquer New York," *Delirious New York* (New York: Monacelli, 1994), pp. 235-249.

Week 3

Communication and Form – FOA, Reiser + Umemoto

Alejandro Zaera-Polo, "The Hokusai Wave," *Volume 3*, September 2005: 32-39

"Being RE," (interview with RE Somol), ed. Christopher Henry, *The Cornell Journal of Architecture* 8: RE, Mar 2011: 76-85.

R.E. Somol and Sarah Whiting, "Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism." *Perspecta* 33, 2002: 72-77.

Week 4

Large Buildings – Roche & Dinkeloo, SOM

Vincent Scully, "Thruway and Crystal Palace," *Architectural Forum*, March 1974

David Gissen, "The Architectural Production of Nature, Dendur/New York," *Grey Room* 34, Winter 2009: 58-79

Rem Koolhaas, "Bigness or the Problem of the Large," *S, M, L, XL* (New York: Monacelli, 1995), pp. 493-516.

Week 5

**Guest Speaker: Chris McVoy, Partner, Steven Holl Architects
Atmospheres - Herzog de Meuron, DS+R, Holl, Hirsute**

Jeffrey Kipnis, "The Cunning of Cosmetics," *El Croquis* 84, 1997: 22-28

Mark Wigley, "The Architecture of Atmosphere," *Daidalos* 68, 1998: 18-27.

Jeff Kipnis, "...and then, Something Magical," in *A Question of Qualities: Essays in Architecture (Writing Architecture)* (Cambridge: MIT, 2013), pp 53-98

Jason Payne, "Hairesy," Interview. *Volume 24*, 2010: 128-131.

Week 6

Term Proposals Due 6p the day before the course meeting

Term Proposal Presentations

10 minute maximum. Presented from a written script with image slideshow including annotated diagrams

Week 7 3/6

Term Proposal Presentations - Continued

10 minute maximum. Presented from a written script with image slideshow including annotated diagrams

Week 8 3/13

Autonomy – Mies van der Rohe, O.M. Ungers, Piero Vittorio Aureli

Piero Vittorio Aureli, "Toward the Archipelago," *Log* 11, Winter 2008: 91-119.

K. Michael Hays, "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form," *Perspecta* 21, 1984: 14-29.

Spring Break

Week 10 3/27

Term Proposal Presentations - Continued

10 minute maximum. Presented from a written script with image slideshow including annotated diagrams

Week 11 4/3

Void and Incompletion - OMA

Rem Koolhaas, "Urbanism After Innocence, Four Projects: The Reinvention of Geometry," *Assemblage* 18, Aug. 1992: 82-113.

Jeffrey Kipnis, "Recent Koolhaas," *El Croquis* 79, 1996: 26-31.

Rem Koolhaas, "Whatever Happened to Urbanism," *S, M, L, XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), pp. 960-971.

Wouter Deen, Udo Garritzmman, Diagramming the Contemporary: OMA's Little Helper in the Quest of the New, *Oase* 48, 1998: 83-92.

Week 12 4/10

Technology and Sustainability – Mies van der Rohe, Richard Foster, Morphosis, Philippe Raum, Olafur Eliasson

Jeffrey Inaba, "Machines for Architecture To Be Lived In," *Volume* 37, Fall 2013; 4-7

Mark Wigley, "Pipeless Dreams," *Volume* 37, Fall 2013; 22-31

"Air Space," Philippe Raum interview, *Volume* 37 Fall 2013; 146-149

C-Lab, "475,200 ft³ of Almost Nothing," *Volume* 37 Fall 2013; 64-47

Neil Denari, Richard Foster's Willis, Faber & Dumas building, Interview. *Volume* 37, Fall 2013; 82-88

Week 13 4/17

Individual Term Project Discussions

The sign up list is posted on Courseworks

Week 14 4/24

Storytelling and Form Making – BIG, Tom Wiscombe,

Mark Wigley, "Storytime," *Assemblage* 27, August 1995: 81-94.

"Yes Man: An Interview with Bjarke Ingels," Interview. *Volume* 13, September 2005: 48-52

"Figure in a Sack," Tom Wiscombe interview, *Volume* 37 Fall 2013; 120-129

May 7

Term Paper Due Date 6p, by email to ji2129@columbia.edu