

Problem #2 – INDEPENDENT RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The central tenet of this course is that interventions on old buildings often result in aesthetically and culturally complex and beautiful works of architecture: we need to study these interventions to be able to develop a rational approach to the architectural and preservation problems they offer.

The purpose of this last assignment is to allow you, the student, to independently research and investigate new forms resulting from interventions in old buildings and to learn from them.

The focus is on recent work and hopefully you will find worthy projects in or around New York so that you may see them for yourselves (an invaluable experience), but in the cases where that will not be possible, you will depend on third party documentation.

DESCRIPTION

You are asked to conduct magazine, print publications and internet research (archinect.com, archnewsnow.com, eyecandy.com, architizer.com, e-architect.com, archdaily.com, dezeen.com, Curbed.com, and others, and architects' web sites) and to bring a pre-selection of buildings which have been added to or otherwise transformed by recent interventions to the class for discussion and final selection.

THE ISSUES**1: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ORIGINAL ARTIFACT**

When acting on a historic building through design, the foundation on which we stand is an understanding of the significance of the old building. Why does this building matter to us? What aspects of it are meaningful? What physical parts of it, or of its relationship to its environment (man made or natural) are significant, either historically, aesthetically, or culturally?

This is the background against which ANY intervention needs to be evaluated, because the new work should enhance rather than diminish our understanding and our experience of the artifact's significant aspects.

So, our first effort in analyzing the work is to try to define what the significance of the original artifact is – fully aware, of course, that significance is not a static notion: for example (grossly simplified) while architects in the Renaissance prized buildings from antiquity, they did not assign much value to vernacular buildings, but our culture, now, has developed an interest in vernacular architecture – so our understanding of significance varies with time and place (which is the reason why “reversibility” is such a key concept in Preservation).

2: THE NEW WORK: WHAT?

You then need to understand, characterize and describe what is being done to the existing artifact. You can do this in a little sketch, a diagram or a one-sentence statement (or a combination of all). What is the idea? What is the concept that guides this intervention and makes it a complete work of architecture.

3. THE NEW WORK: HOW?

Then you need to analyze how the intervention is doing what it is doing (remember the lectures – and read *Old Buildings – New Forms*). How are the new pieces related (or not) to the existing fabric? What are the methods used by the architect to make a new complete work with the old and the new, together. Here again, you should conduct this investigation through a written description, a series of sketches, small model(s), and photographs (feel free to use analytical overlays on photographs).

FINAL PRODUCT

In your final presentation you should provide an assessment of the work, based on your research and analysis. Your final product will be in the attached two-page format illustrating an answer to the questions posed or implied above and include an analytical model (physical or digital). You will present your work to the class for review and debate in the final session of the semester. See class schedule for dates.