March – July 2011

The Bauhaus University Weimar will hold its eleventh design course in English in the summer semester of 2011. The course will be entitled “International Advanced Architectural Design”.

The international AAD 2011 program is organized by the chair of Design and Theory of Building Types, Professor Karl-Heinz Schmitz, in close cooperation with chairs of the master program Advanced Architectural Design at the faculty of Architecture. In the past internationally well-known architects have supported the design course with lectures, critiques and discussions on their own work:

Luigi Snozzi Switzerland 1999
Roger Diener Switzerland 1999
Karljosef Schattner Germany 1999/2000
Alberto Campo Baeza Spain 2002
César Pelli Spain 2003
Oscar Torreño Guzmanesquía 2003
Gunther Zamp Kelp Germany 2004
Samuel Kaiser & Sebastian Moos 2005
Daniel Marques Switzerland 2007
Peter Cody Ireland 2008
Christopher Platt Glasgow 2009
Alberto Campo Baeza Spain 2010
András Pálffy Austria 2011

The program includes an excursion to places of specific relevance to the course. Students will be asked to contribute to the costs of the excursion (probably 350 Euros). The design course will be supported by a lecture course on Theory and History of Building Types as well as additional seminar courses. The entire study program may earn up to 30 ECTS credit points in total.

Closing date for all applications: 4th of March 2011

iAAD
International Advanced Architectural Design

The design of buildings is a formal response to a program and a specific environment. We understand the design process as a means to gain insights into an architectural problem. Design is a hypothesis rather than an answer, a way of investigating the correctness of a program, the potential of a specific environment and the opportunities inherent in the formal concepts of our time.
The lectures deal with the historical evolution of public buildings and public spaces. Two aspects are important: function and architectural space. The history of function is one of diversification and specialisation. History has shown that programmatic ideas and spatial ideas correspond within their own time but that form does not always follow function. In many cases, typical spatial forms are capable of coping with a diversity of functional requirements. Function can be implicit as well as explicit; how could we otherwise reuse older buildings.

Public buildings and public spaces are as much a result of conflicting architectural ideas as of different periods of history as they are the result of a specific programmatic idea of their own time. Ideal buildings and ideal spaces are the exception; in most cases, architects are concerned with the reconciliation of conflicting spatial ideals and conflicting programmatic ideas. The lecture course supports the idea that the intuitive design process is part of a greater architectural history. The lectures deal with the present, and with the past in relation to the present.

At all events, the architecture of skyscrapers is regarded as a development that took place on the other side of the ocean. While most US churches, museums and banks were uninspired reproductions of European ideals, the skyscraper was a rational product and a symbol of the American spirit; according to the US architectural critic Claude Bragdon. The direct relationship between this type of building and the American ideology of progress and success is probably an important reason why it is still regarded with such suspicion in Europe.

These quotes are a convincing reflection on one aspect of the history of skyscrapers. Does this mean, however, that European architects were less enthusiastic about a building type that has always seemed antagonistic to the established concepts of the European town? There is very little evidence for this supposition, as there are many notable European architects who did design a skyscraper: Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, Adolf Loos, Tony Garnier, Auguste Perret or Antonio San Filippo. The first generation of modern architects on both sides of the Atlantic worked on proposals for high-rise buildings regardless of whether they were designing for Chicago, New York, Berlin, Paris or Milan. Even those architects who belong to the second and third generation, those who have defended the European town against the concepts of modern town planning, like Peter and Alison Smithson in Great Britain or Oswald Mathias Ungers and Hans Kollhoff in Germany have designed high-rise buildings. In contrast to the first generation, some members of the second and third generation have taken great pains to reflect upon the situation of the European town with its rich historic layering of urban ideas.

Students taking part in this year’s iAAD design project will be asked to give thought to the special history of the skyscraper in a European context, the changes taking place in the nature of public function and public space, the relationship between the icon and public space and the spatial principles of organizing public functions vertically.
Technique and Discourse: Positions between Architecture and Philosophy

Since architecture has been regarded as the result of an intellectual process rather than an „mechanical“ struggle for a scientific foundation, it became a permanent obsession. Disabilities, design is one of the key words in this context.

For as already the italian term „disegno della mente“ clearly demonstrates, design is by no means confined to the art of drawing. It is rather signifying a sophisticated and highly intellectual approach to the building world, comprising questions of philosophy, aesthetics, techniques and alluding to numerous branches of human knowledge. As is widely known these affiliations to otherwise incomparable discourses encouraged architects and theoreticians to assume a kind of „metaphysics“, capable of defining architecture as an autonomous, rational discipline.

On the other hand one has to take into account that architecture or architect’s image occasionally served as a metaphor for the logical construction of philosophical thoughts. Against this background architects are constantly referring to philosophers and vice versa while the architectural design process opens a field of interdisciplinary relations between technique and discourse.

This course offers the opportunity to discuss some of the most discussed authors on the field of modern architectural design theory, including texts by Alexander, Barnes, Benjamin, Eisenman, Mitchell, Schumacher and many others. Reading assignments will be announced on the web site of the department. The beginning of the semester. Attendants are expected to prepare every single text provided for seminar discussions and may present their papers in english.

In this class, we will look into many examples and aspects of artificality in architecture and its cultural neighborhood. Trying to find out what was so sexy about the plastic dresses of the 1950ies, the airy interiors of the space-age, the decorated sheds of Las Vegas, cyber-space, cyborgs, and many more, we will assign a topic and reading to each session. Each student will host one session’s debate. Most of the class will be in English language. Many of the texts are available in German, too, however, daring to debate is crucial.

Friedrich Nietzsche curiously asked how much truth man can endure behind the question: who is talking truth? In other words: we love being deceived. It was in this sense that Béla Balázs, the second great philosopher of the 17th century after Descartes, claims that life is nothing but a stabil illusion (Richard Boll, The Meaning of Surface).

Sullivan’s famous quote ‘form follows function’ has often been misunderstood to imply that there cannot be any form without a function (which was never Sullivan’s problem). In an arithmic alliance between the ethics of Functum, the spirit of capitalism and the sense of modernity, heroic architectural modernism seemed to preach the dictum of absolute truth in expression as well as intention, of a secrecy of construction, instead of a construction of secrecy. Just as we nowadays don’t believe in heroes anymore, post-modernist thinking has overcome the idea of an objective reality as such; replaced what was square with queer, the simple with the complex; and architectural post-modernism has unleashed the power of story-telling and thrown overboard all ideas of purity, along with, apparently, the architect’s own integrity as well. But where are we now, in this weird mixture of retro-modernism and neo-liberalism that makes whole generations of students search for the sublime in concrete, and the existent in the right angle? Has the stubborn yet heroic Fronteistehent transformed into nowadays social engineering masterminded just to design facades that were already invented in the 1930ies? Or is this all just another grand masquerade?

*We who know how to live in superficiality from the Depth* Friedrich Nietzsche

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Faculty of Architecture

Theory and History of Modern Architecture

Prof. Dr. Carsten Ruhl

Prima materia: The Material Imagination in Fabric-Formed Concrete

(3 ECTS)

Current experimentations in the use of fabric as a fomconcrete forming material have led to astonishing formal and structural inventions. Fabric formwork takes advantage of the natural wedging between the hydrostatic properties of wet concrete and the high tensile strength of woven materials to create a low-cost alternative to traditional wood or steel concrete formwork. Using simple techniques such as sewing, weaving, and folding, radically new and varied forms are opened up to the architectural imagination. Because of its direct and facile relation between technique, invention, and the unexpected, fabric-formed concrete is a natural starting point from which to explore the so-called prima materia-the formless, material receptacle capable of embodying all forms. In the wedding of two, seemingly fluid materials, one begins to imagine within the material intrinsic nature of the material—a principle concept in the conception of architecture as edification.

This is a 3 ECTS course that meets once a week for four weeks, culminating in a 2 day fabric-forming workshop during the final week end of the course. Each week students will be given short, workshop based assignments (using plasters in lieu of concrete) which support the seminar lectures. The final workshop is a culmination of these experiments in the production of a small, temporary installation which demonstrates the topics explored in the seminar.

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