INTRODUCTION

No field of architectural modernism has been so thoroughly revised as that of the city. This course looks at the diverse lines of criticism that were levelled at the modern movement's model of urbanism during the late 20th century, and the often contradictory alternatives that were theorised and sometimes built. They show a widespread ambivalence about not just the design of towns and cities but about the value of collective, settled dwelling itself. As the 21st century unfolds, this restless uncertainty shows no sign of resolution; indeed it has spread around the globe.

We begin with the rationalist synthesis that was advanced by CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architecture) through its 1933 Charter of Athens, which conceived the city as a planned distinction of functions in place of their historical confusion. But disaggregation led, through the growth of motor traffic, to disurbanization. In the 1940s, reacting to wartime destruction, some called for a revaluing of monumentality and historical continuity. Yet the razed areas offered a chance to realize CIAM’s disurbanist model. By the 1950s, CIAM was beset by contradictory desires. For while younger members - Team X - called on urbanists to learn from the anthropology of settlement and community, other critics, such as the Independent Group, wanted architects to adopt the ‘pop’ values of a new consumer society, forsaking permanence in favour of ‘flexibility’. To combine fixity and flux became the aim of Japanese Metabolists and Archigram’s projects for megastructures and mobiles. ‘Consumer’ models of personal freedom, however, became the issue of Situationist attacks in the 60s. Yet another left position was that of ‘Casabella’ rationalists such as Aldo Rossi, asserting architecture’s autonomous power to keep continuity and determine place.

By the time of the disturbances of 1968, the modern movement in architecture was over. Modernist abstraction still inspired formal speculations in specific projects, but the idea of social totality that produced the modernist city had faded. Robert Venturi pointed students to consumer semiotics on the strip in ‘Learning From Las Vegas’. Robert and Leon Krier, whereas, called for a full return to traditional urban space and ‘the reconstruction of the European city’. This ‘postmodern’ revisionism received its most sophisticated statement in Colin Rowe’s 1978 case for complex pluralism in urban form, “Collage City”, and led to the comprehensive project of Berlin’s 1987 International Building Exhibition (IBA).

At the same time, however, an architectural neo-vanguard was drawing other modernisms - Russian formalism, surrealism, and situationism - into radical provocations, less about cities than the divers quasi-autonomous regimes (‘Heterotopias’, in Michel Foucault’s term) that structure social space in the ‘hyperurbanism’ of global capitalism. Prominent among these were Superstudio, OMA, and Bernard Tschumi. A site for heterotopic experiment was the urban park of La Villette. Tschumi’s filmic montage there was mixed by the NATO group (Narrative Architecture Today) with London punk situationism to generate “Gamma City”, and recently Nigel Coates global projection “Ecstacity”.

Many of the mutations in architectural form over recent decades have resulted from such fundamental revisions of urban form, either through excavating historical examples such as Nolli’s Rome or Piranesi’s Campo Marzio, or by extrapolating ‘other modernisms’ that the ‘official modernism’ of CIAM suppressed. This course follows these neo-vanguards’ of both left and right - or often puzzlingly both. It involves turns to the permanent city (the Kriers, Rossi), technopop (Archigram), commercial demotic (Venturi), collage (Rowe, Stirling), provo-utopias (Archizoom, Superstudio), hypermetropolis (OMA), allegory (Libeskind), systematic hybridizing (Eisenman), kinematic montage (Tschumi), and multitrack narrative (Coates & NATO). Essays may thus develop from it on specific subjects of the course, or on the general crisis of the city to which they have presented such variant and contradictory responses.

GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Joan Ockman, Architecture Culture 1943-1968.
Ulrich Conrads, Theories & Manifestos of Modern Architecture.
Charles Jencks & Karl Kropf, Theories & Manifestoes of Contemporary Architecture.
Kate Nesbitt, Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture.
M. van Schaik & O. Macel, Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations 1956-76.
THE FANTASY OF FLEXIBILITY

Bibliography:

SITUATIONISM

Bibliography:

THE PHANTOM OF AUTONOMY

Bibliography:

COLIN ROWE & JAMES STIRLING

Bibliography:

A PARK, A CITY

Bibliography:


Rem Koolhaas, SMLXL


NATO & ECSTACITY

Bibliography:


BERLIN: YEAR ZERO TO IBA

Bibliography:


TIMETABLE

Wed 25 Jan 2006
Room T401
17.00-18.30 Lecture 1 REVISING THE CITY - INTRODUCTION
18.30-20.00 Lecture 2 THE FANTASY OF FLEXIBILITY

Wed 01 Feb 2006
Room T401
17.00-18.30 Lecture 3 SITUATIONISM
18.30-20.00 Lecture 4 THE PHANTOM OF AUTONOMY

Wed 08 Feb 2006
Room T401
17.00-18.30 Lecture 5 COLIN ROWE & JAMES STIRLING
18.30-20.00 Lecture 6 A PARK, A CITY

Wed 22 Feb 2006
Room T401
17.00-18.30 Lecture 7  NATO & ECSTACITY
18.30-20.00 Lecture 8  BERLIN: YEAR ZERO TO IBA

Wed 01 Mar 2006
Room T401
17.00-18.30 Seminar 1: Lectures 1+2+3+4
18.30-20.00 Seminar 2: Lectures 5+6+7+8

Wed 15 Mar 2006
Room T401
17.00-20.00 Seminar 3: Students Presentations & Tutorials

Wed 19 Apr 2006
School Office: ITTA Final Course Submission

Wed 24 May 2006
Room M140
10.00-12.00 ITTA Course Feedback