

# Southern California Institute of Architecture:

Studio III: with Tom Buresh - Autumn '93

## One Project: in four parts

Architecture is a product of culture and as such exists within the world from which it originates. It therefore responds to and accommodates culture in a variety of ways. The intention of this Studio is to labor at the mend/tear at which culture/architecture intersects. This course examines the conventional instances where culture informs architecture and conversely (as modernism states) where architecture informs culture.

### PART ONE:

The semester is divided into two basic parts. The first of which will consist of three sections. Each section is concerned with the examination of a particular origin for the work of architecture:

**1. Form:** In the absence of the conventional determinants of program and context you will be asked to develop a project via a strict linear process and intent on conveying an undeniable and coherent internal structure.

**2. Fiction:** Is concerned with expansion of the conventional program to include range of issues including experience, emotion, use, and again legibility, especially as it results in the communication of a complex fiction and/or intentions. Fictional Architecture is intent upon conveying communicable subject matter.

**3. Context:** Concomitant with the field trip to the desert this exercise proposes an architecture informed solely by the reading of a place. Critical observations will be made and recorded using a combination of psychological and physical mapping strategies.

Each section examines architecture from the point of view of a singular subject. The stated intention is to examine the work in this limited yet rigorous way in order to more fully understand and appreciate the limits and possibilities associated with each.

### **The Interior: A Shelter**

Refuge:           - shelter from danger, distress or pursuit  
                      - an asylum

This space is to accommodate spaces for working, bathing, sleeping and the preparation of food.

This space is to be seen as a destination for a single individual.

To clearly understand what a refuge is, one has to question the description that the dictionary gives such as, shelter from pursuit, or asylum. An asylum from what? Could it be that one needs not to escape reality from outside, but more so, from within?

When in front of the notion of escape, I "see" running, therefor a route or a path, I "see" it being a hiding place, a stationary space, a retreat, and an enclosure.

To express those feelings, I see this space as a linear path, an enclosure where, although not having the outside elements brought in, except in terms of light, the elements of the city and its energy is represented within the space, by the formation of a subspace that floats above the "path" and thus creates awareness of what it represents - the city. A second space is to be a "think tank", an ivard looking space, a space of comfort.

Two elements are then introduced as to reinforce the notion of this space being a route, a path, as well as being a retreat from...?

Those elements are in the form of a wall, cutting through the space as to force one's perspective, to guide one's way through it, along a predetermined path,

" A wall is for them something calming, morally  
decisive and final, perhaps even something mystical "

Dostoyevsky

The other element can be seen as a cut that allows observation or surveillance of all spaces and activities, thus providing awareness of one's self as well as the outdoors. This element is in the form of a ramp, on a raised level, leading from outside and through the entry facade, along the wall, with view through a cut in it, to both the work-space as well as towards the "think-tank", that also provides for accommodation for sleeping and meditation. The end of the ramp becomes an observation point, from where is the only point where the outside is visible, through a "cut" in the front facade, which is made of translucent glass, held up by light steel structure on the outside. At the level of the ramp is a horizontal

"Cut" of transparent glass, allowing for view of the city in which this space is located.

The workspace can be seen as having been formed as exploding fractions of a larger whole - the wall.

The "think-tank" is meant to create a feeling of comfort and calmness. The nostalgic memory of The Northern Lights, floating through space like a silk scarf, is in the form of a membrane structure with PTFE fabric, translated to be a space that embraces the individual and allows for relaxation, a refuge from the rest of the world.

## PART TWO:

**4. Constructions:** The method of inquiry whereby a body of knowledge is studied by dissecting each distinct and identifiable component is scientific and inherently flawed. Part Two: Constructions addresses those shortcomings by asking the student to assimilate lessons from the previous projects for the express purpose of forming a comprehensive and complete architecture.

## **Sunset Productions**

As a conclusion of the semester's earlier projects, which dealt singularly with Form, Fiction & Context. This project is to assimilate lessons from previous projects with the purpose of forming a comprehensive and complete architecture. The program was to house a production facility with housing & an outdoor area. Given were certain size requirements and a percentage of the whole for parking spaces. This project was to house a pre-production facility for a small film company, with accommodation for some of its personnel on the site. The idea was to integrate the work aspect with the living.

The site is along Sunset Blvd., just east of LaCienega. A photograph, taken of Sunset from the site drove, along with elements from the previous projects, much of the concept for the project and its language.

The main mass of the Project was to be built along Sunset Blvd. Automotive traffic and the idea of cruising, is then brought into & through the site. A cut is introduced, a cut that is to bring fourth a focal point in the city. Because of a dramatic slope of the site, the lower part of it is surrounded by built fabric. For this reason I decided to look towards the Spanish influenced, California tradition, of inward looking building around a central courtyard. In deciding on materiality and trying to create a language between the different building elements. I decided to use four different materials, that them would be used as curtain-wall or infill and applied to the steel and poured in place reinforced concrete structure. These materials were concrete block, weathered copper, wood & glass. Where intermediary structure was needed, such as in the glass curtain wall, dark painted and lacquered steel sections would be used.

The main building mass & the outside bearing walls are of concrete block. The "cut" through the center of the site, becomes a representative of three elements of the city, that I find important. First, from the California court-house tradition, the lower court becomes extended as a "strip" court, allowing for an element so often missing in Los Angeles, street interaction and social gathering. All spaces, including a café, are entered from the "strip" or court. This way the cut becomes not a courtyard, but more so a "street" or a "promenade". Automotive traffic is separated but yet a part of the space. Together these elements were to bring the "street" alive. Second, the element of the billboard. The tectonics of the cut is to be that of the billboards along the iconic Sunset strip. The material, glass, either acid etched or clear, allows for most of the light into the spaces

within. The structure would allow for attachments of canvases to the outside, with advertisements of the company's projects. Outside the cuts made into the building mass by the "promenade" as well as the "court" and traffic flow, materiality becomes determined by whether a cut is made, where the "wound" is of copper. Or an extrusion where the "growth" is of wood.

At the end of the wall of the lower court, the glass curtain wall could have projections of films on it; thus the court becomes an outdoor theater. This way, as one stands at Sunset, or cruises by, the "cut" presents elements of the city afar. At mid ground a film projection, a representation. Along the "horizon" a bridge for "cruising".

## Southern California Institute of Architecture:

### Studio IV: with Reiner Pirker - Spring '94

#### PROGRAM:

##### ORGANISM - THE VITAL MACHINE

ARCHITECTURE AS A DEFINED SPACE FOR ACTIVITY  
ARCHITECTURE AS ORGANISM (NOT TO MIX UP WITH ORGANIC ARCHITECTURE)  
THE CITY AS AN ORGANISM

THE IDEA OF A BUILDING IS NOT THE FORM  
IT IS NOT SPACE  
IT IS NOT FUNCTION  
IT IS NOT STRUCTURE  
IT IS NOT LIGHT

THE IDEA OF ARCHITECTURE AS AN ORGANISM IS A COMPLEX INTERACTION OF ALL THESE ASPECTS

THE ORGANISM IS ADAPTING ITSELF TO THE CONDITION, TO THE ENVIRONMENT  
AND IT IS AT THE SAME TIME FORMING THE ENVIRONMENT

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21st CENTURY WE HAVE HUGE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS  
THE POPULATION IS INCREASING  
OUR USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES IS INCREASING  
SOCIAL PROBLEMS ARE INCREASING  
THE POVERTY OF THE POPULATION IS INCREASING

WE CAN SEE HOW OUR NATURE IS COLLAPSING  
WE CAN SEE HOW THE OZONE HOLE GROWS  
WE CAN SEE HOW THE TRAFFIC COLLAPSES IN OUR CITIES

WE HAVE TO FOCUS ON THESE PROBLEMS  
WE HAVE TO DEVELOP AN ARCHITECTURE WHICH IS AN ORGANISM BY ITSELF AND WHICH IS PART OF THE UNIVERSE

WE HAVE TO STUDY NATURAL ORGANISMS  
HOW ORGANISM WORK  
WE HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THE NETWORK OF NATURAL ORGANISMS  
THAT EVERY SINGLE PART OF AN ORGANISM IS A COMPLEX SYSTEM  
AND EVERY ELEMENT NOT BELONGING TO THE SYSTEM IS ALIEN TO THE SYSTEM

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS IS BASED ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF THESE SYSTEMS  
IN EVERY PERIOD OF HUMAN HISTORY PEOPLE HAD BEEN TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE UNIVERSE

DEVELOPMENTS WITHOUT THAT BACKGROUND WILL FAIL  
EITHER THE SYSTEM IS ABLE TO CORRECT THE PROBLEM BY ADAPTING TO THE NEW CONDITION OR THE SYSTEM MAY COLLAPSE

FROM ITSELF WILL NOT BE THE ANSWER FOR ALL THESE PROBLEMS  
FORM BY ITS OWN HAS NO MEANING, EVEN WITH A PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND  
THE BEAUTY OF ORGANISMS IS NOT BASED ON FORMAL IDEAS

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING US AS WE MOVE TOWARD THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY IS A NEW  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TECHNOLOGY AND ORGANIC LIFE, BETWEEN THE ARTIFACT AND NATURE  
THE BALANCE OF NATURE WILL BE THE MAJOR PROBLEM

ARCHITECTURE IS PART OF THE SYSTEM  
ORGANISMS EXIST IN EVERY SCALE FROM MACROCOSMS TO MICROCOSMS  
FROM THE CITY TO DETAIL

THE WHOLE IS MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

I AM THINKING OF BUILDINGS WHICH CAN BREATHE  
INTELLIGENT BUILDINGS NOT INTELLIGENT FACADES  
STRUCTURES WHICH ARE JUST NECESSARY  
BUILDINGS WHICH DO NOT ORIGIN FROM FORMAL IDEAS, SCULPTURAL IDEAS BUT FROM A COMPLEX SYSTEM OF  
FUNCTION, SPACE, LIGHT, STRUCTURE, FORCES FROM THE ENVIRONMENT, TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURES, ETC.  
AND THE BALANCE WITH NATURE

RESUME

ARCHITECTURE AS AN ORGANISM INCLUDES SEVERAL ASPECTS:  
RELATION TO THE ENVIRONMENT (CITY, NATURE)  
RELATION BETWEEN SINGLE ELEMENTS AND ASPECTS  
FUNCTIONAL ROLE IN THE SYSTEM

BUILDING PROGRAM

PROBLEMS AND NEW DEMANDS OF OUR CITIES  
MIGRATION, TRAFFIC, SOCIAL PROBLEMS, CULTURE, IDENTITY

CONCEPT  
FUNCTION  
URBAN CONTEXT  
INFRASTRUCTURE

## LOS ANGELES - CITY OF LINES

- Lines connecting points, those points though, not being "centers", but rather intersections.
- The city fabric is stretched out like a desert, continuous and the same. A layer of connecting lines lies over it
- The layer of the new Metro system is to make moving around the city, easier for everybody - this will reinforce the cultural mix that the city is and. This layer goes under the city fabric and only at certain city fabric - lines - intersections; it peaks up through the layer of buildings creating connecting points.

## A PLACE OF DESTINATION & SOCIAL GATHERING

- The building would be made to reinforce the area of which it is built in by creating a focus point for it and a magnet for the district.
- The building would reflect the industry that created the city - the FILM industry - and try to reestablish the glamour and charisma that it had in the early part of the century.
- The building would provide a public space, both indoors and out. These spaces would be for social gatherings, whether formal and organized or informal and casual.
- The building would recognize the artistic culture of the area and provide facility for it's creation and publicity - a performance center.
- An amphitheater, a plaza would provide for a variety of public events, a place of destination.
- The building as performance, a center for information - a university of the street

## A CENTER FOR INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

A space for social gathering

### LOS ANGELES

Through my research & analysis into what sort of programmatic element I felt Los Angeles could benefit from, I looked towards the fact of it being the cultural mix it is. The city's lack of a conventional center makes it into a collage of suburbs that have grown into each other. Each different culture has its enclave in a specific part of town and doesn't have much to do with one other. Cultural interaction is limited and thus understanding of each other is limited. This has made Los Angeles even more dispersed.

### DOWNTOWN

Downtown Los Angeles is probably one of the city's most dynamic areas. Its extremes are very apparent. Physically, it includes the densest building complex in the city, a center of finance. Also an area, by most considered one of the most problematic of all areas in the city. The difference between its daytime and night existence is a major factor in how the area is perceived by most. The proposed and partially realized Metro System that the MTA is building is a physical Network, aiming at the city's compression - that is, make it easier for everyone to get around and about in it. The major connecting point of all the different arms of this network is in Downtown, the cities melting pot.

### URBAN PUBLIC SPACE

A different kind of public life is emerging, in the forms of places we hardly recognize as "public space". It is taking place in via the media - call in shows, interactive networks, grand public events reported on the news, and it is taking place in shopping malls, flea markets, local festivals etc.

### THE MORALITY OF URBAN PUBLIC LIFE

- Freedom to assemble and associate
- Acceleration of social learning, to form and test new opinions, attitudes and values
- Public opinion about matters of social significance
- Individuals and groups can offer social presentations & productions and respond to those offered by others
- Individuals can act as components of an information network facilitating the exchange of news and information, acting as components of a network, both receiving and transmitting

### DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

The plan proposes a set of "catalyst projects". It sees Broadway as a critical juncture. To the west is the "city", characterized by modern office, hotel & residential towers & flashy cultural facilities. To the east is "the markets", an active and economically successful industrial, warehouse & distribution center. The plan suggests stronger connections between Broadway and the "City" and "Markets" districts. It sets out architectural and programmatic ideas for Broadway as an arts and entertainment center.

### THE SITE - PERCHING SQUARE - BROADWAY

The building is located at a cultural juncture, a "wall" between a high cost, high density, business oriented "city" & the industrial, old, badly used, low cost "markets". An open lot on the block connecting Perching Square and Broadway was chosen as to reinforce the cultural axis from the Los Angeles Library, to the activities of Broadway and the cultural elements south of it. The public activities of the square and the cultural activities of the building would be seen as to reinforce the other and thus create the sense of place.