New Public Landscapes

Course: Introduction and broadening of perspective, 30 credits (Modules. RG10 Orientations 12 credits + RG11 Explorations 1 12 credits + RG12 Explorations 2 6 credits)
Teachers: Tor Lindstrand (responsible teacher) + guests

Background

“To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time. The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak. What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them.”

Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (1958)

Public and private are key concepts in order to understand the cultural history of the built environment. All the way from the Greek notion of the agora to how contemporary cities are being planned, organized and constructed, we can see how the public and private realms are interconnected and how they are linked to the production of power, ideology and space. Ideas of private and public, and their relationship, underpins the construction of our world. Historically the interior belonged to the realm of the private, but with capitalism, modernism, democracy, media and new technologies the traditional categories of private and public has been challenged. With public institutions and
infrastructure came the public interior, with the development of late capitalism the interiorization of the public, and with new technologies the private become public.

Today we can observe how the public and private realms are becoming more and more diffused into each other, the traditional borders between private and public are increasingly put into question, both on a global scale through changes in politics, economy and urban growth, but also in our everyday lives through the ubiquitous presence of technology. The ongoing evolution of public space and the field of interior architecture and furniture design are mutually dependent, and closely connected to each other. The profession of architecture and design is linked to the future of public space. This year we will study, analyze and critically examine these phenomena and develop concepts, designs and proposals that points towards possible futures.

Assignments

“The metropolis ceases to be a “place” to become a “condition”: In fact, it is just this condition which is made to circulate uniformly, through Consumer Products, in the social phenomenon. The future of the metropolis coincides with that of the market itself...In fact, no reality exists any longer outside the system itself: the whole visual relationship with reality loses importance as there ceases to be any distance between the subject and the phenomenon. The city no longer “represents” the system, but becomes the system itself, programmed and isotropic.”

- Archizoom. No Stop City. (Domus 496, March 1971)

To understand society is to understand the importance of public space and interiors in public institutions. For a large majority of humankind public space and institutions serves as a backdrop in life, we are born into a world built by people that was here before us. All these environments impact our understanding of the world, kindergarten, schools, universities, libraries, cultural centres, museums, train stations, sport fields, swimming pools, places of worship, parliament, courts, police stations, streets, town squares, parks, beaches. These spaces are not only material, but also ideological and political constructs. We shape our buildings, and thereafter our buildings shape us. (Winston Churchill, 1944) Today these spaces have expanded, and become increasingly complex and sophisticated. At the same time the definition of what is considered public space is challenged by new technologies, new behaviours and an ongoing privatization of the public realm. What will happen to the interiors of the public in this new landscape and what new functions, roles and behaviors could we imagine following this transformation?

The course will be divided into three connected but individual parts. Orientation; individually and together you will study the history of public spaces with examples taken from history and all over the world, and in what way new technologies, materials and methods have informed and changed the way we imagine, build and use interiors. We will map, examine, reference and discuss contemporary examples in order to contextualize and create a background for your individual projects. We will further focus on understanding the local context of the Stockholm metropolitan area, both its historic context, but also some of the ongoing processes that are either on the drawing board or being under construction. Exploration 1: In this part you will individually define an interest within this large field of studies. This will reflect your own personal interest and it will test your abilities to make concepts, develop methods and techniques to present and communicate your ideas through models, drawings, text, images, prototypes and more. Exploration 1 is thought to be focused more towards creating an idea and making a proposal, making new knowledge through the process of design. Exploration 2: The second exploration is about placing a proposal within a context. Here you will learn design by responding to an existing physical, social and political environment. Starting from your investigations in Orientation and Exploration 1, you will develop a proposal for a context-specific intervention. You will make a proposal that works as an extension, intervention or addition inserted it into an existing environment.
Method

The course will be divided into individual assignments and group activities. You will all work within the same field, but at the same time develop your own interests and modes of making. In this way all individual work feeds into the general knowledge provided by everyone. Rather than seeing the course as a competition between individuals, the ambition is instead to encourage an atmosphere of learning and sharing together, where each individual work feeds into a collective research through seminars, lectures and group discussions. The transformation of public space are currently much contested and heated topics up for discussion, not least in relation to questions about social justice, democracy, climate change and the future of the planet. This course is about addressing these questions and what implications it has for the role of designers and architects.

Hand-in

You will present your individual project in front of invited guest critics. Since you will develop your own projects, each student is responsible to find a method of presentation that clearly communicates the project. Something that will be discussed and developed in tutorials and peer to peer pin-up presentations. We will work collectively on a catalogue that brings together all research (Orientation) as well as documentation of your projects (Exploration 1 and 2). Together the catalogue and a collectively curated exhibition will be presented at the end of the semester. See Canvas for more detailed information about hand-in requirements.

Schedule

There will be weekly individual tutorials and group activities in the form of pin-ups, lectures, seminars and study visits. Schedule will be made available through Canvas.

Learning outcomes

See course syllabus for Introduction and broadening of perspective (MDE102).

Course requirements

All students need to: Actively participate and contribute in tutorials, workshops, seminars, pinups, critiques.

Grade criteria

To receive a passing grade for Exploration 1, 2 and the module of Orientations each student must do all of the following:

- Show that they have planned and performed the projects and created a proposal that has a high and relevant level of precision and articulation.

- Have used methods and approaches that have been suitable for the project and argue for the choice.
- Explain and justify their own proposals in such a way that the projects outline, intention, outcomes and artefacts are clear and well communicated.

- Explain and justify the design proposal in which way it is relevant for the discipline and profession.

- Actively participate and contribute in classes, seminars, tutoring and presentations throughout the course.

Tor Lindstrand
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