IN, OUT, AND AROUND

Our contemporary understanding of indoors space can borrow from how we think about and design for outdoor public spaces, landscapes, and cities - an interior urbanism that, at its core, is the natural purview of architecture. In, out and around, our studio will examine how the library can become the vehicle to generate spaces that are an active part of the public realm and catalytic for civic engagement.

Indoor public space has been relegated to the realm of transit and transaction (the mall, the station, the atrium, the store) yet in its diminsh form, it remains stubbornly vibrant. New York is no stranger to propositions of interior public rooms (Rockefeller Center, Grand Central, the subway, the Ford Foundation) that define and punctuate the character of the city. We crave more.

In an age where we resign ourselves to extol Starbucks and the Apple Store as stalwart advocates of public life indoors, can we conceive of a new, perhaps better, inner public life - less banal, commercial, and controlled; more intimate, surprising, and diverse?

In this context, the studio will explore the potential of libraries as a third space and the capacity of their architecture to shape environments (in and out) that provide a layered relationship from the room, onto the street and to the city. We will question and explore the library’s form, structure, and program at various scales and against the measure of our different senses to propose new experiences and atmospheres. To do this, the
The studio will observe and analyze spatial conditions (natural, urban, architectural) that shape social behavior in cities, and conversely, social conditions that emerge in the built environment that determine how we inhabit and use space.

A COLLECTIVE CONTEXT

The library has become more than its stacks and readings rooms - it is now a place for meetings, events, concerts, lectures, art, classes, technology, and more. This diminishing importance of the physical delivery of information is recasting the library's role as a place for community and exchange.

As libraries evolve to encompass this ever wider range of circumstances, they must develop strategies that allow a programmatic mix not only to work but to thrive. Operationally, they are forced to do more with less: stretching their staff, thinning their budgets and straining their infrastructure. In the meantime, if we acknowledge the public nature of interior spaces, libraries must as readily embrace spaces that are less programmed, more ambiguous - like the park or the street, perhaps a place indoors where we can simply hang out.

In a city that increasingly lacks them, we crave spaces able to foster community; spaces that aspire not only to collect but to connect; spaces that comfortably hybridized program; and more importantly, spaces that address a new landscape of contemporary life where boundaries between work, life, and leisure are blurred. It's this collective context libraries must embrace and inhabit.

The question remains: what should the contemporary library be? Do we face a typological revolution or its natural evolution?

Freed from any institutional legacy or inherited social mission, the studio will seek to project provocative alternatives for the library in the 21st century by designing a new vessel for civic gathering, of dizzying activity, of vibrant inner life, of hybridized identity, of immoderate inclusion.

OUTPUT

The parallel use of multiple modes of representation will be encouraged. Working through models, photographs, montages, and drawings, we will mix, test, and explore architectural propositions and spatial effects. With an emphasis on iterating, documenting, capturing tangible results, we will seek to generate more individual and specific modes of visual expression.