Park, Shop, Work, Learn:

Designing for Incomplete Futures

(*Version 1/8/18*)

Housing in Osaka Baseball Stadium

Questions

In our unstable societies of change – in climate, programs, and even sites –when is architecture ever "complete"? An intended program is often outlasted by the building itself, raising questions about how we define architectural completion. Can designing for a state of incompletion become a final architectural act? How does planned obsolescence in the built environment reframe the discipline's definition of both program and type?

The studio will design projects with both near and distant futures, connected to each other by a state of incompletion. This will require students to invent design strategies of incompletion, flexibility and planned obsolescence. The projects' near future will be an urban building type that is common today but will probably become obsolete in the future. Students will select from a parking deck, big box retail or an infrastructure facility. The near future will also address the site's current relationship to the water. A distant future, with a different water condition, will require transforming the selected building type into an academic facility for a university. This studio is not about adaptive reuse. Instead, it is about designing for radical change– whether from environmental, programmatic, or social forces.

Challenges

In the studio, students will be challenged to design for a continual state of incompletion. Each project will transform from the selected building type (parking deck, big box retail or infrastructure facility) into an academic building. The project's near future will eventually become obsolete due to changing social forces (car share, online shopping, renewable energy). Its distant future will be an academic building which will need to adapt to an entirely different environmental condition. This design challenge will challenge the fixity of architectural programs and prompt a more open and flexible relationship to the environment.

The university, as urban institution, is an suitable framework for the scenario proposed by the studio. Universities are constantly changing micro-societies that exist within a fixed built environment—but what if the physical spaces of the university transformed over time? The studio will propose designs for the future expansion of the Cornell Tech campus. Within this context, a transforming academic building on New York's Roosevelt island will address both the water environment around it as well as the social environments within it.

Project Site

Historically, Roosevelt Island was the location for many of the city's hospitals and asylums-- characterized by Rem Koolhaas as a "storehouse of 'undesirables'."It was also the site of numerous urban imaginaries from Louis Kahn to Peter Cook to Rem Koolhaas. This social and architectural history makes Roosevelt Island an ideal site for a future scenario of architecture, transforming over time in response to both social and environmental change.

The studio will present 3 sites along Main Street in Roosevelt Island. Recently, the Cornell Tech campus opened in the southern end of the island. This campus, both an extension of and separate from its parent institutions (Cornell University and Technion), is founded on the ideals of connecting academic research with commerce. The studio imagines that the Cornell Tech campus will eventually expand to sites on the northern side of Roosevelt Island. The chosen sites will be designed to meet both the current needs of the community while transforming over time for a growing campus.

How We Will Work

The studio will be conducted as an open workshop in which collaboration between students will be highly encouraged. Students will design for three sites, thus allowing for parallel discussions between classmates. Expanding the boundaries of the architecture discipline will be integral to the studio methodology. The students' work will be trans-disciplinary in their nature and will be influenced by the social sciences, arts and sciences. A series of trans-disciplinary discussions with sociologists, climate scientists and artists will be integral to each student's project.

Schedule

Project 01: Designing For Planned Obsolescence

(Review on February 5th; 2 weeks)

Simultaneous research of transformable architecture case study and the design of a prototypical building for a near future scenario. The research and design will establish an argument towards the project site and its surroundings. This work must be iteratively explored for its potential in formulating a concept argument towards the project.

Project 02: Mid-review

(Mid-review on March 1st, 3 weeks; Ware Lounge)

Each student will present at the mid-review the research and the design proposal for both near and distant futures on the site. The proposals will be based on innovative strategies that allow for transformation from one building type to another. The proposals should clearly and precisely define the project's argument relative to both site and program.

Spring Break

(March 12^h – 16th, 1 week)

Project 03A

(3/4 review date TBD, 2 weeks)

Project 03B

(Final review on April 25th, 3 weeks; Avery 408 & 409)

Studio References:

To be determined