DESIGN PROBLEM

concept architecture

issued: Monday 10 September
due: Wednesday 10 October (Jury: Friday 12 October)

...PLACE... ARCHITECTURE... RITUAL...

ISSUES

This first individual project asks you to craft the existential space of a powerful ritual by means of architecture. Your architectural environment will "fix" that ritual in place and, at the same time, "let" it happen. Architecture will be the intermediary, witness and expression of the relationship between human activity and cosmic order. In this act of bringing conceptual, physical and existential orders together, dwelling will be re-considered, re-discovered.

Our purpose is to help you realize the profound implications and roots of architectural decisions and 'forms'. You will engage the issue by
— using the worlds of myth and storytelling as the framework to bring human activity into a different, more fundamental level of understanding;
— studying the role of the basic architectural elements and strategies of enclosure (wall, excavation, skeleton, opening, covering) in defining meaningful existential spaces;
— exploring the concept of site as a source of architectural insight (genius-loci, axis mundi, location, cosmology, etc.)

Your work will consist of a thorough and thoughtful investigation of the relationship between the foundations of architectural form/space and the foundations of architectural function/program.

You will approach the design process through a series of tectonic models using the basic architectural systems of enclosing and thumb-nail sketches as your way to think and act upon the subject. You will not try to design a "building" (although you will create one) but a place where certain powerful experiences unfold. You will not try to respond to the mechanics of functionality (although you will) but to the poetics of life . . . In short, you will need to consider and design the 'character' \(^1\) of a place.

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\(^1\) 'Character' is defined as 'how a thing is', the features or nature which makes it distinguishable from other things. It also "denotes the general atmosphere which is the most comprehensive property of any place" (Norberg-Schulz; "Genius Loci", 1980; p.11).
SITE

You will be assigned one of four sites (all of which may be found in the following specific areas of Antelope Island, Great Salt Lake):

1. a desert terrain (flat) — vicinity of Camera Flats
2. a beach terrain (water meets land) — White Rock Bay
3. a mountain terrain (vertical) — Elephant Head land form

Select the specific location of your site, and review your selected location with your Instructor for approval.

PROGRAM

Your place will be designed for one of the following possible rituals (assigned to you randomly):

- Nourishment — (A)
- Healing — (B)
- Cleansing — (C)
- Meditation — (D)

What, Why and How the particular ritual will take place (i.e., activities) is up to you provided that you respect

- the 'theme' and 'character' of the ritual (consistency)
- the nature of the site
- the nature of the basic architectural elements/strategies of enclosing,
- a clear, coherent parti

There are no constraints on form, proportion and dimension of the Place except that it is intended for up to five people. You may choose to emphasize the group or the individual. The total area of your proposal should not exceed ± 4000 sq.ft. This area includes closed, semi-enclosed and open space. This place is for a particular ritual and does not include any other type of facility beyond this purpose.

It is very important that you:

a. consider the closed, semi-enclosed and open spaces as totally interdependent (i.e., positive/negative interactions to produce other spaces and relationships)

b. avoid conceptual laziness (i.e., easy images from precedents, etc.)

c. avoid the use of stereotyped words like cabin, kitchen, door, etc. because of the power that words have in controlling our thinking and shaping our images. Please use more generic terms for defining human activity in relation to psycho-physical frameworks, (i.e., shelter, threshold, opening, etc.)

MEDIA

The requirements for design process and presentation are:

a) different model types: rip-n-tear, study, analytical, tectonic, working and final models.

b) freehand drawings, emotive sketches, diagrams (use of different media and techniques is encouraged)

c) scaled drawings: specific information will be given at a later date.

Additionally; "every place is given its character by certain patterns of events that keep on happening there" (C. Alexander; 'The Timeless Way of Building", 1979, p.X)
SCHEDULE

Project Intro & Site visit  Monday Sept. 10
Explorations 1 week (W.9/12 – W.9/19)
Design Parti & Development 2 weeks (W.9/19 – W.10/3)
Fall Break  Friday, Oct. 5th
Final Presentation 1/2 week (M.10/8 – W.10/10)

Projects Due  5 pm, Wednesday Oct. 10
Presentation / Jury  Friday, Oct. 12

EVALUATION
Open jury with guests from the local architectural community. Criteria for evaluation is articulated within the Program section of this document.

VOCABULARY

dwelling parti conceptual scheme
insight semantics Genius loci
program pragmatics skeleton
character of a place syntactics excavation
pattern of events intention wall
function premise exploration
activity development tectonics
ritual existential space archetype
sacred/profane order/chaos retreat

READINGS

ALEXANDER, C. The Timeless Way of Building (1979)
BACHELARD, G. The Poetics of Space. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964)
CHING, F. Architecture: Form, Space and Order (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1979)
MORRISH, W. Civilizing Terrains (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1989)
ZEVI, B. Architecture As Space. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974)

For ritual, myth and alike you may refer to:
CAMPBELL, J. The Power of Myth (available in video); JUNG, C. Man And His Symbols; and JACOBI, J. The Psychology of C.G.Jung

Special reading selection describing particular rituals (copies available for each studio section)