

**Programme:** Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences

**Track:** Architecture

**Studio:** Public Building 'Border Conditions in Yerevan'

**Research topic:** 'Collage, Contrast, Abstraction'

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### *Reflection*

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The fact that the graduation topic essentially derived from the very act of researching has a lot to do with it being an integral part of the design process. The research challenged the steady and rather old methods of collecting information about an analyzed city (or any subject, for that matter) and presented a rather fresh outlook that refused any pre-knowledge or prejudice about that city, be it political, cultural, architectural, etc. Instead, there was an alternative photographic manner applied – a *collage-like* photography (pic. 1) – that gathered alternative information which was as factual as the conventional one, yet triggered the very primal, superficial, visual, material layers of the city that carried potential to evolve into deeper issues. The photographs being odd and non-referential, almost as some accidental collages, became a sufficient base to be experimented with, interpreted and spatially translated. Hereby, the discussed alternative *reading* of the city also suggests an alternative *writing* of it which contributes to the preservation of urban continuity in its further development.



Pic. 1 An example of a collage-like photograph

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Therefore, the relevance of the topic in the academic environment is also inevitable. The issue of continuity and ability to integrate the old into the new as well as finding new methods of designing is always an encouraged and intriguing challenge of the architectural discourse. More importantly, the suggested method equally encompasses any of the subjects regarding the discipline and, thus, provides an opportunity for the design to focus on or become any of these constituents, be it a landscape element, a building or a master plan. In addition, the Public Building studio theme 'Border Conditions in Yerevan' is also reflected within the research which, on one hand, challenges the subconscious limits of the mind conditioned by the awareness and pre-knowledge about the place. On the other hand, it introduces the technique that triggers the physical borders between the observer and the object being recorded (photographed).

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The method reflecting on the relationship between the researcher and its surroundings on a primary/superficial level represents the so-called bottom-up approach that begins with small scale, local findings to evolve into a wider idea, concept, issue, etc. Therefore, the collection of the *collage-like* photographs and their application in the design process implies sensitivity to local conditions and, thus, is easily embedded into that landscape, urban or natural, by the means of architecture. The method thereby plays a huge role in the urban continuity of the city.

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Continuity operates on different levels throughout the project. Architecturally, the design adds up to urban continuity since the particular collaged moments or urban appearances from the city are almost directly translated into the design obtaining yet another meaning and in this way extending their being. The project, therefore, represents the technique that provides numerous possibilities to make a design proposal that is both unique in its character yet still relevant to its surroundings and authenticity as well as cultural background.

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Even though the research topic was already indicative enough to initiate the first steps of the research process of gathering the photographic data, the further steps of it were expected to come in a successive or, in other words, a transformational manner. Therefore, in the meantime of developing the project there were a few moments of reassessment taking into account the relevance of certain actions in the process and the potential continuation of it. Thus, there were different experiments carried out in order to work with the collected abstract photographs. Yet, even after the research findings were finally embodied in a digital drawing (pic. 2),



Pic. 2 The conclusive drawing of the research findings

it added another layer of sophistication that resulted in lacking directions towards the next step to translate the drawing into the spatial phenomenon.

Hereby, the uncertainty of the technique lies in the infinite amount of possibilities it provides. If they are misused or there are certain intermediate steps missing in the process of developing the photographs, the project increases a chance to grow into a vague, architecturally unreasonable structure. To avoid this, the design process followed a consistent

pattern of slowly translating the photographic results of abstract urban appearances into a newly constructed spatial phenomenon.