THESIS REFLECTION

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Studio: Complex projects
Teachers: Darrel Ronald, Mitesh Dixit, Karel Vollers
Title of the graduation project: South Works Creative Incubator
• the relationship between research and design

The final thesis project South Works Creative Incubator is a continuation of Graduation Project MSc3 phase focusing on research and development of the masterplan framework for the Southworks site: an emptied industrial lot of 2.8 sqkm at South Side, Chicago, Illinois. The aim was to introduce a catalyst proposal to develop the area and activate the neighborhood in its environment of slow growth. As the continuation of the first phase, MSc4 project tests the arguments of developed masterplan with an individual building intervention.

The intention of the project, emanating from the context of masterplan, was to create a hybrid building combining the functions of production, exhibition and learning, with the main focus on creative sector. This programmatic combination chosen addresses the low educational level, unemployment and the demographic homogeneity of the neighborhood, introducing programmatic and spatial diversity, through insertion of creative industries into the site. Furthermore, the design incorporates the valuable remnants of industrial past of the site: the ore walls as an integral element of design.

• the relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

Based on critique of South Chicago suburban condition and analysis of the existing conventional masterplan proposal for the site by Skidmore Owings & Merrill LLP (SOM) the strategy, suitable for the city experiencing rapid decline was formulated: the flexible plan that allows different scenarios, aiming to achieve higher density and diversity. With the sustainable use of existing infrastructure and with the emphasis on linearity of Chicago urban tissue the program is strategically inserted with an intention to create relative functional and spatial tensions generating further urban growth.
• the relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework

Informed with the research conducted in MSc3 and based on literature and references study, programmatic brief is being determined suit the location chosen in framework of masterplan. Mapping of the neighborhood and the site analysis served as a basis for developing the large-scale proposal informed through comparable investigation on urban parameters through analysis of chosen case studies. Consequently, the building intervention deals with one of the strategically inserted buildings and explore the tensions it may create with other strategically inserted buildings along the existing ore walls and water slip in the middle part of the site. The aim of the project is to generate an intensive and creative environment inciting interest and introducing new potential for the site through the productive use of existing landscape.

• the relationship between the project and the wider social context

**South Works Creative Incubator** is the digital art production centre supporting the creation and presentation of art works achieved through the use of new and evolving technologies and providing artists with an environment and facilities for audiovisual experimentation.

Project is focused on the merging of production space and public building. Through the exposure of normally hidden events of art production processes the building is playing on curiosity: peoples native inclination to observe and explore. Promoting media literacy, the building contains three levels of learning: interaction (inspiration), observation and experimentation (doing).

Project operates simultaneously on the local level of the neighborhood, integrating the existing community within the new development, and on the global level, establishing the interaction between the site and the city center for two directional benefit. Moreover, the project at large scale - adds to the current academic debate on bottom-up versus top-down urbanism, proposing the sustainable - adaptable and productive strategy for an area experiencing rapid decline and recession, without resorting to traditional, and perhaps antiquated techniques of Masterplanning.

At building scale: The ambition of the project is to frame a strategy for the benefit of the local community by introduction the creative processes in neighborhood employing inspiration as impulse for change.
Components of swci

- media production suite
- prototyping suite
- exposition
- studio space