Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

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The choice of explore Lab is rooted in the particular structure of the studio itself, which leave the students room enough to follow their personal interests and fascination in the development of their own graduation thesis and project. I had something which I wanted to explore and ExploreLab was the only studio which gave me the chance to do that, with a selection of the students based on the quality of their proposals and not on a who-clicks-first-win base.
Problem statement_ I started my work with an interests in the way architecture can relate to the experience of art in the first place and an automatic critique to the White Cube as consequence. At the same time, I was interested in the relations art spaces engage with the outside world, with the city. The research is concerned about the issues around the definition of art spaces, the problem of art value and its distortion which affected the tensions around the way a collection of art, and a private collection in particular, is presented to the world.

“The museum, ‘the container’, has developed separately from its contents and at best has the relationship of the tin can to the soup. Usually the ‘container’ is antithetical to the ‘content’. The main problem is that contemporary museum architecture is affected or appalling at the worst and so is inimical to art, which has to be honest.”

Donald Judd, Interview with Francesco Poli during the exhibition Overture II, 1986

Research question_ The research tries to formulate an attitude towards the way of dealing with art collections and art spaces, and the consequence and power of the role of those spaces within the city and in constructing the viewer's knowledge and understanding of art.

Design assignment_ Development of two art spaces with a common attitude towards the definition of them which starts from the identity and feature of two different art collections. This attitude will be informed by the sensibility developed through the research process and the analysed ways of displaying to and engaging with the viewer. It will be projective in the intentions of defining spaces which are not neutral in the kind of attention they request to the viewer and in their inner features, and receptive to the narrative already existing among the artworks of the two specific collections. Each one of the two spaces will be developed in relation to the collections’ implication and environments in this sense. From the comparison between them other reflections will take place.

Location(s)_ The places and spaces have been chosen in relation with the two different art collections and their bounds to a precise spot on earth. The choice of the places is related to the two collection's roots and origin, as well as the ones of their collectors. The aim is to define a certain environment where a certain collection can dialogue with the world in the most compelling way. The two places in the world to ground my research came out naturally from the study of the two chosen collection and their understanding. The first one is a place in within the historical city of Naples and the second one is a place out without the walls of Verona. The way those places relate with the city will have different implications for the two collections, and the way the two collection relate with the city will have instead a strong effect on the environment that will be defined with the design.
Process

Methods

Awareness_ Travelling and researching about contemporary - and not so contemporary - art spaces in the Italian panorama, with the aim of developing a certain sensibility towards them and to study the agency of art and the one of architecture in defining them;

Analysis_ Cultural interest in the proximity which is happening among the viewer, art and architecture within those spaces. How is the experience - and knowledge, and interpretation - of art made public?

Selection_ About the power of certain spaces of influencing my work and the aspects of them which I want to try to embed in my projects;

System_ The different agents in the art system and the way a collection is constructed - looking for the content and learning how to deal with it;

Empathy_ Understanding_ In conversations with the collectors and their collection - learning about art, art history and art spaces. Research around the roots and origins of the two art collection selected;

Choice_ Research and selection of two precise places which relates to the collections' identities in precise ways;

Exchange_ Talking about spaces with the collectors/sharing sensibilities;

Discussion_ Exploit the collectors knowledge about the places and their fantasies in dealing with a particular spot on earth and a non-temporary exhibition of their collection. Their way of understanding the issues around the actual construction of a space for their collection could still tell a lot about their doing and the identities of their collections;

Research_ of historical material and technical material. Research within the archives of the history of the two spaces and their stories and reasons;

Design_ from the ruin and its presence in time and space within or without the city to its new role in the contemporary city and within the contemporary art world.
Literature


Haacke, H., “Museums, Managers of Consciousness” (1983), Art in America, no. 72 - February 1984


Knight, C., Art of the Sixties and the Seventies: The Panza Collection, New York, Rizzoli, 1986

Latour, B., Reassembling the Social, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005


O’Doherty, B., Inside the White Cube, Santa Monica and San Francisco, The Lapis Press, 1986

Pimlott, M., (2013) Art, real places, better than real places [speech]. Held on 02 May, Bluecoat, Liverpool


Pimlott, M., Studiolo, London, Todd Gallery, 1995


Poli, F., Il sistema dell’arte contemporanea, Bari, Editori Laterza, 2010

Reflection

Relevance

The definition itself of what an “art space” is, opens up a discussion about what do we mean as “space” in itself. As Luciano Fabbro pointed out in an interview with Francesco Poli, artists and architects are both “space constructors”, but architects build spaces within the existent world, and artists creates new spaces in other worlds.

The design of a space for art is the design of a space able to be appropriated by other spaces. The task of architecture is defining a prelude to those other spaces, and a narrative among them. Architecture can propose different ways of understanding the artworks on display, or just one. But the narrative that the architectural space will define it is the one which will produce the knowledge of the artworks themselves. This narrative, and its consequent understanding, can become something which has not been post-produced and digested a posteriori, but it can be able to display the process of its delineation, and the reality in which the artworks has been collected in the first place. A narrative which is not a-temporal but it is instead dealing with the time of the world and its unfolding.

The space of the museum, as O’Doherty pointed out in “Inside the white cube,” tend to expose art as it was already in the domain of eternity, but this approach is wrong by definition, since contemporary art is in itself a product of our contemporary world and it is made to have a role within it at the same time. In this sense, “modern art needs the sound of traffic outside to authenticate it” and the rhythm of the world to be part of it.

A non-neutral art space is meant as a space where art relates with its time and position itself within an art system which is still in the process of being, as the collection itself is a non finito, trying to bridge a relation at the same time both with the art world and with our world, so that one will be clear to the other and viceversa.

The problem of private art spaces and their role in the city, due to the constriction of the distance which was used to exist between collectors and museums is also extremely relevante for the art system, and defines the role architecture could have within it. The produced and consumed image of the art space, with artwork which are legitimated by the environment independently from their value has as consequences significant problems around the actual role of art spaces within the city. The image of the museum is transformed, generating a typological issue around what an art space represents for the city and for the collection it is hosting.
Time Planning

**P1_ week 1.9**
Research about the history of display, art spaces and theories around the display of art and the engagement with the viewer. Visit, study, research and analysis of Contemporary art spaces in Italy, with a particular attention about their agency and the conditions of proximity between art and the viewer, the space and the place within them. Research different art collections in order to chose the ones I will deal with during the project, and consequent study of them and of their collectors. Considerations about the implications those collection will have.

**P2_ week 2.9**
Research about the Contemporary art system, the distortion of value of art and the consequence in the construction and aim of art spaces for the viewer and within the city. Development of an attitude towards the way art spaces and defined and the regime around them. Understanding of the collections and the collectors I will have to deal with, of the identity of their collections and of all the implications those collections will have for the city and/or for a precise spot on earth where they will be displayed. Understanding of the relations among the artworks, and the engagement each collection could ask the viewer for. Research and definition of the places and spaces which could respond better to each one of two collections, and investigation of the tensions that those places and their new role will have for the city and its story.
**Reading**
- about art
- about art spaces
- about collecting
- about the art system

**Research**
- of the collections
- of the environment
- of the history of places
- of the technical material

**Writing**
- research about the art system
- implications of the art collections
- reflections about places and spaces
- fiction of the art spaces

**Design**
- sketch phase
- preliminary design
- design development phase
- definite design | model

**Involvement of the collector(s)**
- identity of the collection(s)
- artworks and their relations
- place and implications
- design discussion about my choices

**Building technology**
- relation with the two kinds of ruins
- dialogue with the additional buildings
- issue of the sea in Naples
- issue of controlled environment for art
P3, week 3.5
Reflections about the work on the two spaces, and considerations about the comparison between the two collections and their implications in the construction of art spaces. Preliminary design of the two art spaces and of the narrative of the collections within them and within the city as consequence. Building technology studies about the strategies I will use to deal with the two different ruins, in Naples and in Verona, and the consequent features of the environment which will be defined.

P4, week 4.5
Definite design of the two art spaces and reflections about the attitude and methods developed to approach them. Reflections also about the way the designs would affect the cities and on which levels for each one of the two projects. Complete catalogue of all the artworks and consequent reflections about the narrative that with them has been developed within the two art spaces. Building technology studies about the dialogue of the new structures with the existent ruin, and definition of the strategy that each site will use in relation of issues of controlled environments for certain works of art.

P5, week 4.11
Final design, drawings, building technology details and models of the two projects. Reflections about my doing, the difficulties I encountered, my collaboration with the two art collectors and my understanding of the Italian art world I'm learning to deal with. Presentation of the work to my tutors and to the art collectors, for the first time together and able to see the completeness of my work.