

Graz University of Technology

NOVEMBER TALKS 2012

Bernard Khoury | Shim-Sutcliffe | Jonathan Sergison | Dorte Mandrup

PREFACE

Again, after November 2011, we were able to enjoy an outstanding series of talks at Graz University of Technology! After having had Bostjan Vuga from Ljubljana, Angela Paredes from Madrid, Xiaodu Liu from Shenzhen and David Adjaye from London as our November Talks 2011 guests, we were proud to welcome Brigitte Shim and Howard Sutcliffe from Toronto, Jonathan Sergison from London, Dorte Mandrup from Copenhagen and Bernard Khoury from Beirut as our guests of the November Talks 2012.

We have developed a special format for the November Talks, which gives us and the audience the possibility of obtaining an in depth notion of the way of working of the lecturers. They were asked to lecture for 45 minutes only and then indulge in a conducted discussion with myself and a staff member of again 45 minutes. In these discussions we were able to hit surprising aspects again and again, also due to the fact that our guests do not know beforehand, which questions we will be asking. We have recorded and transcribed these discussions in order to be able to share our experiences with a wider audience, with those who were not able to attend the talks and those who are interested in the individual positions of our guests.

The audience was able to witness very different positions, which were very specific at the same time. I do think this to be more important than inviting guests with a similar approach, which finally does not provide ground for any kind of debate. But creating a debate is beneficial for students and architects alike. And also we as teachers get the chance to sharpen our own individual position, which ultimately will strengthen our competence in a wider architectural discourse.

As a reflection of the talks, bottom lines have been developed in an attempt to position our guests' architecture, their strategies and the processes of developing projects. Bernard Khoury's talk was seen as "The Good, the Bad and the Vulgar", Brigitte Shim and Howard Sutcliffe were positioned with "Architecture: Handmade", Dorte Mandrup has been captured with "Reflections on Space" and Jonathan Sergison communicated "Fac(ad)ing the Social" in a convincing way.

The November Talks 2012 would not have been possible without the substantial support of the staff members of my institute. May I especially thank Sorana Radulescu, Marcus Stevens, Armin Stocker and Tim Lüking for

preparing the discussions and sharing the stage with me and our guests.

The November Talks 2012 would also not have been possible without the substantial financial support by the Sto Stiftung as well as the generous trust I was granted by the members of this foundation.

Next to transcribing the content of each discussion, we also tried to capture the atmosphere of every evening, hereby trying to communicate and share the unique experiences we were able to enjoy. Enjoy reading this brochure and get ready for the upcoming November Talks 2013!

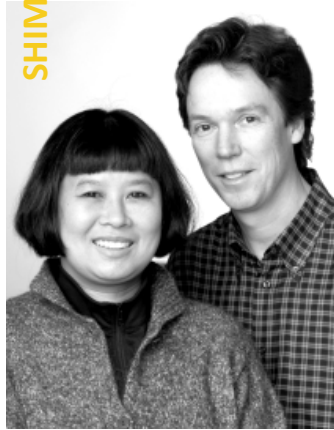
Roger Riewe

BERNARD KHOURY_9

The Good, the Bad and the Vulgar

**SHIM-SUTCLIFFE_27**

Architecture: Handmade

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Fac[ad]ing the Social

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Reflections on Space

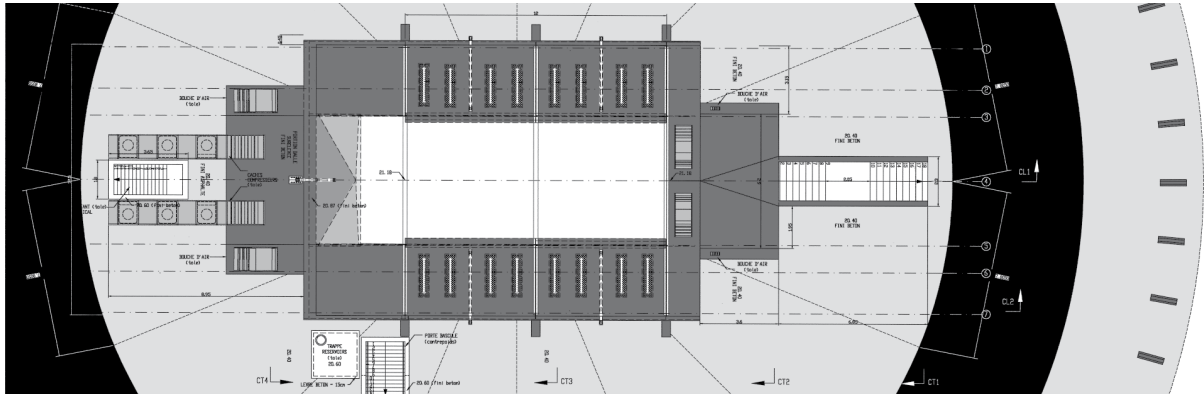
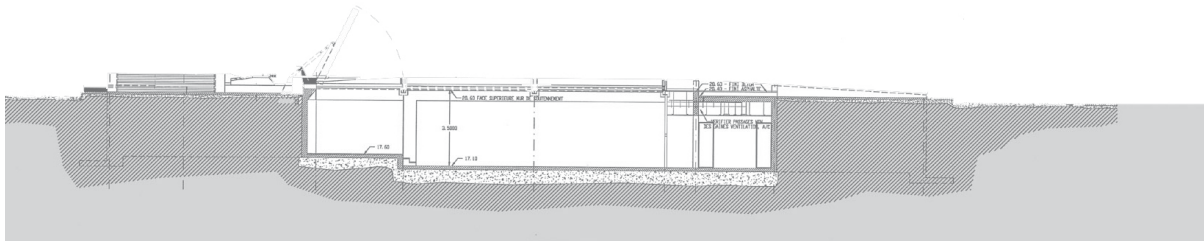
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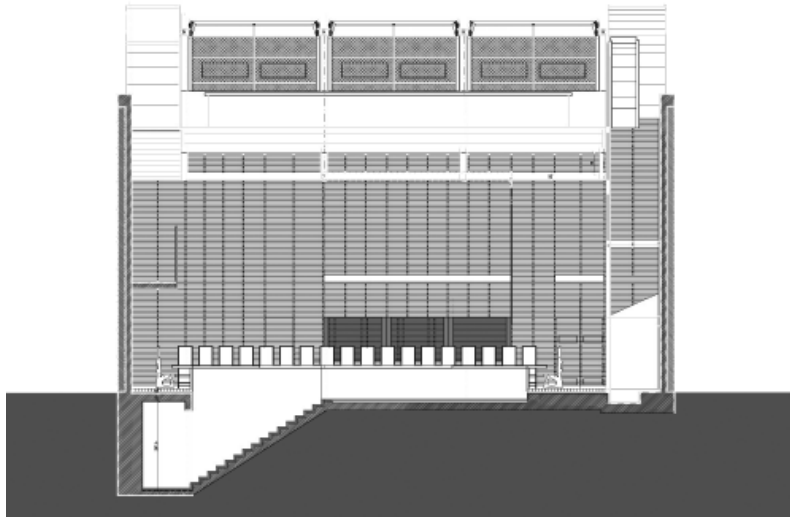
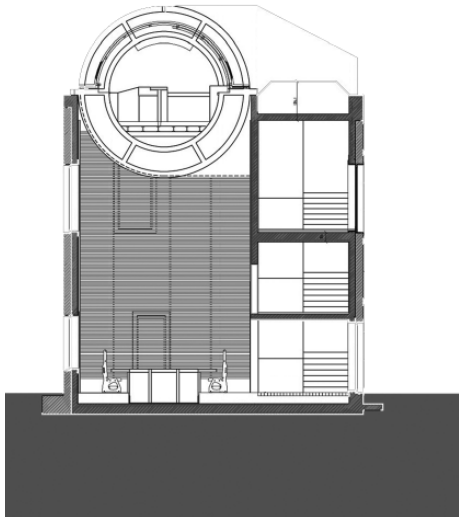
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LECTURE**B018_ Beirut/Lebanon 1998**

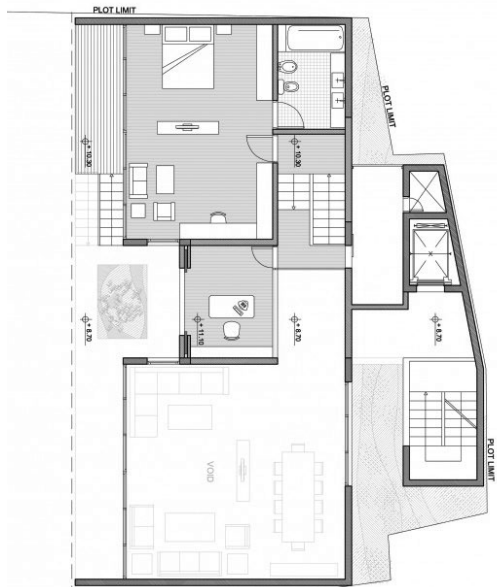
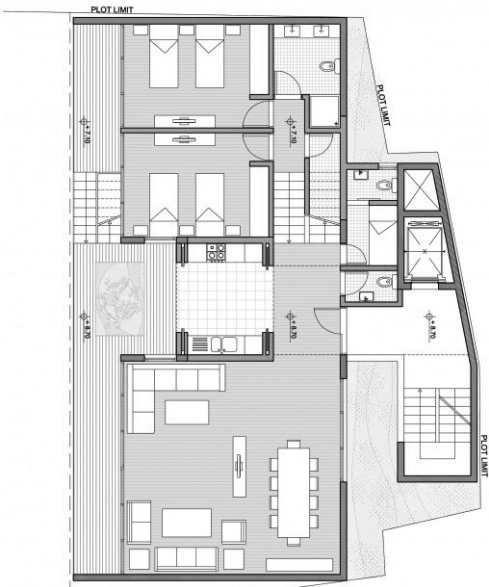
<How do you build a place of entertainment in a city that during the early years of its post-war period has been in complete denial of the tragic events of our recent past. You realize quickly that that is a very explosive issue and a very dangerous territory to intervene on. It's a building, which goes to sleep and completely disappears during the day and wakes up at night.>





CENTRALE_Beirut/Lebanon 2001

<I decided to preserve my brutal interventions and present them on the facade of the building with these steel belts that keep the facade structurally sound. A beast inside the envelope.>



PLOT #183_Beirut/Lebanon 2009

<I've exploded the existing typology: I've created apartments that are completely in opposition with what the industry has been producing for the last 40 years. Parents can wake up in their room ... get out on the balcony, walk around the olive tree, grab a cup of coffee in the kitchen, grab their newspaper in the living room, walk down and see their kids without ever walking inside. The idea was to reconnect with your immediate environment, to reconnect to the street.>



INTERVIEW

The Good, the Bad and the Vulgar



BK_ Bernard Khoury

RR_ Roger Riewe

MS_ Marcus Stevens

RR_ I think we really enjoyed these 45 minutes of suspenseful and exciting work. Thank you, Bernard, for giving us this small insight into your huge portfolio. When we go through these projects, we notice that there is always something in the background. Beirut is in the background. Lebanon is, of course, in the background. Lebanon used to be called 'Switzerland of the Middle East' or Beirut 'Paris of the Middle East' – all these clichés we know. Then between 1975 and 1990 there was the civil war severely damaging Beirut. And then you see in the background of your pictures that some of it has been rebuilt, some of it is still in a dilapidated state. Is there actually something going on in your mind trying to reinvent or re-do Beirut to give it a new image?

BK_ I think I am liberated from trying to be contextual in

the basic definition of the term. I am liberated and it has taken me some time to free myself from the constraints that you have when you are asked to do something contextual. Contextual in the sense that it fits an accepted definition of what the context is. I've given up on trying to fix anything or trying to work around consensual definitions of Beirut, because I have none. If anything, I enjoy the fact that I can contradict myself from one street corner to the other. Whether you are able to do it here or not is another question but I do it with a lot of conviction. No, I would not depict a certain history or portrait of my city. I try to connect as much as I can with every specific situation I encounter. And the situations I encounter can sometimes be very sour but I always find some pleasure in that. I'm not a dark person, don't get me wrong. But one situation can lead you to taking positions that can be radically

different from the ones you've taken simultaneously just a few hundred meters away in another situation. And I think this is very much Beirut. This is the present I am very much imbedded in.

RR_ So, you actually need the city as it is now, the everyday life, which is obviously very exciting in most different layers. To provoke you: how would you perhaps work in a more boring situation, like Switzerland?

BK_ Is Switzerland boring? I don't think there are boring places. I think there are boring postures, boring positions. I might agree with you, maybe, in some sense, that yes, Europe ... and not only Europe, I think the civilized world, can put you to sleep. It makes you worry about things that at the end of the day are very futile. You guys can go down the street to protest about something that we feel is completely irrelevant. So yes, you're not confronted to very fundamental questions on every street corner because you have a very structured environment where the Good and the Bad are clearly defined and where there are certain core values on which society is built, that we don't have. I work in a territory that is full of uncertainties even when you face most basic and existential questions. Where I come from you have to sit and think and wait because nothing is absolutely certain, but this doesn't mean that Switzerland is boring. You will always find something everywhere that hopefully will trigger pertinent questions.

MS_ I'd like to come back once more to what you said about your way of dealing with different situations in a city

like Beirut. If you don't want to act contextual, as you said, how do you understand the city then? Are there different zones for you or territories with changing character? And how would you describe the function of your architecture in this context?

BK_ I don't see the city in zones, no. I see it as very particular instances. I have very modest means of interventions because my projects, as you've seen, mostly are of a relatively small scale, at least those that have been implemented so far. It's interesting because we've worked from a very small scale to very big scales. I have not shown you a lot of the stuff we've been doing but I think the biggest project I've done was one single structure in Libya that was up 750,000 square meters. The client was Gaddafi's son. 750,000 square meters where we had to produce a project in less than a month, something extremely explosive. So, it is not only Beirut. I think the whole Arab world today is facing very burning, very pertinent and sometimes also dangerous questions. But unfortunately, we are missing the boat. I have dealt with very modest means, with very small-scale projects, mainly. But they are situations for me, they are interventions and I like to call them devices. They are very particular devices that will hopefully trigger something at these points of the city.

MS_ What does that mean in terms of use of your architecture? Do your buildings, the structures you call devices, manipulate one's behavior? Is this your intention?

BK_ Like any other architect, we try to exercise a certain

power. Sometimes we can abuse it. In certain instances we can go pretty far in abusing that power. The early entertainment projects, because they are looked at as futile places, because they are looked at as temporary places, they deliver exceptional events in your lifetime: You go to a club, you get trashed, you get out back to your life. So you're allowed maybe to go to such extremes or such an extreme manipulation which was the case, for instance, in the first three entertainment projects I've shown you. Even the BLC Bank project has this moment of manipulation to a certain extent. I had great clients in this project who allowed me to exercise that power. But there are other incidences where we simply cannot act like that because the reality of the situation doesn't allow you, not even to partition the space. The first permanent buildings we built were sort of a manifesto of that situation.

MS_ We all know that Lebanon was a heavy conflict zone with several confronting political and territorial interests...

BK_ It still is.

MS_ ... and today, the situation seems to explode again in a way. Your buildings or devices bear a resemblance to missiles and other military structures, but seem to transform and reinterpret these elements into something useful, something that engages people to come together and re-experience space in the city.

BK_ I think you're giving architecture too much credit. We all think that we can still have some sort of political power

or that architecture is a political act, as Lebbeus Woods used to say. But mostly it becomes a political act amongst us as architects and in the polished papers of our magazines and our history books that we write ourselves and about ourselves and for ourselves and that nobody really cares about. To what extent do we have control or impact or can we really make a difference in our cities? I hope we still can, I hope we still do.

RR_ When we see these projects of yours, they are on one side incredibly strong and powerful and at the same time there is also a slight notch of being a little bit sad or contemplative. And one has the idea that you try to show the society: Enjoy this day, enjoy this night because we don't know how we will be waking up tomorrow morning or even if we will be waking up at all.

BK_ But you might have a heart attack tonight, I hope not. [laughing] But this is everybody's life story. I don't think my work is sad. No, I think I try to celebrate even what is difficult to celebrate. But I try to make these celebrations maybe not as naïve as one would think when one is given such programs. You don't usually build nightclubs. I mean, nightclubs or restaurants, this is where I started, are not looked at as necessarily interesting territories to develop relevant architecture. They are usually given to basements of buildings. Who cares? A nightclub is there for just a few months or a few years maximum. Then they get scraped off. The church remains, the library remains, the opera house will remain, the palace of justice will remain ... but a nightclub, come on! But yet, I think that we as architects

should start to consider these spaces that architecture has not really considered. In my opinion, these secondary or supposedly irrelevant spaces, in fact, are much more in tune with the present and sometimes are more difficult and more complex realities than those that are portrayed by the more consensual projects, such as the library, or the public housing, or the school, where you certainly have a very consensual depiction of what society or the state is, of what the Good is. Yet, is this really what our cities are made of? No. Our cities are in the hands of the private sector, mostly driven by quick profits. And if we as architects do not confront that, do not take part in that and try to resist the stupid models that are perpetuated by the private sector, if we as good thinkers and architects that we are don't consider this, architectural magazines won't publish it because it will never make history. They will never give the Pritzker Prize to a supermarket. No. So, who is the Pritzker Prize given to? And how relevant is this when the cities are in the hands of the private sector and you are in complete denial of that? I think the academy has a big problem with this. I think schools have a big problem with this. I think the architectural press has a big problem with this. I think the architectural critics have a big problem with this. Because they are in complete denial while the city is happening completely without them and despite of them. It is no longer in our hands because we are on our clouds. Open any nice architectural magazine today and look what the critics look at and what sort of value they try to project and promote. And you will see that it's always the very consensual good values that in fact are completely disconnected from the very sour realities

I live in. But at least I'm conscious of that and I recognize that. And I try to fight that, pervert that hopefully in a positive and pertinent way.

RR_ Have you actually done work for the government or for the municipality?

BK_ No, I never did, and I probably never will build a museum or a school or public housing. So far, I've been condemned to collaborate with the bad guys. Those who try to make quick profits. I know this doesn't sound good in an architectural school because, I guess, most of the projects that are given to students are usually public housing. You have to be nice. You have to promote the good values: a good library or a good school, maybe a stadium or an opera house. But come on. You will never build an opera house. I never did and probably never will. And if



I did, who cares? Museums are the cemetery of culture. I think we should start giving students rougher terrains to deal with, to survive. I wasn't given that when I was at school. It was always the very noble programs, not the vulgar stuff I ended up diving in when I had to.

MS_ But one can see that you try to bring public and architectural issues into this profit-driven sector or try to give your architecture more quality than just providing objects for the private market. How do you deal with that in a real project?

BK_ Well, I called them the bad guys, but they are not always so bad. I have very heated relationships with my clients but they are at the same time very passionate. It is extremely intense. So you have to understand that the one in front of you is not always an idiot. The bad guy is not always an idiot. He has a form of intelligence that you have to first of all understand, and then you take it from there. It is not me against them or us against them. Yes, my apartments sell very well. Yes, my clubs ended up getting media space that was worth maybe ten times than what the clients had spent on their projects. So yes, there was a great profit. But is this bad? Am I a bad guy, will I be hung or go to hell because I worked for the private sector and have contributed to their financial success! Bad, very bad!

MS_ What really struck me about your office was the picture of this black sphere hanging from the ceiling of your workspace, especially with this person being lifted and having his head stuck into the object.

BK_ My cemetery. The one that had the British ambassador by the balls.

MS_ Cemetery of your projects, right? I was wondering if maybe for you architecture is not only the built outcome, but already the thoughts and designs that come before the building process?

BK_ Some of my projects that got built I do not recognize as my own anymore, particularly the projects that I have done with a physical and geographical distance. This has occurred to me in the Golf, for instance, where one particular project was completed but you will never see it. What you see is my drawing. I will not say which project it is. If you go through the list in my archives or on my website it will say: aborted. But it got built. But I don't recognize the kid. It is not my son. So the project is the drawing. A friend of mine who has worked on Oscar Niemeyer's Catalogue Raisonné, his last catalogue, supposedly, has given me this lesson. I think that Niemeyer has close to, if I remember correctly, 700 projects in his archives. When my friend was going through the archives with him, trying to understand where this project was located, Niemeyer would tell him: No, no. This is the project. This is the project. So there was no way you could know where it was, if it was built or not. This was the project. Whereas other projects that physically exist somewhere are no longer drawings. Unless you really accept that you shoot yourself. I don't go for bad compromises. So you really try to do your best but then at some point you might lose control and the project might drift and be badly executed or perverted. It is the

story of my first building. My first construction ever, which is in fact not B 018, is a project you will never get to know that I have done it because it doesn't have my name on it and I don't recognize it. And although the project might claim that it is mine, I will not recognize it. So the kid would say this is my dad, but I'd say: No, no. This is not my son.

MS_... but the project, the drawing is.

BK_The drawing, yes, unfortunately. I mean you invest a lot of time. You invest years sometimes into this process. The Golf project I was talking about took me five to six years. And the end result was a catastrophe. Not my fault.

RR_Let's talk about the process. Starting off, you have your client, the private investor or developer coming to you asking you to do a project. How do you communicate this in your office, because there must obviously be some other people helping you? The team is larger than just you yourself. How does this process actually take place?

BK_I don't have a recipe. Unfortunately. My life would have been easier but ultimately I'd like to say that a project starts without papers, without pens, without anything that can register or try to illustrate and materialize any ideas. So I like to say that the project starts usually orally. Well, there are certain projects that impose on you a certain analysis that brings you back to reality at a very early stage sometimes. But other projects can start somewhere else where you are not even allowed to draw, at least in the beginning. I won't start drawing a project until I can

orally communicate it to you and it becomes extremely clear what it is about because I want to think that it is not necessarily form that drives the concepts. I am not into syntax masturbation. That's not me. Sometimes, I gain results that can be qualified as gadgetism. Some of my professors at school used to tell me that I was a gadgetist. But anything is allowed as long as my scenarios would have functions. So if I make use of means that are sometimes para-architectural or that can be considered by some of the more reasonable architects as gadgets or as something that does not qualify as architecture, such as the crane that lifts the bar, this is such a futile and vulgar gesture. I like that.

RR_But then, there must also be some people in your office who are able to follow your ideas.

BK_... not only following, I think. It starts as a monologue but we like to talk about architecture and listen to ourselves speaking. At some point as we are trying to illustrate or translate an idea some sort of exchange happens. You don't even speak in the same way you think of it, so you engage in a kind of exchange. But then you take as much as you want because we are very egotistic. We collect and we steal all along the way. And at some point, we retract and you are alone. Then you make your decisions, you resample, you distill things. There is a moment at which you are alone. I don't do projects alone from beginning to end. I hate that. I am not a loner. I get depressed. But yes, at the end of the day, I have to finish it with my eyes closed. Alone.

MS_ I'd like to continue with this. You call your office 'design workshop.' How is it organized? How do you collaborate with others in this frame?

BK_ Well, it's a flop in a way because I wanted to start a structure that could serve as a platform that I would share with other architects. The idea was that I would liberate myself from the pressure I have of producing a certain amount of projects per year, to sustain a structure of 20-25 people, maybe more at some points. Unfortunately, you have to reach a certain scale in order to have access to certain projects. Otherwise, I would have worked with 1 to 3 collaborators because, I think, the bigger the structure the bigger the pressure on you. So the idea was to share the structure with other architects, so that at some point in time I will no longer take so much work. Yet, the structure would be there, for me and for others. It turns out that we have an ego problem in this profession. Maybe because my floor is red, because my bike is there, because of me being on the walls everywhere ... nobody wants to share. It turns out I run the ship and I have to. [laughing]

MS_ But for some projects you share the design workshop?

BK_ I have collaborators but they are all my collaborators and I don't share them with anybody else, unfortunately. It's open to anybody. You can come and share it with me, but the floor is red, my cars are parked in there, I start my bike everyday in the morning and pollute the atmosphere. My cemetery will remain there and the floor will stay red.

But anyway you're welcome to join.

RR_ Parallel to your practice you are also engaged in teaching at numerous architecture schools. When you are running your studios, how can you actually push students in that direction of trying to be bad?

BK_ Bad? You think I am bad? I was surprised lately in my last couple of episodes. I think every time I teach I do have a few surprises where, in fact, I am taught instead of teaching. I think the only reason why every couple of years I timidly put a foot back into school and get out there and give studios is because I think that the 20-year-olds have a certain approach that even at an age of 40-45 makes you wonder. I look back at certain positions I took when I was 20-25. It's like musicians. A lot of musicians were at their peak when they were 20. I hate to say that it is the fate of architects. I'd like to think that we do our better work as we get older. But is it true? I don't know. I think you have some miracles in the young generations that do not mimic the old idiots we are but have the guts to do something. And this is why I teach, because in the lot of 20-25 you always got one, sometimes even more, who hit you in the face really good.

RR_ When you say that there are so many boring things like museums, banks and opera houses and so on, obviously these are not the things that you would ask your student to design. What are your briefs then like?

BK_ Last year I did a very strange studio, which was a

one-month quick, intensive studio in Paris, where I literally took a program that was a competition that was launched by the Bahrain minister of culture. The brief was to design a public place in a historical quarter right after the main public square was bulldozed by the government. It was very strange to have somebody from the government proposing such a program. A true scenario, a competition in which I was part of the jury. And to bring that to French students who have a completely different approach or view on public space than they have in Bahrain, where there is no such thing because if there are any streets or leftovers of the old fabric of the city, it's taken over by low-wage immigrants. Bahrainis live in compounds or in towers, Anglo-Saxon models. So how do you take the idea of public space in Bahrain to the French young kids who are embedded in Paris, in this completely different notion of the state and of public space. You'd be surprised by the very interesting proposals I got from the students in a very short period of time. So I did not propose a supermarket or a nightclub or a bank. I proposed what is a very public program, yet in a completely different context.

MS_ Here is a more general question, I'd like to address. What are your expectations of the initiative 'Keep Walking Lebanon' that was launched recently by a liquor selling company for the cultural development of Lebanon and Beirut. What do you think about this campaign where you took part in?

BK_ You want an honest answer? I had a picture of me posted 40 meters high on a building. I was 40 meters



high. Under me was a billboard of Paris Hilton. My picture was above her five times bigger than her size. That's pretty good, though. [laughing] I had my 30 seconds at the 8 o'clock news for about a year every single day. So, I guess the Pritzker won't do that. But the campaign, the stupid campaign of a whisky company, is exactly where I come from. I flirt with the vulgar and I have no problem with that. It might upset some people in our circles, but that's okay.

RR_ If there would be one special, one specific task you would like to tackle, something you would like to design, what would this be?

BK_ A surprise, something I would not have expected. Honestly.

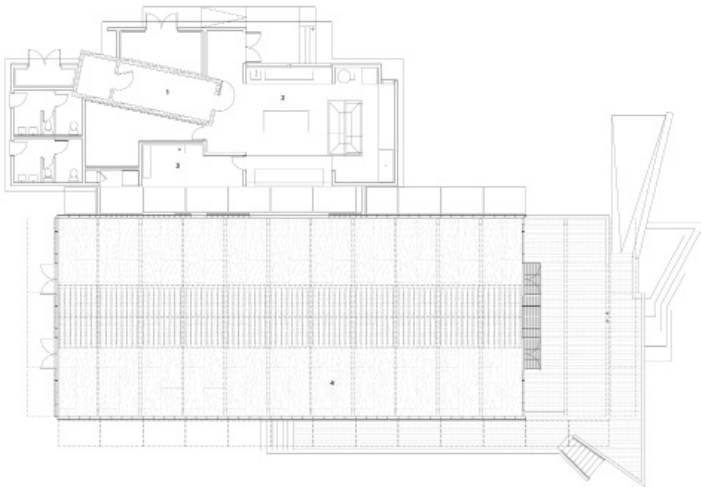
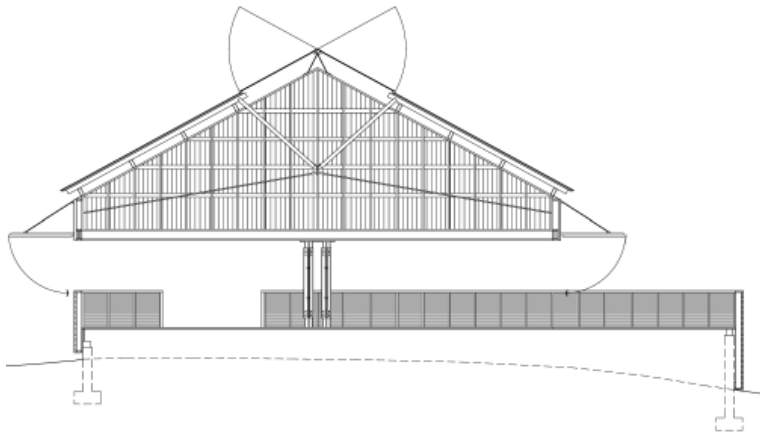
RR_We've had a very insightful talk and I think what is really interesting and something which is not so common in our spheres here is the notion of the political moving in, positioning you, determining everyday life, determining also in terms of architecture. We are here in Europe, which is just about a-political, because everything is set. And suddenly you are surprised, because there is something like an economic crisis. But who gives a damn. It still goes on as if there wasn't anything wrong. So I think your position here, this evening, was very important to be shown. That this different world actually triggers off a very strong architecture, finally. I appreciate that a lot. So thank you very much, Bernard.



NOVEMBER 12, 2012

LECTURE_29

INTERVIEW_37

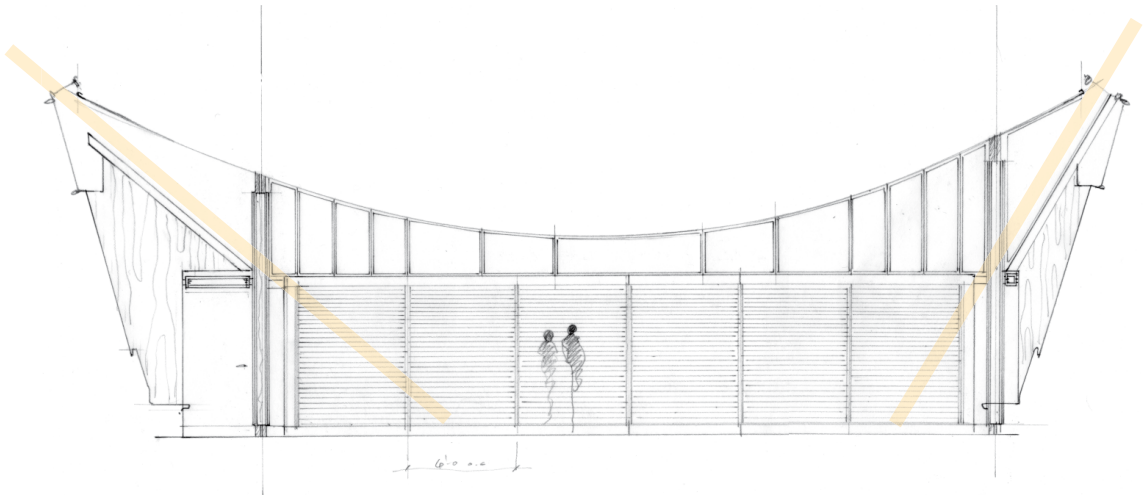


<Important was the idea that the elements of the building have to do more than one thing ... especially when one is dealing with the seasonal component.

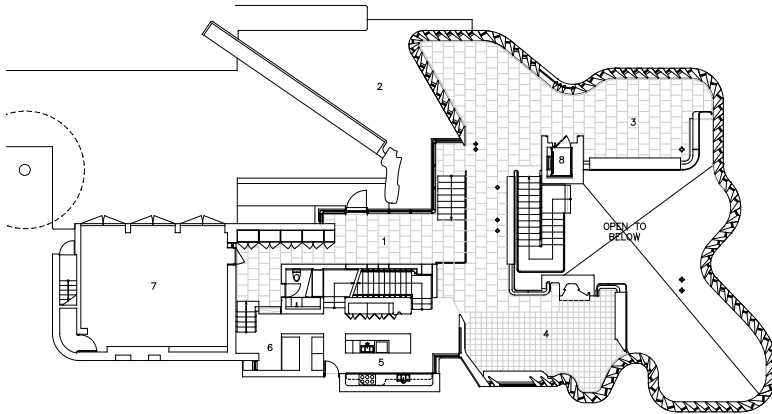
The section shows both the hybrid truss that we created and the greenhouse glazing providing lighting as well as ventilation – a ready-made, of the shelf piece used for greenhouses: very inexpensive, very easy to install.>

LECTURE**MOORELANDS CAMP**_Lake Kawagama/Ontario 2002

<... light becomes a driver both for the sacred aspect of space and for understanding the climatic condition of the project. The ceiling is curved, almost tent-like and the east side and its depth is different from the west side, where we want to capture the west light and incorporate it into the surface itself – so we have an asymmetrical condition.>



BET HA'AM SYNAGOGUE_South Portland/Canada 2008

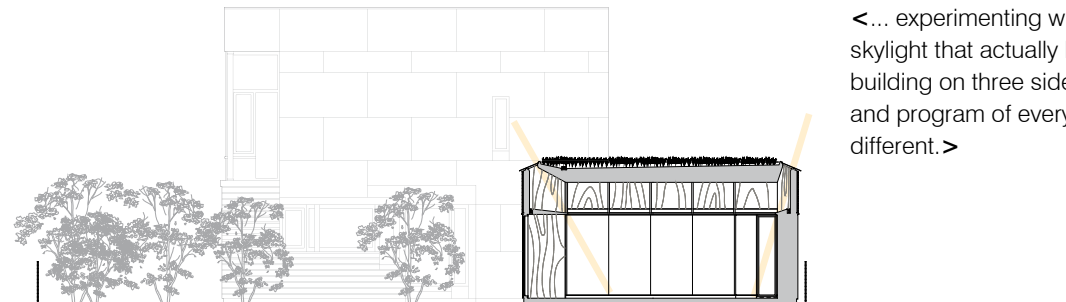
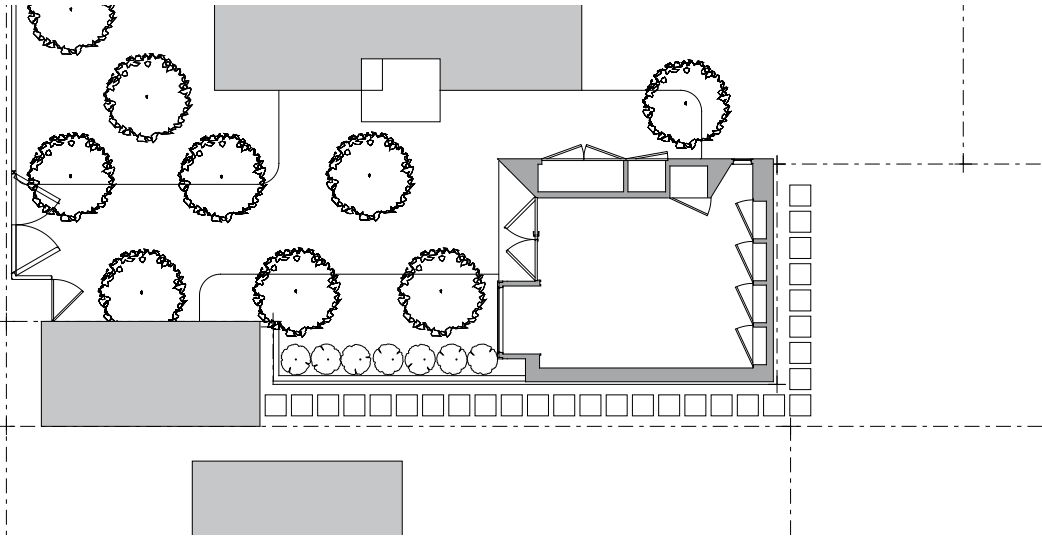


<The idea about density at one level and openings that allow views of the Ravene system drove us. We were playing with textures and their relationship to such an important site.

Part of your experience should be that you enter the Toronto Ravene and you may not have ever gone outside.>



THE INTEGRAL HOUSE_Toronto/Canada 2009



<... experimenting with a very narrow skylight that actually borders the building on three sides. The thickness and program of every wall is slightly different.>

CRAVEN ROAD STUDIO_Toronto/Canada 2006

INTERVIEW

Architecture: Handmade

BS_Brigitte Shim
HS_Howard Suttcliffe
RR_Roger Riewe
TL_Tim Lüking



RR_Brigitte, thank you for this wonderful lecture. It provided a really good insight into your work. Starting off the series of questions, I think it is important for our audience, who are maybe not so familiar with the Canadian system of architecture in terms of building and designing which is so very specific and unusual, to point out that most of the work is standardized. Every window, every door frame, and so on is standardized. Looking at your projects, it seems to be completely different as everything appears to be something of a development process, customized or even an invention. At this point you put a lot of effort into your work which is something you don't recognize at first, if you're not familiar with the standardized Canadian system. How do you go about this, because for a client it obviously looks more expensive. It wouldn't be, say, a low-budget project, because you usually couldn't buy all this

stuff off the shelf. Still you go completely different ways. Is this so important to you? Maybe Howard, would you like to answer?

HS_I think you're right. Basically the North American construction system is very banal. Now in the residential component of construction, it is all two by four constructions and dry wall. And the commercial construction is very much systemized, which is partly the result of a rigid environment. No one wants to take responsibility of things, which are not part of systems. We worked on quite low-budget projects. I think we probably in a way naturally subverted the kind of normal system out of personality, or whatever. We certainly start to not go about things in a normal way. In fact we often build components of our projects ourselves in order to achieve the results that we

wanted on our smaller projects. In doing so we certainly develop relationships to craftsman and people who actually are really skilled in doing things, but normally didn't get a chance to build in that way, because the construction methodology is what it is: it's pretty normal. And I think, as we develop slightly bigger projects we manage to maybe pick out certain things, which are more important for the project, somehow pull out of the budget, say: OK, put an allowance in for that item, so that we can develop it further. Certain parts have a kind of active faith I would say. The clients believe in the aspects which we think are important and worthwhile. We take on a little bit more risk perhaps. Right now, we are doing a fairly large project, which is roughly customized. It's about 10,000 square meters and we're actually working with a German fabricator to develop the curtain wall and the cladding system which is built in Germany and it is within strict budget constraints. I don't know how we pulled that off but we somehow managed and it seems to be successful.

BS_ I think that the minute you do something that isn't normal or standard requires a lot more work, because you actually have to figure it out. You have to know that it works. We build a lot of mock-ups, full-size mock-ups and pieces to test and fully understand, whether it will work or not. We engage the fabricators and our clients in that process so that we are all in it together. And I think the question of durability in our climatic zone is an imperative. If you don't build well, it will fall apart, literally before your eyes. The testing and understanding of its performance is essential to what we do. So it's not that it's some nice idea

but it actually has to perform, work well and be able to be built.

HS_ I think it's fundamental to our practice. We are pushing the limits to do these things, always trying to test possibilities of what we can do with this, like a window system or a constructional system, to really expand it, not at the expense of the client, but really as our responsibility as architects to keep pursuing new ideas and new ways of doing things. Some are touching the idea, the kind of fabrication. Some of it is handmade, some of it is machine-made using all these amazing tools we have now in the construction industries. You can actually get things that are incredibly well made for quite reasonable effort like some of the parts of the Integral House, for which we developed small castings and things. We can actually do the work in our office: get the prototypes through 3D modeling and then I can direct it to the casting company. So in a way, it was quite inexpensive, because we were taking the work on ourselves in order to achieve something that was, you know, some extraordinary thing.

BS_ Also, I would say it's a form of resistance against a kind of mainstream of North American construction which is so banal, so boring, so uninteresting. And so this question of invention and experimentation while understanding the imperative of performance, is a kind of balance. And I think what I was trying to share in the talk was that you get more courageous with bigger projects, because you've understood them in smaller experiments. One leads to the other and because you know that it will work, it's not just

some nice rendering that you've done but you've understood the physical impact of it. It allows you to be bolder in the next project in terms of how you develop it.

RR_ Well, this is actually a question, which was on my mind, because I'm trying to figure out what is driving you or who's there behind you driving or even pushing you into this position? So I think it's something to be, as you said, critical. You want to be critical, which is a special notion in your architecture. Also at the same time, it's something very hard to bring together as well, because we see on the one hand, the technological part, the detailing, the drafting, and on the other hand, you got these very important topics: landscape and object in the landscape. Then you go, for example, to an island and you think about how to get the materials there, preferably as simple as possible. Ship it there and just build it, nail it together. When you start off a project and begin with the design process, how does that go about? Do you visit the site? Do you talk about it?

HS_ Yeah, when you start a project you have to think about it, talk about it as ideas. We start to do some very rough sketches and have discussions about that in terms of what possibilities this project offers. Sometimes the formal parameters, like in urban projects, are more normative: massing, set backs etc. which are very normal and kind of banal constraints. In the landscape, sometimes there are these issues that the client brings into the project maybe some passion or some aspect like that, which kind of feeds us and bases as inspiration for all the possibilities.

I think it's never really like: "We do it this way!" It's always: the site, the client, the program – all these things feed you and generate possibilities for which direction it might go.

BS_ I would also say there's not an a priori assumption it should look like anything or there's a kind of material that it should be. We begin the process in a very open way and I think those decisions evolve through the discussion. It's not like it must be this or that. It's never so dogmatic or so prescribed as an outcome.

TL_ When picking the materials for your projects, do you think about the usage or the hints of usage when they are built? What about their appearance when they are aging? Is that of importance to you when you are building somewhere in the countryside?

BS_ I would say we think about time a lot. And sometimes we imagine whether a building might be a good ruin and if it's a good ruin in its decayed form, maybe it'll be a good building for someone to live in. So this question of selection of materials, whether some things are inert and unchanging versus things that are reacting to the atmosphere is something that's important for us. We have things that weather in different rates so you are always aware of time in the work.

TL_ When I am thinking of Northern American architecture, I always have these typical houses in mind that are just built for a short period. While here in Europe an architect always wants to build for, say at least a century.



Is that something that is on your mind? Do you think: “Okay, this building will only last for ten years, twenty years?”

BS_ I hope not! [laughing]

HS_ When you talk about resistance, I think you’re right: a lot of North American construction is built for a very short time span. It has a kind of disposable commodity aspect to it. We don’t think about projects as commodity. We think about places for people’s lives, about habitation. Hopefully, they will last longer than ten years. But you know architecture is surprisingly impermanent, sometimes, even when you hope it will last a hundred years. Things change, you know, buildings get sold or whatever. There are a lot temporal aspects to it. With our projects, we imagine them being around, aging and weathering for

a long period of time. We used weathering steel quite a bit in our projects. It really shows a certain degree of time in a very forceful way. We’ve used that in many projects as a way to encapsulate time and weathering, and the possibilities of how it weathers. We really think about it a lot.

RR_ Talking about time, resistance of materials and the way you used them, is there actually a different approach to designing in winter than in summer? Because you’ve got this extreme climate, these long cold winters, really cold with a lot of snow. Do you think of different details in winter than in summer when it’s very hot?

BS_ Some of the buildings I presented are seasonal summer only buildings. And some of the delight for us is that normally, you never get to see the structure, because you have to insulate and it gets covered up. So the summer buildings are actually a pleasure, because you get to expose everything and it’s all seen. But you can’t do everything only for one season so we think the ability to do things that actually address all the seasons is a key.

RR_ In your lecture, you pointed out this very special stance of trying to incorporate the landscape in your projects, the outside coming to the inside and vice versa. Is this a reason why I hardly saw any white color being used? Except for this one small studio, you hardly use the color white.

BS_ We hardly use white?!

HS_ It's true! We hardly use white. Maybe it's a reaction to the American conditions where everything is dry wall. It's all white dry wall in residential buildings. I think initially, in our first house, we decided we were going to use no dry walls in this house. It was kind of a position to make it out of real materials. This was many years ago. It actually started off a sensibility of how we would build. It was going to be real materials that had real values and real substances to them. A kind of cardboard house, North American house, we resisted. We've used white ceilings sometimes ... [laughing]

TL_ Do you always try to use new materials? Are you curious about these things? Or do you first design the look you want to have and then think: "Ok, which material could that be?"

BS_ A lot of times we look closely at the vernacular condition, the local context, because I actually think it tells you so much about a place: what's used, why it's used, where it's used, how it's used, when it's not used. I think that those acute observations are the starting point for much of the work that we do. So like the synagogue in Maine, you know, these wooden cladders are everywhere, at every house that you see but then it's how you understand what it does, how you can transform it into something else. The congregation we were working with, their name is "Congregation Bet Ha'am" which is "House of the People", so the idea is what is used in the vernacular actually becomes used for their big house. It is the understanding of how it's normally used and how it's adjusted or trans-

formed by shifting things. Changing things, for us, means understanding what the status quo is, and then how you can think of changing it.

HS_ I think on that project, we were looking at the New England kind of vernacular, it was all about these very fine boards on all the houses ...

BS_ Cladding!

HS_ You realize it is actually the right scale or thing for that quality of light. Very fine shadows and it hasn't got any tartness to it. Then we had this idea that we could invert it and have lines of light as opposed to lines of shadow. By tilting the wall we could actually capture them, by inverting the siding. So the steps went up as opposed to down. And it did work! It was kind of amazing! A very simple device, but it was really beautiful! It has got these fine lines of light cast by a couple of skylights. That does, I think, completely transform the material into something else. That was really a brilliant subtle thing. It was pretty amazing!

BS_ There is a Walter Gropius house in Lincoln, Massachusetts, which he designed for himself and it is actually using cladder. So it looks white ...

HS_ ... painted white ...

BS_ ... from the outside it looks white. It's cladder and it's painted white.

RR_ Something which is interesting, when you show these slides, there is this mixture of hand drawn details or hand drawn drawings and the computer technology used to make details and the structure itself. Is that a very specific thing that you still need to have a kind of grasp of the project by using your hand, by taking the pencil and pen and not starting off with the computerized design process?

HS_ Yes, it's pretty fundamental to how we work. Our methodology is to draw by hand and make models, which we learned to do. For me it's pretty fundamental. You draw the thing by hand and actually it becomes part of your being by drawing over and over again. And then you use all the kind of modern computer programs and techniques to develop things. But I think the act of drawing by hand embeds it into you as a kind of being. It becomes part of you. We are actually trying to do work that is humane and the scale, I think for us is fundamental. That is how we developed our methodologies and how we continue to work. We haven't completely shifted over to a computer condition even though we use Rhino and AutoCAD and all those things for our projects. The generation of the ideas is by hand. I think for us the issue of scale is fundamental to that, too. It's the issue of drawing in different scales and specific scales, and doing this constantly for years. You kind of know the size of things and develop an inherent knowledge of scale.

BS_ I also think the nature of craft is changing the definition of what it is. The fact that access to laser cutters, 3D printers and all these things has become easy, because

they are not so expensive anymore. They are more decentralized. We were actually able to model the bronze clips of the blue glass stair, do several 3D printouts of it, figure out which one worked with our engineers, refine it and then do a sandcasting of it in a limited batch. That actually allowed a custom element for that project, for that particular piece. And it wasn't exorbitantly expensive. So the question is: "What is craft?" How do you redefine what craft is considering current technologies making it actually more accessible and more affordable and more customized without having to necessarily pay such a premium for that? I think, it is actually a really interesting part of the times that we're in and we're very interested in how you can exploit that in projects. Before you might have to mill something, and the costs of that would be so expensive that you would never be able to afford it, for the kind of limited run that you have. So there are all kinds of really great opportunities that are now available, that I just think we need to take advantage of more as architects.

TL_ That was also an issue of your exhibition at the Venice Biennale, which attracted my attention: there were these four key words Kenneth Frampton used: light, material, craft and space. To me 'craft' didn't really fit into the North American Style somehow. Do you think this 'craft' experience will now become stronger in the North American building industry?

BS_ That's a big question! I would say what's interesting about the show that Kenneth Frampton curated was that maybe craft for each one of those participants, the five

North American Architects, would be defined differently. So how someone on the East coast or the West coast or southern US or East Western Canada or Central Canada might define craft. I think it would not necessarily be the same. And so I don't think we would be able to feel comfortable being definitive about what craft is. I think it would be easy for us to describe what it means to us and within our context and within the kind of fabricators that we work with and the constellation of people that we work with on different projects but I wouldn't be so presumptuous to say I knew it for North America. I think that in a way, it is something that is actually quite fragile. It isn't necessarily part of the conversation all the time but I think as architects we need to make it part of the conversation. I think it's an active stance to kind of say that it's embedded in our work and it becomes prototypical of one way that you can imagine craft being included, because it's so germane to the physicality of architecture. We create spaces and they are made of stuff. They are made of physical things. I mean, we're in this totally remarkable room and you look up at the ceiling and you see the kind of evidence of craftsmanship everywhere and it's partly what makes it so special. And I think that we can't recreate these kinds of things now but we can also create new things that address the time that we live in. This question of craft and the modernist project sometimes seems to be at odds but we feel that there is actually a way of thinking about them together. Door handles, light fixtures, fittings, pieces that are part of our everyday lives can actually be made by people and contribute to the experience of space.

RR_ You have been able to realize quite a number of projects and you have only shown a few of them this evening, also due to the 45 minutes you were given. You have private clients and public clients. When comparing our situation here in a European, German, Austrian context with the Canadian, North American one, most of the public projects you acquire here is by having to win competitions. As far as I understood you don't really have this system in Canada or North America. But tell us the secret, how do you find your clients?

HS_ Well, I say it's true. Competitions in America are typically developer-driven competitions. Occasionally, there are some famous ones for city halls and things like that, but there are pretty few and far between. If we would rely on competitions we wouldn't ever practice. I think we have been very lucky for sure. I mean, part of it is timing and luck. We have had some great clients, who have just come back to us over and over again for small projects, which allow us to experiment through many years with the same client. So there is a kind of development of confidence in us and, you know, in very small projects we were able to experiment and do quite interesting things for them. Part of this is just pure luck, part of this is being public, we published quite a bit, and people phone us up. I think people, some certain people, were engaged by it. It's not a very predictable or good business model, I would say, because it really relies on this active faith in the future that someone will phone you at a certain point and say: "Do you want do us a project?" It's that kind of odd and straight forward. We have been incredible lucky.

RR_ So it sounds as if you just open your door and the clients come in.

HS_ Sort of like that. [laughing] I wouldn't really recommend it as a business plan, but it seems to have worked.

RR_ There was something Brigitte hinted at just now, you are actually taking on projects of bigger scale. I can imagine your very specific way of working may be changing also, say, in the context of taking on work in other countries. As far as I know, you are even working in Russia. How do you do that?

BS_ I think this is an interesting question for us and even the way that we develop our work and the specificity of it. We just finished a project in Hong Kong and we are doing work in Moscow. That kind of relationship between the site and the built form, the ways of building; these are very big challenges and they are in a way engraved in the way that we think about the work. We are working just to really understand that local condition, to really think carefully about the relationship of the built form to the site. I think that it's part of how we see our projects and we'll just have to see what the outcome is.

HS_ Yeah, it's all about the kind of relationships between people at a certain point of doing anything. So you're trying to build up relationships. There are certain systems of construction in different places and in Russia there are definitely systems of construction and delivery, which are not North American. We're trying to hopefully improve the

quality by developing a kind of delivery system that will allow us to have some say in the construction throughout the whole process, which is quite unusual actually for many contracts there. So we started off by getting the supervision. It is part our fee, which is good!

BS_ So the way we design our building, we design the project on paper, we design it through models, we design it through contracts, we design it through specifications and then you build it over and over and over again and each version is as essential as the next to the realization of the final thing.

RR_ But you still keep to these very elementary topics which you have on the table: landscape, the object in the landscape, materials.

HS_ The fundamental thing for us is how we see and how you live in the world, basically all the possibilities. So there are certain kind of mechanisms that you use that are germane in the work we do. That's naturally how the project evolves, that certain kind of aspects, which are very fundamental to architecture that we believe in.

RR_ So if you have parts of your building being constructed in Germany, as you said, and brought to Canada, will you also take Canadian parts to Russia?

HS_ That's the idea! [laughing] The world is a complex place of things moving back and forth. And different abilities and skills and different parts as well.

BS_ So maybe I dissect a little bit. We were working on a project for a group of Catholic nuns and one of the issues for them was for the project to be as ecologically sensitive and as well built as they could afford. Typically, North American curtain wall is really bad; the fabricators don't follow high standards. We said if they wanted to make the biggest difference, they needed to build the best building envelope they could afford because it would pay them back every single day. We had an open bidding process and then ended up with a European company because the testing methods and the kind of performance level of the envelope was better than the North American. And the ability to provide quality control and supervise the installation and ensure that it was installed properly, was actually the best way to ensure that it was as sustainable as possible.

HS_ There was also a bit of luck in that because this company was trying to break into the North American market. They were fairly aggressively going after the project; there was a lot of value added in that component of it. It allowed us to have them on board for a less price than local people.

BS_ But I also think that what it will do when it's built, it will raise the bar in terms of a residential project that actually addresses the building envelope in a way that's more serious than a more developer-driven outcome. For us, that's really important. It's about raising the bar and pushing the limits, and not just accepting the status quo.

TL_ After having realized so many interesting projects, is there a context or a program for a house which would interest you to build or to design?

HS_ For a house or any project?

TL_ Yes, for any project. I mean, the Integral House, as you already said in the lecture, is like having developed this program for a seminar. What would you like to do?

HS_ I think any project where you have a great client who's interested in doing something architectural is of interest ...

TL_ I mean the Integral House has somehow an urban context...

HS_ A sort of it.

TL_ That's true! I thought it would be somewhere miles away from city. So would you be interested in designing a house somewhere in the city center?

BS_ Oh yeah, and we have done it. A lot of them are in back alleys, in very small tight urban spaces and ...

HS_ We recently got a little urban project. Very small, just 5 meters wide by, I don't know, maybe 3 floors high. We haven't done an urban project for quite a long time, so I was very happy to do that. Even if it was a very modest little project, it was a totally urban little thing. I mean at different times you have different projects that engage you.

RR_ We have been talking about your way of working which is very specific and the quality of the work you are producing is also extremely high. Is this also an important issue for you when teaching, going with a young crowd? What are the issues you actually try to communicate to these young people?

BS_ In the studio?

RR_ Yes, in the studio.

BS_ The size of our studio is ten people, including Howard and myself. So we are eight. They are all trained as architects. We have people at different levels of their experience and we work very collaboratively with them to help realize the work.

HS_ Also, we don't do big projects, or we haven't done big projects. The work we do, the people in the community look at. I think by example we can show possibilities. We can improve the quality generally of our architecture, not necessarily through the things we are doing or by doing big projects but actually by leading some examples.

RR_ But in which way do you actually take these topics into teaching and teach the students to work with these kinds of skills which you have now been producing in the office.

BS_ Well, in terms of the university and the students in architecture school, there are so many issues that I think

are really important: these laneways, these back alleys in the city, finding ways to make these invisible systems more understandable and legible. To understand their opportunities and possibilities is really important. I think by mapping, drawing them, understanding the kind of potential of them, we actually allow both for citizens as well as politicians, other people to see them not as a throw away condition but actually a real site for potential construction in the city. So I see a lot of the work at the university almost operating like counter proposals to the norm and students as being actively engaged in understanding what these systems really are. What I have done at the university is looking not only at Toronto laneways, but laneways in Tokyo, in Melbourne, Australia, in London, England and start to compare widths, dimensions, and proportions of Toronto systems to other cities so that we can have benchmarks and actually understand relative conditions or also what's atypical and special about our own systems. I think that's an ongoing discussion and a bigger project that is working both at a micro-scale and a macro-scale. We have students looking at the whole system but also finding sites within it and using building projects specifically as a kind of design exercise within an urban exercise. The question of architecture and urbanism is played out in a variety of different ways and maybe not so much big to small but rather small to big.

RR_ Do you also hire students in your office?

BS_ We hire recent graduates, so if anyone has any résumés ... We had students from time to time. But I guess

the kind of studio we have, because we don't do competitions, we actually pay everyone who works in our office. We don't really have a kind of tutor office. We try to keep it small. None of us really likes managing other people and so we prefer to keep a smaller studio. We can control the quality and we can push the limits further. We both worked in larger offices, we both worked on big competitions and none of us has much interest in that. Our view is: "Bigger is not always better!" which is not very North American. [laughing] It's really these many experiments and this ongoing dialogue what we are interested in; being challenged, rethinking some of these questions that have been asked before but finding new solutions for them.

TL How do you teach students to get this feeling for materials, for space, for light, which is very important in your work?

BS For both of us, we had very good architectural educations in Canada. We both went to the University Waterloo, very good time, but I would say we also embarked on our own architectural education, visited so many built projects by the modern masters, by current work. Unless you see built work you don't really get it! You need to be in it, to walk through it, see it maybe ten years after it came out in a magazine to know what worked and really didn't work. So we built a kind of understanding of all these things through seeing work. And I drag my students all over the place, because I feel this issue of understanding the physical project is really important. One of the last studios I taught in Toronto, I actually had architects in the city do

almost seminars in their work with a group of Master students. So we would be in somebody's house or the space they designed. They would have to describe the process and the issues of what was almost like Master class in the space, but so amazing for the students, because you could just point to a window detail or point to the flow of this area, and the fact that the actual designer was describing it in the space. Their field trip required to take public transit to every site but they learned so much about their own city and they would not normally have been able to access so many of these spaces. To have the designer actually describe their own space, that was a pretty interesting model. So you can learn about your own backyard, in your own backyard – that's not a bad thing!

RR Maybe there would also be some experience that Graz students could bring from their backyard to Toronto.



You wouldn't really say "No" when somebody would be knocking on your door, would you? You would open up and say: "Come in". Maybe you would have a talk and maybe somebody could be working there, which I think would be quite nice and quite promising. Brigitte, Howard we have crossed the world of architecture, from landscape to material, from drawings, drafting right up to contracts and technology. I think it was really interesting having you here this evening. It was great going to this detail, also to the way you are teaching and maybe one person or the other here in the audience would be interested in not only spending their holidays in Canada but maybe also working there. And even if you would pay them, as you said, wow, what a paradise! Thank you very much!

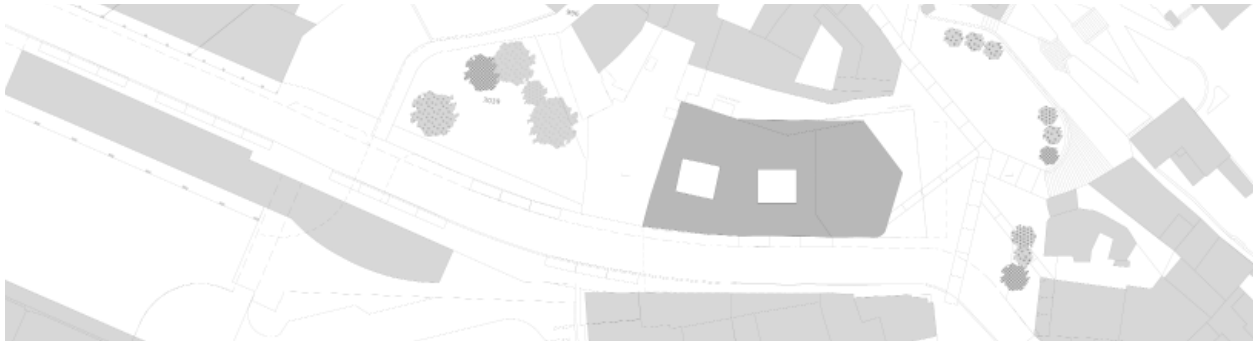


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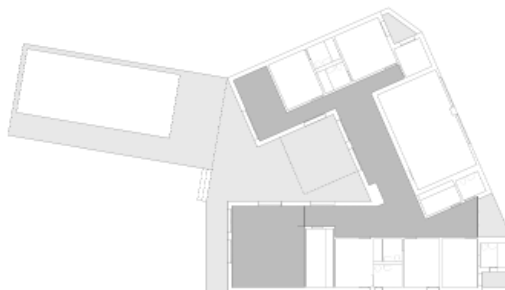
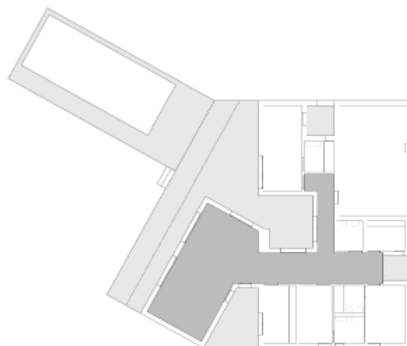
LECTURE_53

INTERVIEW_59

<... a series of urban interventions within the center of the city in Mendrisio: the first was to give the city a piazza which it formerly had, but which had been lost in the 1960s through the construction of a not particularly sensitive building in this location. The other thing that we are trying to address is the status of a control road and the impact it has on the piazza.>



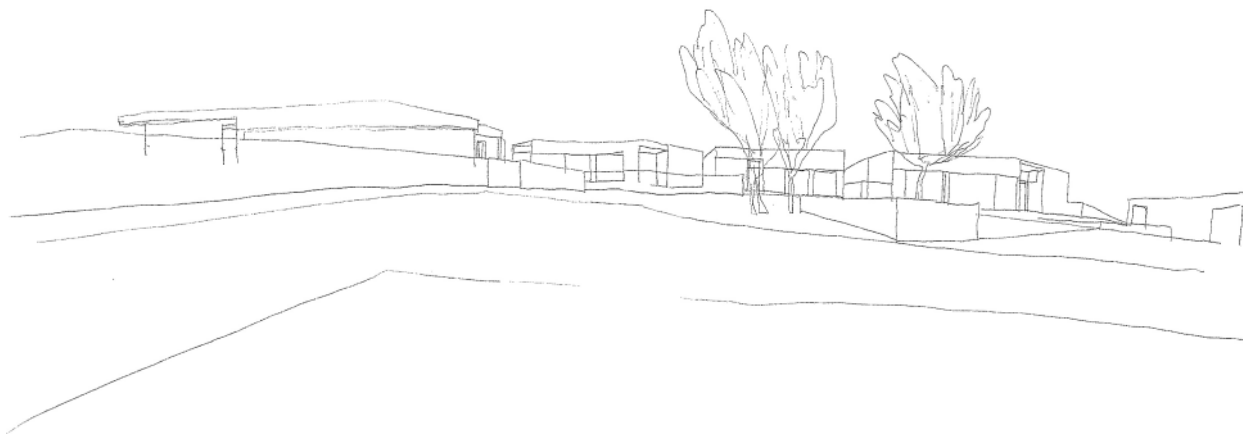
LECTURE**NEW CITY LIBRARY AND PUBLIC SQUARE_Mendrisio/Switzerland 2010**

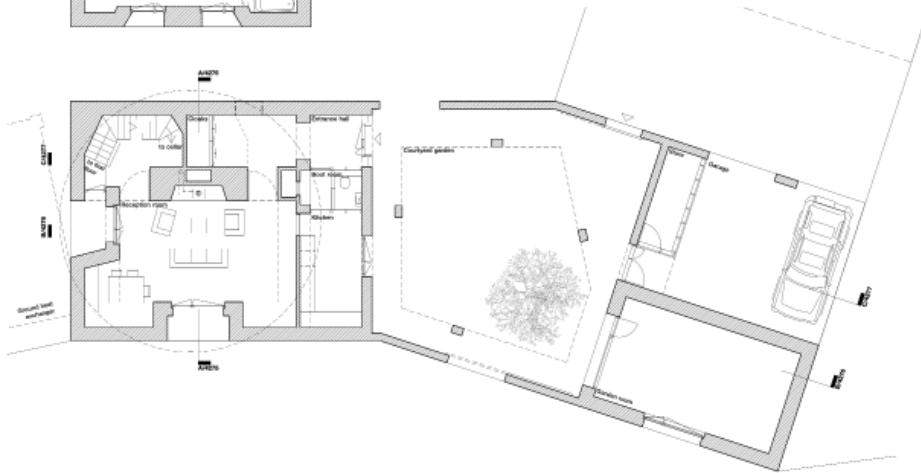


TEN HOUSES_Montemor-o-Novo/Portugal 2006-2012

<... working with the idea of a shared landscape. One of the starting points were the qualities of the Roman villa - a project with a courtyard space at its heart, spaces opened to the sky and places for gathering.

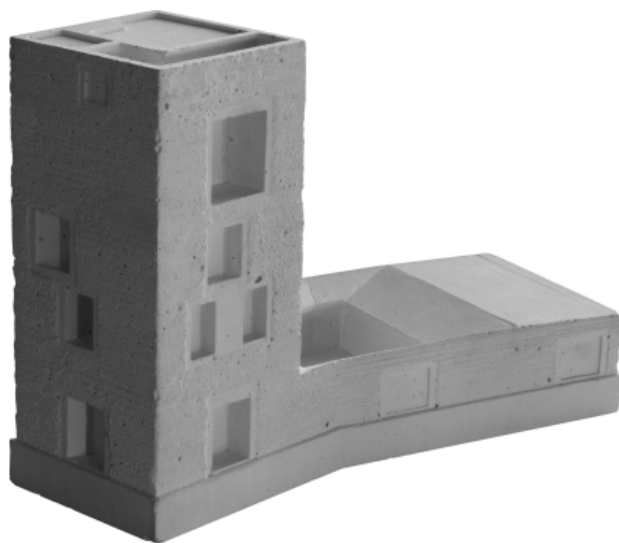
There are three different house types, which all work with the idea of an opened court. The buildings sit with an understanding of topography, their formal qualities are deliberately loose.>





<The dominant form of the house is a tower-like one, which sits more or less exactly on the place of the demolished concrete water tower. Our proposed house is arranged around a courtyard.

In this suite of plans our enthusiasm for the scottish tower house can be clearly seen. The upper floor of the house has a viewing platform, which enables the owner of the house to the privilege of looking out over his estate. >

TOWER HOUSE_Nutley Hampshire/UK 2011-2014

INTERVIEW

Fac[ad]ing the Social



JS_ Johathan Sergison

RR_ Roger Riewe

SR_ Sorana Radulescu

RR_ Thank you Jonathan for these first 45 minutes - a great lecture! We are heading now for the second 45 minutes of tonight, a guided talk, and I think we've got quite a few questions after this lecture you put forward here. You hinted at that you had been here in Graz many years ago, in 1999. This was a small kind of event that my colleague Hans Gangoly and I had organized at that time, 'Graz – Maribor: Space of the Future'. It was the time when we were expecting Slovenia to join the European Union. Perhaps you remember we invited four teams to come in and so I asked a good mutual friend of ours in London whom he would recommend and he said: "Well ask these guys. Nobody knows of them yet but they will be the guys of the future." This was 1999, and so we invited you. Back then, you made a very interesting proposal of picking up some traces of the vernacular and trying to enhance them along

this line from Graz to Maribor. And I noticed somehow this topic has always stayed and accompanied your work until now. So it must have been of some importance already.

JS_ I think it was at a time when notions of 'as found' were prevalent in our discussions. The project you refer to was an area of study, as I recall, of 60 x 20 km. So it was a huge territory and what we were scrutinising were the means by which Graz and Maribor existed as urban conditions. We speculated on their need to change and the management of these changes... We were thinking particularly about the change that would occur to the territory with the opening up of the border between the two countries. Often our attention was drawn to almost prosaic things like the manner in which the people who tended the vines put netting over them and, rather play-

fully, we were suggesting that they could change colour but still retain their purpose. It was meant as a way of meaningfully affecting landscape. And there were many observations. I don't know if the project bordered at times on being too optimistic or maybe even naïve, but I think it certainly contributed to the sharpening of our own position in practice as architects. You are absolutely right: at that time our office was young. It was a fantastic invitation. I remember I couldn't come to the briefing because I got married on that day. And I think Roger even asked me if I could change the date of my wedding ...

SR_ Well, I must say I was impressed by the respect you have for public space, for social issues. So I must ask how you managed to keep this sensitive approach towards space, social topics and material in such a global environment, in such an international environment that you are working in. Is research an important part of the design process?

JS_ I think so. Our discussions about the city and the way we might meaningfully contribute to existing urban situations occupies a lot of our time. In terms of research, our work as teachers has a close relationship to this interest we have in practice, a form of investigation into the contemporary European city. This semester, with my students in Mendrisio I have been working in Naples. A number of weeks ago we made a very memorable visit to this part of Italy. From experience, we have found that the first time you visit a place you take in many things that the second visit, which is often made with a project in mind, allows

you to make sense of. During the course of a typical semester this possibility does not exist, so we went later in the semester, when the students had already started to develop ideas for the sites in the historic centre of Naples, and could then adjust them according to the experience of visiting these places.

I noticed in our work that at the point where we found ourselves being invited to make projects outside of the place in the world where we grew up, it became easier to observe the intrinsic characteristics of a place. London, a city that I enjoy and relish, is incredibly complicated as an urban situation. Working in London, in our experience, is more difficult as a result of our familiarity with the social codes and the cultural significance of the things we are working with. When you visit a city that is not your own, you read it much more immediately.

RR_ But when reading these places - and in the lecture you said it is really important - you actually get the, say, the physical component of the space, you can take up these kind of grains. And when you see these projects you are doing, whether the renderings, the perspectives or even the built projects, you suddenly notice there is a strong social contextualism as well, a socio-political context. Something which, I think, is really difficult to grasp when you just do a first site visit, but is this another notion which is important for you: to integrate the project into its urban fabric especially in the context of the social?

JS_ I would say it is. It's certainly made more challenging by the difficulty of communication. In our studio in London,

I think we probably speak 8 or 10 languages between us. I should have said at the beginning that my intention in this lecture was to show eight projects that we are currently working on. But what you can see on the screen projected above me are eight projects that we have recently completed. These provide a body of research, an experience we can now draw upon in their completed condition. Throughout the evolution of the projects, through the countless forms of negotiation that occurred between all the protagonists of a project, the clients and client body, there is always a need to develop a dialogue with many parties and many agencies. While the procedure differs in detail from one country or architectural culture to the next, the processes are generally very similar. For us, what becomes important are the lessons that the completed projects hold. For example, in the project we have finished in Geneva, we feel the need to try and ensure that we have access beyond the moment the contract is finished, to allow us to continue to learn important lessons through the way people now live in the eighteen apartments. This kind of education we consider to be important as well as technical lessons about material performance and all those kinds of concerns.

SR_ Well, speaking of materials and construction methods, do you value these sort of refined vernacular methods, very traditional construction methods, or rather global construction strategies that come with such international projects?

JS_ I think it is a mixture of both. It is important to us that

any project has the sense that it belongs to its place. For example, the first project I showed, the project we are building in Vienna: we had a dilemma as to how we could meaningfully bring a construction logic and a sense of materiality to the building. Our work sits somewhere between the pleasure of craft and technique and the realisation that we are building in a contemporary sense, and that brings other kinds of demands. We are not nostalgic. Wherever our projects are located, we need to make sense of that place. We ask how we can engage with the construction industry that exists in that place. The situation we have encountered in China is very different to the experience we have of building in Switzerland, where things are made to a very high standard, with a well organised building industry. You could say, a very old fashioned way of procuring buildings, where the architects' role and that of construction is very important. What we find interesting, in comparison with the experience we have of building in London, is that construction costs are considerably lower in Switzerland, and much of this can be attributed to invisible costs. The salaries of project managers and people who do not directly contribute physically to buildings seem to guarantee that the overall construction costs are greater in than in a more traditional contractual relationship.

RR_ Taking you from this topic of materials, the selection of materials and the technology you are using, right up to the way you are actually developing your façades and the appearance of the building ultimately, it seems the appearance is always trying to be very modest and, in a way, very careful. Everything is selected with a lot of care.



Is this also a certain commitment to social acceptance, or anticipating social acceptance?

JS_ There is an aspiration to make projects that are not alienating. When Stephen and I began our collaboration, we had an interest in “the everyday” that I referred to earlier, and the possibility that our buildings could act as carefully judged backgrounds.

I think our experience of realising our first projects made us aware that the process by which we make a building inevitably means it's special. It cannot by definition be everyday. So, I think there is a sort of management of, let's say, the tension between the special and a feeling that our work, especially when it is dealing with normative programmes, should contribute, you could say, to the background of the city. In our minds, when we make housing, the last thing we should do is make it architec-

turally spectacular. Now there are other kinds of building programmes which involve a more public kind of architecture: a museum, a public library and so on. Clearly the architectural language of these kinds of buildings can afford to be more ambitious, they can act as more than backgrounds to the city.

RR_ We are always tempted to kind of categorise the architecture of our colleagues. And if we tried to do that with yours, it would be in the category of ‘Signatureless Architecture’, but with a very specific architectural language. There must be some bottom-line going through all these projects. Is it something you talk about in your office when developing a project?

JS_ It's an on-going discussion. You talked about façades earlier. We are extremely interested in asking the question: when I look at something, what do I see? When we propose an elevation or a façade concept for a project, we ask: how will it sit in the city? I think that's the responsibility we have. At the moment, in Zurich, which has an incredibly refined architectural culture, there is an over-reliance or over-interest in plan. I don't think you can make cities by spending 90% of your conversation on the qualities of the plan. I think the façade is the thing that negotiates the relationship of the building to the city, to the public realm. Its place in the city is determined and experienced by those decisions. Another component of what you are asking is, is there an identifiable language running through as a seam in our work? And, inevitably, there is. Because I think any architect has the capacity to invent ... not that

much! We are very comfortable with the sense that our work is kind of an experience and an evolution that builds upon itself. I find the position that some architects in the contemporary scene adopt, where everything is some kind of unrelated invention, frankly ridiculous. It's futile work.

SR_ I want to ask you, because you mentioned several times the way you work with limitations and regulations that come with public assignments, do you find this more challenging than a private assignment, this public aspect and all the limitations that come with it?

JS_ Well, often a private assignment comes with the management of someone's ego. I think a more public work ... what you're describing is in a way the discipline in which the project has to work, and I don't think we see it as limiting. We just see it as a framework in which we need to operate. I find it tiresome when architects bemoan the complexities of the building regulations in whichever location they are, because building regulations are normally based on the experience of making sure the buildings function. And isn't that what we're supposed to be doing? I don't see this as a problem. I mean, it is a series of challenges that we need to systematically work our way through. But I have often found, through the experience of our work, where you meet these moments ... at the time it seems like a crisis ... where the planning authorities have said: "We are not very happy, you need to rethink it", something better comes from that challenge. I think that on occasion, where there has been a need to find savings, often what gets saved is probably the 'fat' you can live without on a

project. It's easy to say it now in the abstract; it's sometimes painful in the day-to-day reality of a practice but I would say overall, it's what we need to manage.

RR_ We had Bernard Khoury here from Beirut who works with private clients, hardly any competitions! Shim Sutcliffe from Toronto, no competitions! And when going through your work, we see you got private clients but a lot of your work comes in by competitions you have won. So you obviously don't have any problem with that.

JS_ Seems like we don't! But I mean, what I didn't show is all the ones that we didn't win, which is often the body of work that you have the most difficult relationship to. We see any competition as an opportunity, with a certain discipline to experiment, to prioritize the idea before you have all of those other issues that you've just rehearsed. Not all of the projects I showed were won in competitions but the only two exceptions are ... the invitation to make those houses in Portugal and the project in Chile, which were direct invitations. We need to recognise that it is a condition of contemporary practice. And certainly, the kind of practice that we are involved in.

RR_ But also when winning a competition, that's a very favourable situation. The door is then very wide open already. It is far easier then to work on the project than going in with a private developer, proposing your project to the municipality, to the mayor and so on. Isn't it?

JS_ Yeah, I think it is. I've got to say, in our experience,

the version of a competition that we favour the most is where at various points, and certainly at the end, we would have the opportunity to stand in front of the client and give a justification for the ideas the competition has been exploring. I think there is a certain fear of the anonymous competition where a project's fate is determined behind closed doors. But in the end, we have to trust the decision that the jury takes. And we might not like it, we might not always agree with it, but it's a key component of the manner in which a competition is organized.

SR_ I am very interested in a certain topic you mentioned: the one of density that I know you have a very special interest in. I would like you to give us some insight and your thoughts on it and how you consider it in your daily work.

JS_ I think our role as architects normally demands an attitude to the European city. When I think of the pressures and forces that European cities face, there is an alarming and urgent need to find meaningful answers to how density can be introduced. In other instances, there are urban conditions where the reverse is the case, where a kind of urban opportunity could be created, though it would require de-densifying. But we are normally involved in the former. If we are talking about a condition like London, a city of 9 million people, that in the next 20 years needs to build something like 300.000 new homes in order to maintain its current trajectory, the question is: how do you do that? We think the way to do it is to recognize that London is currently and essentially a low-density city. And what we feel strongly shouldn't happen, although it did

happen historically, is that the city just expands outwards. There is plenty of opportunity for a city like London to build upon itself and achieve density and, inevitably I think, this is a more exciting attitude to proximity. This can happen in central London locations before we even begin to talk about the largest urban landmass of the city, which is its suburban periphery. This is the kind of dialogue or discussion that concerns us when we talk about London. But we have little work in London, so it doesn't keep us very busy. A much smaller city like Zurich, another place where we are active, has invested over a long period of time a great deal of energy into very carefully considering possibilities for growth and providing for the housing that its own housing crisis demands. London as an urban situation has always resisted the big plan, preferring to give priority to a kind of 'laissez-faire urbanism' that favours urban economic considerations. A city like Zurich, and I would say the cities in the German speaking world, have given more time to a propositional planning structure - and I've got to say that I have the greatest respect for this. It is less prone to failure, although it also runs the risk of being so correct, it is dull.

RR_ A very interesting position because years ago Rem Koolhaas claimed that the European city is dead. Except for maybe Barcelona, because Barcelona has the potential to reinvent itself all the time. Now you come up with another position and say, there is strong potential in the European city which we actually can use to develop architecture and urbanism.

JS_ Absolutely! I remember a conference we were involved

in many years ago, in Porto, where that position was forcefully proposed by Rem Koolhaas. On a panel session that included Vittorio Lampugnani, a great protagonist and supporter of the qualities of the European city, and Miroslav Šik, Koolhaas was really brutal in the way that he dealt with that position, arguing that the centre of the European city, that both Lampugnani and Šik admire so much, can simply not contain the growing populations of European cities. To a certain extent he is right, but like many things that Rem Koolhaas advocates, it's a point made in the extreme, as a way of trying to enforce his own position. And I remember having a conversation with Mike Guyer in Zurich, many years ago, where he was noting that some of the most talented European architects were abandoning Europe to undertake projects of a huge scale in China and the Far East. He turned to me and said: "You know what we should do? We should stay here because everyone will soon have gone." [laughing] He was joking, but I think he had a point.

SR_ I want to ask you about your academic activity: what message are you sending out to the students when they approach a new project? What strategy or methodology do you apply?

JS_ Uh, that's a big question! When I was invited to teach in Mendrisio, I couldn't help but observe that the school had attracted some really incredible teachers already. People like Peter Zumthor; more recently Valerio Olgiati, Aires Mateus – architects who I have great respect for, but whose work really attends to the importance of the

idea, and perhaps you could say, in the end, the perfection of the object. And I felt that my responsibility was to bring another kind of investigation, and it's one that I have been exploring in our own practice. My teaching studio places priority upon urban investigations, where we look at programmes of housing and cities. Certainly, this interest I have in density in relation to the European city is part of an on-going programme we're involved in right now. In the first semester, at the beginning this investigation, we looked at London. Last semester we were looking at Zurich. This semester we're working in Naples, which is an inherited and incredibly dense city. Next semester, as I told you, we are going to be turning to Bucharest, and in the future we might be working possibly in Berlin or in the east of Austria.

SR_ Can you establish a comparison between this methodology and this strategy you have in your studios and the one that you apply in your daily professional life, in your office?

JS_ Methodology sounds too organized a term for what I am able to bring and encourage in the students based on what I know. I think that's what they value. So an encouragement to look and try and understand things is a reoccurring proposition in my teaching practice. A critical component of this is the very detailed survey work students are asked to make, not just as an exercise that helps them learn how to draw - that would be boring - but to understand the scale of things in a way that they can then use in their own project work. But it must be said,

and I'm sure you would agree with this, that the opportunity to teach is also one that allows you a certain freedom to explore things that you can never explore through your own professional life. That is something that interests me greatly. That's what makes me passionate about teaching, I think. At the point where I feel like I'm just repeating myself and would give up ... it's got to be inspiring and motivating. One of the privileges of teaching in a school like mine, is that I am frankly given incredible freedom to do what I am interested in doing.

RR_ In your lecture I heard a slight criticism that there is a politeness in urbanism. Now coming to your students in Mendrisio, are you actually able to motivate them to be impolite?

JS_ I hope so. I mean they're not blindly obedient. Mendrisio as a school is an incredible place. It's in this little provincial town, almost in Italy, where the opportunity of really immersing yourself in an architectural exploration is certainly reinforced by its geographical remoteness. And I certainly enjoy its proximity to the Italian-speaking world ... of course, it is the Italian speaking world. I think the students don't need too much encouragement to be impolite but I think the management of, let's say, a kind of unknowing sense of urban decorum is something that I do talk about.

RR_ Also topics like, something that you showed here, contemplating about the characteristics, the dimension of a wall. Is this – the wall – one of, let's say, the classical

topics in architecture, something you try to communicate: the wall, the window, the door?

JS_ Yes, buildings are made of walls and the way that those walls are made gives the intrinsic atmosphere or presence of the building. This is the kind of discussion we have, and I'm always telling my students that architecture would be easy if you didn't have to make windows in walls. I think that is a lesson that comes from Frank Lloyd Wright. It's why when the students begin to organise ideas of façade, I tell them to look at the dimensions of windows that they know, because they are always either far too big and too abstract, or horribly small. It's always best to start with things that you know. But their sense of starting with what you know, I wouldn't say it's a battle, but it's a kind of difficult concept. I remember recently being on a review in Vienna with Tony Fretton and he gave some advice to the students which I thought was really fantastic ... but probably advice that meant nothing to them and will only start to make sense years later. He said: "You know, when I started out in practice, it suddenly became really attractive to do things that were really quite normal." And he sort of left it at that; it takes a certain experience to know what he really means.

SR_ You structured your presentation in two chapters, which are 'past' and 'present', so it's a very obvious question I'm going to ask right now: what is the next chapter, the future chapter, in your mind? How do you see yourself in several years? Do you still think of yourself as a European architect or do you value this global aspect, this

global image that you have constructed for yourself?

JS_ That's an impossibly difficult question. I mean, it's the kind of question that Stephen and I systematically find ourselves turning to. What are we really doing? Where are we going? And in the end, you sort of have a sketch of what it is you are trying to do, but how you organise it is inevitably out of your control, because it comes from the accident of an invitation to make a project, and the outcome of the discussion of a jury that you have no influence over. I really like the accidental nature of architecture. Of course, you always have to manage it, because there is always a point in one's professional life where you realise you're going to need some more work. It's a little bit out of your control, but I think when you feel that strongly enough, a chemical is in the air that somehow brings fortune to your door. Are we ambitious in terms of expanding beyond Europe?



Not really, because I think the responsibility that comes with that is quite demanding. But as you see from the evidence of what I've shared with you, it doesn't mean that we would say no ... it's just a kind of: yes, if we can make sense of it.

RR_ But even if Europe is quite small, still it is quite diverse: different languages, different building codes and so on. You started off in London with your office, now you got another office in Zurich, you are teaching in Mendrisio, Stephen is teaching in Munich ... you are kind of spreading out. I think the quality of your work until now, has actually come from a large body of thinking, thinking architecture, which really makes the whole thing strong. This is also a question for the future: how can this continue? How can you communicate this idea amongst the players in your office producing the projects?

JS_ I think that's a very good question. Fortunately the size of our office has grown in a very manageable way, which has meant that as the opportunity to make bigger projects has occurred, we have felt that our experience enabled us to undertake those larger commissions. We are lucky that there is a core of people who have been working with us for many years, who know our ways, know the manner in which we like to organise our studio, and a sense of structure and infrastructure that has grown up in time. Do we want to get a lot bigger? Not really, I would be happy if the office was a bit bigger sometimes because I think part of the answer to your question is, we have a kind of curiosity to build at a bigger scale than the things

we've realized so far. We are ready for that. It hasn't been mentioned, but one of the key disciplines that Stephen and I insist on is a need to write. And in the past that's come from, on occasion, giving a lecture, as a paper in a much more structured and written form. But increasingly now, writing comes through our teaching activities and most of the papers we write, are initially intended as ideas we want to share in relation to the thematic investigations of our various teaching practices. We value writing highly because it seems like it has a discipline and it keeps us in order. I think the word and the management of words is something that we value greatly. We are not writers but we like the discipline of writing.

RR_ There are actually not many writing, practicing architects, are there?

JS_ No, fortunately. I mean, the example for us was the incredible appreciation we had for the writings of Alison and Peter Smithson. In our minds, they demonstrated a way that words could organize architectural thoughts and give them a structure and an ability to communicate the intrinsic value of the work. The Smithsons were amazing in this way. The way that they wrote from one decade to the next really changed. The management of their production was very freely explored and I think that's something we really value as well.

RR_ Is there a project or a topic you would like to pick up, a project you would like to design in the near future?

JS_ You've done it ... an airport! A small airport. This is

one that I would really like to do because it has such an incredibly social programme. But there aren't so many to do. Whenever I go through City Airport in London, I'd like to start there. It's a disaster, as you probably know. Our current exploration of places of employment as a building programme is another area that interests us greatly, and we have a continuing fascination with questions of housing. This is the building programme we have the greatest knowledge of to date, but as it makes up the largest component of any city, this is hardly surprising. But of course, we would love to do a really big museum. The only type of building I don't think we want to do is a stadium. I just don't think we are stadium kind of architects.

RR_ Well, I noticed that there is a lot of work ahead of you, except for stadiums. Jonathan, thanks a lot for this great and interesting, in-depth talk and thank you to the audience for being here and paying attention.



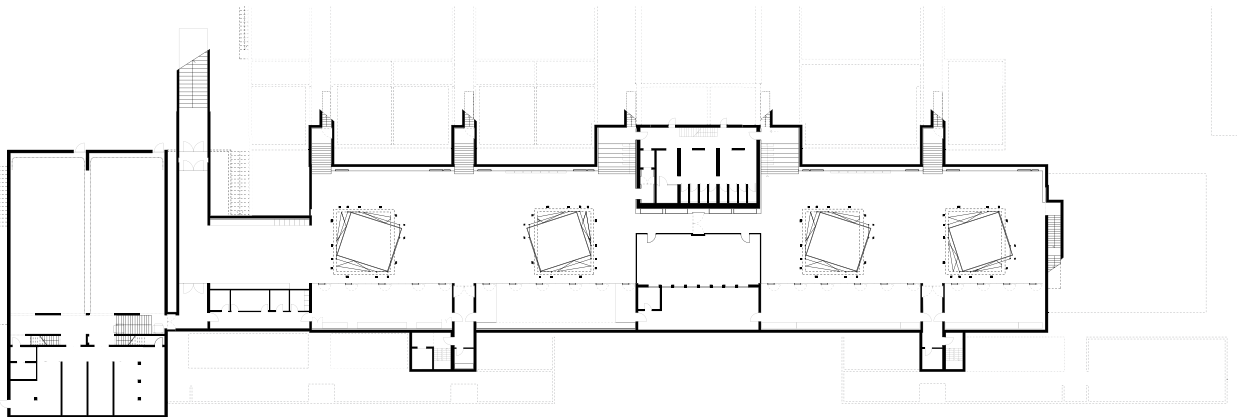
DORTE MANDRUP

NOVEMBER 26, 2012

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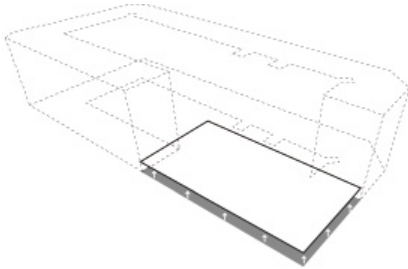
<... what we did was trying to reprogram the whole school ... replacing the old aula, the empty heart of the school, with the library.
We suggested to intervene in the schoolyard by working underground, not touching the listed building and using Arne Jacobsens proportions, getting light down in the basement, creating an underground connection between the existing buildings.>



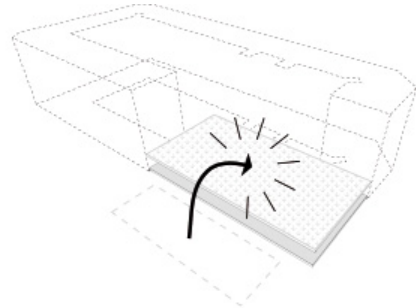
LECTURE**MUNKEGAARD SCHOOL_Gentofte/Denmark 2009**

<... we decided to lift up the whole plane. The western and southern sun had to get down into the backyard, so we put the outdoor areas on the roof ... shaped the slope in order to get a natural transition between the ground and the first floor.>

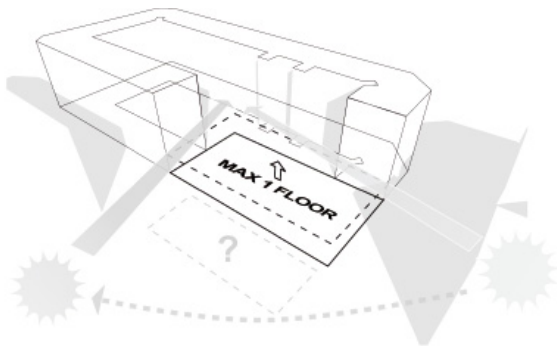
new surface



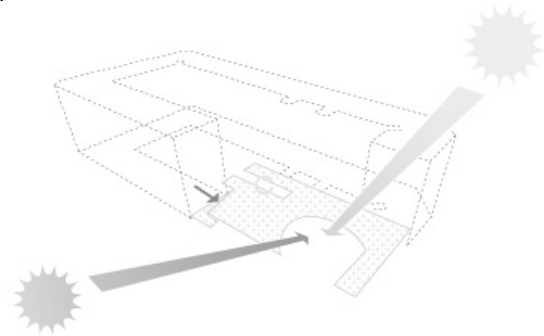
outdoor areas on roof



zoning regulations due to sunlight

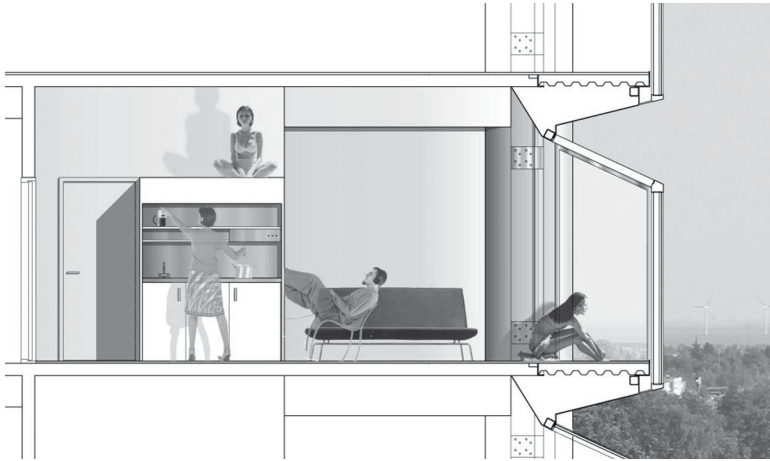


shaping of surface according to light air and regulations



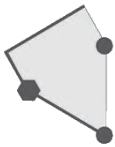
DAY CARE CENTRE SKANDERBORGGADE_Skanderborg, Denmark 2005



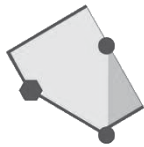


section apartment

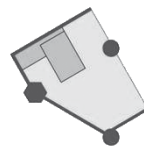
<We wanted to keep the building as a landmark, so we didn't reduce it to a domestic scale. It was about keeping an abstraction even though you have only 45sqm apartments.>



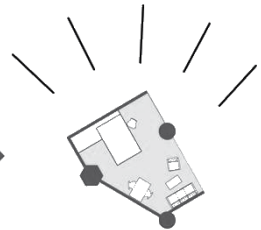
existing irregular geometry



bay with additional bright square meters



Function core with bed loft - functional zones

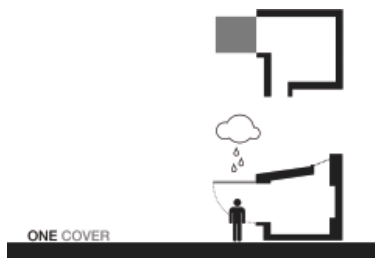
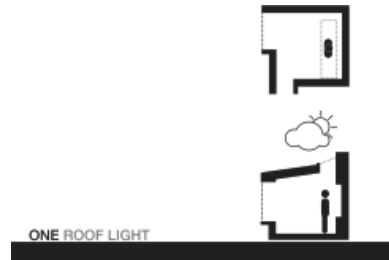
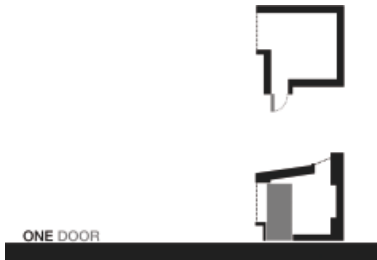


Flexibility

JAEGBERSBORG WATER TOWER_Jaegersborg/Denmark 2006



< It's a small house, made for a writer, a minimum box, one could say. It's pre-fab and needed to be transportable like a suitcase, so you could take it away and bring it somewhere else.>



READ NEST_PREFABRICATED STUDIO BOX_Denmark 2008

INTERVIEW

Reflections on Space



DM_ Dorte Mandrup

RR_ Roger Riewe

AS_ Armin Stocker

RR_ Well, Dorte, thank you for this impressive lecture and for these really beautiful projects you have been showing here. You made a very fast move at the beginning, saying: “This is our office and we work with models!”

DM_ [laughing] Yeah, right.

RR_ And so I would like to start this discussion by asking you about the role of models. Sometimes you see them pop up in your lecture; sometimes you can imagine that models must be very important because of the spatial qualities you are designing or actually processing. It must be of great importance in your office. So how do you actually start off your design process?

DM_ We work, as I said, a lot with models. We work in

teams and every time we start a project we work with different directions. So usually, we would have four or five different concepts or spatial ideas and then we always make them in models. And then we will, you know, work our way into making a choice. But we always have this kind of open possibilities in the beginning. And I think, starting off doing a lot of analysis not only on the programme, but also on the situation, you could say, of the site. It’s not like being a contextualist just reading what’s in the area, but more trying to read also what the social and economic context is. And I think, one thing that’s very important to us is that when you do build, and especially if you build in an urban context, you need to be able to give something back to the public space. So I think that’s probably one of the main things that we will always discuss: What are we giving back? And how can we do something

here? Can we make a space that's more than a space to the building, but also a space that will involve the street or the area itself?!

RR_ Do you actually build the first models before you start sketching?

DM_ Yes! Yes, we always build a model first. We sketch in a model also. I mean, I do very bad models. I throw things together and put needles in them; this kind of very fast way of sketching. And then somebody else will take over and build a real model, you know. We have discussions, you know, when someone puts something on and takes something away. So that's a very handsome way of sketching, I guess.

RR_ Let's have Armin joining us in our discussion.

AS_ There is one thing, one image, which frequently defines a part of your projects: the crystal, like in the school of Arne Jacobsen and also the sports and culture centre in Copenhagen.

DM_ Yes!

AS_ Could you tell us something about working with symbols like the crystal?

DM_ Well, I guess that with the triangulated shape, you are able to work quite freely. I mean, we all know, that Maya has done something for architecture schools but we

also know that it is very difficult to build these kind of double curved shapes. So there is also a kind of pragmatic thing in it, trying to be somehow organic – even though it's not organic – it's a crystal. If you work with this triangulated shape you have this possibility of working more freely I think. That's why we have been doing this quite a lot.

RR_ Following your idea of the crystal and the models you are making, it's also about the material you are using to make these models which you then transform into architecture, right?

DM_ Hmm, yes.

RR_ So, if you used other model materials the architecture would change? Is this a specific note in your way of making architecture, that you use just these specific materials?

DM_ I think that, for many years, we were almost obsessed, I guess, with making the skin of the house or the difference, the border between inside and outside, as lightweight as possible. And I think that Toyo Ito once wrote an essay talking about the osmotic quality of buildings that he did. Actually, I was very inspired by Toyo Ito when I was a student. I think that this whole idea of a house not being permanent, being sort of a softer skin around the activities, was very interesting. We worked our way through this kind of really cheap materials like plastic. And then you see the problems that you also create with these kinds of not permanent materials. Now we are starting to be interested in building more heavily, you know

concrete and this kind of stuff. You could still make very, very loose buildings – not as formal – with concrete, like Corbusier did many, many years ago.

AS_ In the lecture we saw a wide range of projects from small to medium scale. You also won one last year, the competition for IKEA. Can you explain the difference of working on small-scale projects to very big scale? I think IKEA is about 25,000 m², isn't it?

DM_ Yes. Right now we are doing quite big-scale projects like IKEA and also we are doing quite a big office building – not as big as yours, Roger – well, 12,000 m² or something. And I think there is a big difference. I think it's very important not to bring the way you work with small scale up to the bigger scale, because that will not work. I mean it would get too complicated. So there is a kind of complication factor that you cannot bring from the small scale to the big scale.

AS_ Does this also go for the materials and details? Or do you mean the structure as a whole?

DM_ I think it is also a problem with the detailing. If you scale up everything, you need to have a more rigid structure somehow, otherwise it gets too overwhelming and then it gets boring, you know. So you need to cool down a little bit if you go upscale.

RR_ There were actually a few hints in your lecture to the topic of 'low budget' or 'there is not enough money'. But I

don't think you were complaining. It was more like a challenge. Is that right?

DM_ I think it's great working with a very low budget. I mean, depending on your client, you know. If they want to work with it, it is very interesting. It's a very big challenge to make the priorities within the budget. Of course there are some wonderful, wonderful projects with a very high budget but you need to have some kind of restraint, some kind of challenge, to make projects really interesting to work with, because it forces you to go further or to try different things. But of course you can get tired of cheap materials and low budgets once in a while.

RR_ But on the other hand isn't it also very difficult to make a high-budget project?

DM_ Probably, yes. I've never tried it. [laughing] We did actually have a project that was a high-budget project but then the crisis came. It was a very big project and a very big house of 25,000 m² in Aarhus. But that depends on the client. The client wanted to have everything to look more high-end, you know, without knowing what the point was. That was kind of a strange situation to be in.

AS_ Coming back to the smaller projects, it is significant and remarkable, concerning your portfolio, that you did a lot of projects with a social background. Did that happen by accident or is it a strategy to do something like neighbourhood centres, day care centres and so on?

DM_ I guess partly it happens by accident: you get the project, you start up with some projects. But I think, of course, it's also a part of the Danish tradition to be very involved in kind of daily life, and how can we shape daily life in a decent way. How can we make housing that it is cheap and affordable, how can you put caring to that. That's very much part of the tradition and also I think its part of the really basic life. When you work with architecture, I mean, that is about how would you like people's life to be, right? We like working with projects with a social possibility. It is also nice to work with a project if you can push the program so you can, as I've said before, give something back. And maybe you can do that with a private client too.

RR_ Do you then also try to reprogram things in the design process?

DM_ Yes, always! At least we question the programme. It's also about making priorities. I guess if you have a small budget and you want to have as much spatial quality out of it as possible, you need somehow to go down to basics, you know, asking what is really necessary here. So we do try to push the programs, sometimes in another direction maybe than the client wanted in the beginning.

RR_ So I can imagine that this method of putting a strong focus on building models in the office is also good to strengthen the communication between the members of your team. But when do you actually let the client participate in this talk?

DM_ That's a very good question. I guess the client is not working with us on the models. Maybe we should try that, I don't know. [laughing] We use models maybe more as communication tool. But we have done a lot of workshops also with big user groups and have quite strong feelings and quite strong opinions on how this kind of user involvement processes should work. I think it's very important to work with the users; but it's also very important to be extremely careful on how to do it. You don't just ask the users: "What do you want?" It's a different process.

RR_ You also noticed that in these projects, especially in the projects for the day centres or youth centres, there is always this issue of trying to shape the young generation, like the day care centre with the hill where they have to sleep outside. So it seems to be always about trying to educate the young generation in a really special way. Is this an issue for you? Can you imagine that architecture can play this role?

DM_ I guess. Somehow I would hate trying to educate but I think that architecture should have this openness, you could say. So that it's possible to change it and you are not forcing a lot of stuff on them. But of course you could say, for example concerning the thing with the hill, you do force stuff, but I guess it's more like giving people a chance and keeping the answers open as much as possible. That was not an answer. [laughing] But you were asking if architecture can educate people and I guess it can, but also I guess that architecture has always educated. I mean when you have the classicistic buildings

they educated in a way. I mean, all buildings will somehow make the people act in a special way and so I guess we try to make a very relaxed way of entering the space.

AS_ That brings me to a question concerning your teaching. You have been a visiting professor in the United States and you were given a visiting professorship at the Royal Danish Academy For Fine Arts and you lecture all over the world. Is there any relationship between lecturing, teaching and your work as a professional architect?

DM_ Yes! You do get to be more reflective. I guess that both the teaching and these kinds of situations here tonight force you to reflect a lot more than you would do in a daily position. I think you can very easily come into this kind of 'you do what you do' when you don't reflect, which is very bad for you – and for the architecture.

RR_ Well, when teaching, of course you can talk about the idea you have in architecture, the position you have, but you can also try to relate it to other architecture or other architects alive or already dead. Do you think this is important to give the kids these references on their way, to have a look at those guys, those people?

DM_ Yes, of course! I think that is extremely important. I'm actually – ah, now I will sound like a sour old woman – but I really think there is a lack of history knowledge these days. [laughing] I think that is something that is happening with the internet, I guess. I mean we have interns in the office. Very bright, young kids, very clever. And you would

ask: "Let's talk about references for a sports building" and then they would come back with something that they have taken out of Google and you say: "Okay, that's a nice building, what is it?" [shaking the head, imitating an intern] "I don't know". "Ok, but who did it?" "Well, I don't know. It's just nice. I like it." And I think it's very scary, this kind of superficiality. That you don't study, I mean really study the buildings that you admire. Of course, it always starts with some kind of superficial admiration, but then really trying to understand the plans and the sections and what's going on. I think, yes, I do push all kind of architects onto my students and I do push them to really study, to really understand what they are looking at. And that's not just doing like this in a book [flips through an imaginary book] or going on the internet.

AS_ Concerning this, do you have any idols of your own?

DM_ Oh, yes! Well, I guess Toyo Ito, I think was and still is a really amazing architect and a lot of the Japanese architects also. I guess atelier Bow Wow is doing some very interesting stuff, but Toyo Ito and everyone that he actually educated. I mean he has a whole group of architects that he somehow helped. I think also of people like Charles Moore. A place like Sea Ranch and the small houses that he did are also very interesting to study down into detail. And Le Corbusier! I still think he is a genius! I mean he is still very interesting!

AS_ Yes! I have seen on your homepage, that you did a journey to Le Corbusier's works with your staff.



DM_ Yes! We actually came home in September. We had a week of only looking at Corbusier, which was very nice.

RR_ But we also have Arne Jacobsen.

DM_ Yes.

RR_ You talked about the school where you went underground and obviously there is a deep respect for the architecture of Arne Jacobsen in the way you presented the sections and the plans and the quality of the existing school. You tried to work with these qualities and not against them by going underground. The Finish have this problem with their godfathers and they are kind of stuck with that, whereas your architecture is, you know, accepting it, respecting it. And also the setting of a new architecture against it. Is this something you do deliberately?

DM_ Yes, maybe. I think the modernists of the 50s, the delicacy of their work is very much about proportion but also very much about detailing. And the refinement of the detailing is almost impossible to reach today. I mean you could try, but it would be extremely expensive, when you think of the whole heat calculation – everything is just almost impossible! So somehow it's also to say: "Well, this refinedness is no longer a part of the practical life." I mean, all these 50s villas I love very much but this kind of building technique you don't have anymore! I think not in Denmark. I can see that you do a lot of refined detailing here, but there is actually no possibility in Denmark – unless you have an enormous budget.

RR_ When we see this one detail in the Jacobsen school where you made an alteration: you continue the plan and the layout by just going underground and saying there is one missing link. Then you put daylight down into the underground part. At the top it's like a cut insertion which goes with the Jacobsen plan, but then you distort the facade!

DM_ Yes! The space is very differently down there. I mean, there was no point in doing the same kind of rigidity because then we wouldn't be making a supplement to the Arne Jacobsen School. The spaces he made were wonderful but they have one kind of structure and if you wanted to make any kind of supplement, it had to be very different, I guess. So the space is in scale and the configuration is kind of in contrast, you could say.

AS_ In the lecture you said that the parents and the teachers were afraid that there would not be enough daylight. How could you convince them? Did you show them models?

DM_ Yes. We did 1:50 and actually 1:20 models of the courtyard with the section and we took them to the Copenhagen School of Architecture. We have this light laboratory where you have a sun. You could set the time of the year and you can measure quite precisely how the light conditions would be. And then you could take the parents and the teachers to a space with kind of the same logs.

AS_ Was that a long procedure to convince them?

DM_ Yes, we also had to go around the country to see spaces that are dug down and had enough light.

RR_ So this is then the phase where the dialogue with the client comes in.

DM_ Yes! [laughing]

RR_ So it is actually the issue of putting in special features into a building, like the daylight issue in the underground, also the issue with the sports hall trying to convince those who will use it that there will not be too much daylight or that it will not be too bright. The choice of materials which you have been using until now maybe will change. You would like to use new materials, or other materials, but those you have been showing tonight, polycarbonate,

aluminium and steel, is this a very deliberate choice that you can work your detailing on?

DM_ Yes, it's all about getting the skin as thin or as lightweight as possible. Transparency has been an issue. I guess we have done some brickwork but you have to admit that it's also a way of thinking that you make a structure and you make a cladding instead of making mass. You know, working with brick is very different and we have to admit that we don't do that very well. I mean, the architecture, that we do with brick is not working for us.

RR_ It's not your material.

DM_ No. [laughing]

AS_ Continuing with the structure of your projects, there is a recurring motif I have seen in your projects: the staircase. Sometimes as a one-flight staircase, sometimes integrated into the structure, on the outside of the building or on the inside. Is there a background story concerning that?

DM_ The stair is about a diagonal movement. And the connecting of floors and the connecting of space is really important. Also in a lot of our works we always try to push the sections to have this kind of diagonal views. You have a more intricate spatial feeling. You get more space out of not so much space if you have a diagonal possibility. But also the staircases are some kind of a social place. If it's wide enough, it's very easy to sit down and meet.

AS_ That's a very interesting way of seeing the stair.

DM_ Hmm, yes.

RR_ So usually, when other people or critics or whoever try to describe your architecture they would use certain terms. If you would describe your own bottom line in architecture, what would this be?

DM_ Oh, uhm, I don't know. Well, I do know – but then I'm going to talk, you know?

RR_ We can talk about secrets here! Nobody will know.

DM_ I think the architecture is very much about space and not about object, you could say. It's more about space and it's also about the dynamic space, I think. That's what we always try to get out of it. Some kind of difference in spatial feelings, but also very much about the situation and the context. So, you know we haven't done many houses in a beautiful countryside and I think we would not be doing such great buildings in the countryside because it's always part of a connection, you could say, of a relationship to something else.

RR_ And then you try to imagine, when starting your project, the possibilities of utilisation, imagine how the utilisation will take place, right?

DM_ Yes. It's very much about the activities, I guess, that you somehow create by inventing these spaces, making

these spaces, creating these spaces. That you can open up possibilities that were not there before.

RR_ The topic of movement came up in your lecture, like how do you move around and also that there is a second path inside the project. It's for circulation, which I think is very important, to make the small things appear big.

DM_ Yes.

RR_ And what do you do with the big projects?

DM_ Well, like the IKEA project. We are not quite finished with it yet, but it's also about circulation. It's just a box, but it's about how do you connect inside this house. By making openings in the floors, how can you connect as many people as possible in the same really huge office space? There are 600 people working there and there is a big meeting centre. How do you spatially and also emotionally connect all these people so that they feel as being part of the same space? So, it's trying to get something intricate out of a very simple shape.

RR_ Is it of special importance to you that the projects you are doing right up to now are really close to your office? So you can have a close look or supervise them?

DM_ I didn't understand the question.

RR_ The projects you showed were around Copenhagen and so you can always be very close to your projects. Is

that of importance at the moment?

DM_ Now we are doing a lot of work in Sweden. I think we did one project in Germany. That was very difficult, not because it was in Germany, but because the situation was different. I think it's no problem being in a distance. You don't have to totally understand the neighbourhood; you don't have to understand the situation in that sense.

RR_ That's interesting, because now this would also set the base to say, well there is no problem to go to other countries, going abroad to other continents. Is that an issue for you?

DM_ I don't know about other continents. I guess somehow there is a European context, that I think is very important. I would not feel comfortable working in China or in Saudi Arabia. A lot of Danish offices are actually working in Saudi Arabia or in the Middle East and I think of course it's very exciting but I think in that sense you are too far away culturally to really be able to understand what you are doing. Maybe that's just my prejudice, I don't know. Maybe it's different. Have you done some stuff in China?

RR_ No. So the projects, we noticed, are growing, they are getting bigger in scale. If there was a specific project you would really like to do in future, in the near future, what would this be?

DM_ I'm saying something very banal, because I saw this lecture by Nieto Sobejano two days ago and I thought

their work was amazing. I think the possibilities that you have if you do larger cultural buildings would be amazing to have. I think the art centre they are doing which is almost finishing now, you know, with artists and galleries, with both activities and exhibition spaces in one building. This kind of building would be great to do.

RR_ So let's find a project for you.

DM_ Yes, great! [laughing]

AS_ How do you get the projects? Do clients come to you with projects or by open or invited competitions? Like IKEA, was that an invited competition?

DM_ There are a lot of invited competitions. I think we are not that much in favour of competitions but we have to do them. And I think that half of our projects – maybe a little bit more, about 60 per cent – are based on competitions. But I think, as you probably know, that it's not always the best work that wins and it's a lot nicer to work directly with the client.

AS_ In how many competitions do you take part per year? Can you say that?

DM_ Yes, I think last year we did 12 or 13, which is too many. Definitely.

RR_ And how many do you win?

DM_ Yes, and that's the problem, right? [laughing] We don't have a score. When we do 12, we win two or three at the maximum.

AS_ That's great!

DM_ Thank you! [all laughing]

RR_ Yes, that sounds good! [all laughing] Good ratio! Some architects decline going in for competitions. They say they don't want to go into this scenario of competing against each other or in public. And in open competitions, hundreds of teams are competing. And, as we know, when others win we always think it's like the lowest common denominator and when we win, we think it's the best project of course. [laughing] But you obviously choose this way saying, we go into these competitions to get work.

DM_ We also do open competitions. Do you?

RR_ Day and night! Only competitions!

DM_ I think there is something happening, and this is really boring, there is something happening with the invited competitions now, especially under EU laws: you have to produce so much evidence and documentation. So last year we started going back to open competitions because they are more right on the architectural quality and not so much on doing all the documentation. Seems that you are using half your time on documenting that you

keep the budget or you keep the heat loss reports and all these kind of things. We are doing invited competitions, of course, but we also try to do at least 2 or 3 open competitions per year because it relaxes you.

AS_ For bigger competitions, do you also do projects in cooperation with other offices?

DM_ Yes, we do. Right now we have a competition in Norway, where we have a collaboration with a regional office. I think sometimes, when you work in different countries, you need to collaborate with a local architect or another good office in the country in which you are working because it gives you a lot back. Actually, we had this idea like 10 years ago that we should try to make these smaller office collaborations where you keep on working in different countries and you can make these kind of loose teams. Because this is kind of a fun way of also keeping the small ambitious offices somehow together. So you don't always compete with the larger ones or another type of office.

AS_ To have a network of smaller offices to also realise bigger projects.

RR_ It's again a social issue, you know, the kind of connecting and working together with other offices, setting up a group of people.

DM_ I think there could definitely be some advantages in trying to connect closer to related offices around Europe because, I mean, we might be competitors, but first of all,

I think we are competing against very large corporations. It is getting very corporate. Maybe not so much here, but in Scandinavia the offices grow a lot and you have more corporate offices and you know, the clients want to have large offices because then they think that they are more sure on their projects. So we are not competing with the same related offices, we are rather competing with the corporate offices, right?

RR_ Who are the people running these competitions in your office? Are they the architects themselves or also the young ones, the students helping you?

DM_ Right now we are doing competitions with me and one or two architects and then the rest are interns, which is of course quite straining because you don't have a big professional team. But it's also a lot of fun, I would say. It takes a lot of work.

RR_ So would you also take on students from Graz?

DM_ Yes, for what I've seen here. [laughing]

RR_ Ok, so we have got this organised with the jobs. [all laughing] Dorte, I think we have gone through a lot of topics, went really into detail. It was also, what I noticed, a really speedy talk we have been producing here, maybe also do to your architecture and the way you are working. It's nice, this actually came across quite well. So thank you very much for joining in this evening here and spending this evening with us. Thank you.



DM_ Thank you very much.

RR_ So, November is done and next year hopefully we will be here again. I must express my special thanks to the team helping me here at the institute, the student assistants doing the organisation and support; things you don't really notice, and when you don't notice them than you know it's done really well. Also the assistants joining the discussions and especially Marcus I have to thank for co-organising and supporting the whole series. And then, last but not least, I want to express my special thanks to the Sto-Foundation who made these evenings possible, who brought the people here with their generous support. Thank you very much.

Bernard Khoury_Beirut

Bernard Khoury studied architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design. He received a Masters in Architectural Studies from Harvard University. Bernard Khoury was invited to teach design studios in several architecture schools, including L'Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, L'Ecole Speciale d'Architecture in Paris and the American University of Beirut. He has lectured and exhibited his work in prestigious academic institutions in Europe and the US including a solo show of his work given by the International Forum for Contemporary Architecture at the Aedes gallery in Berlin (2003) and numerous group shows including YOUprison at the Fondazione Sandretto in Torino (2008) and SPACE at the opening show of the MAXXI museum in Rome (2010). Bernard Khoury started an independent practice in 1993. Over the past 20 years, his office has developed an international reputation and a significant diverse portfolio of projects both locally and abroad.

www.bernardkhoury.com

Shim-Sutcliffe_Toronto

Brigitte Shim and Howard Sutcliffe formed their Toronto based design practice Shim-Sutcliffe Architects in 1994 exploring their shared interest in and passion for the integration and intertwining of the scales of architecture, landscape and furniture. Shim Sutcliffe's interest in materials such as weathering steel, concrete, water and wood interlocked and engaged with the natural and urban landscape creating rich spatial experiences moving fluidly from inside to outside. Simultaneously, their urban work addresses the intensification and the revitalization of our city centres including its often neglected laneways and back alleys. Shim Sutcliffe's built work probes and rethinks the evolving role of light, landscape and water.

www.shim-sutcliffe.com

Jonathan Sergison_London

Jonathan Sergison graduated from the Architectural Association in 1989 and gained professional experience working for David Chipperfield and Tony Fretton. Together with Stephen Bates, he established Sergison Bates Architects in 1996. The practice works at different scales and their projects range from urban planning to public buildings and housing in the UK and abroad. In 2006, they were awarded the Heinrich Tessenow and the Erich Schelling Medals for Architecture, and many of their buildings have won recognition, including three RIBA Awards.

Having taught at a number of prestigious schools of architecture, Jonathan Sergison is currently Professor of Architectural Design at the Accademia di Architettura at Mendrisio, Switzerland. In addition to his academic commitments, he lectures and writes on architecture.

www.sergisonbates.co.uk

Dorte Mandrup_Copenhagen

Dorte Mandrup Arkitekter ApS is an international practice, based in Copenhagen, Denmark, founded by Dorte Mandrup in 1999. Dorte Mandrup Arkitekter engages in a wide variety of projects; cultural institutions, buildings for children and youth, sports facilities, education, housing, office buildings and master plans, as well as renovation and alteration of Federally Listed historical buildings.

The visionary methods of Dorte Mandrup Arkitekter are based on thorough analysis of every parameter involved in the brief. On this foundation, new materials, constructions and variation of space are investigated.

The office seeks to combine the tactile and poetic experience of space with conceptual clarity and accuracy, in both large scale schemes and in detail.

www.dortemandrup.dk

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