

TU/e Architecture

Philosophy in Architecture

Code: 7X700

Lecturer: Dr. Jacob Voorthuis

Email: J.C.T.Voorthuis@bwk.tue.nl

Website: www.voorthuis.net & studyweb

Credits: 3 ECTS which translates into 84 dedicated study hours

When: 3rd quarter 2009-2010 on Mondays 5th and 6th period (13:45-15:30)

Where: Auditorium 7

Assignment deadline: 03-05-2010

Course Description

Architecture is the product of two relatively autonomous creative processes meeting in the architectural *event*. The architectural event is the moment someone undergoes a building through use of it. First of all there is the prescriptive process of design and the making of space. These two coupled processes prescribe the qualities sought in the final work by use of designs and techniques of making. Then, as a second creative mechanism necessary for the creation of the architectural event there is the bodily undergoing of a building, the bodily experience of the architectural event. This could be seen as a descriptive creativity. One improves one's undergoing of a building, through spatial exercise and the practice of one's judgment. To extend one's awareness of the architectural experience is in fact a form of virtual designing and making. It is a redesigning and remaking of the building *in one's experience*. The fact that they meet in the middle is useful as the one can learn from the other. Comparing notes makes our approach to the design task more sophisticated and more fluently aligned to the way people have found ways to use and experience spaces. What is the role of philosophy in this?

Immanuel Kant asked himself three basic questions: What do we know? How should we act? And, what do we dare hope for? Taken together these questions explore the architect's engagement with society and her power to design well. After all, the architect makes things that order our world. Making and ordering is done on the basis of our experience, on the basis of what we think we know. We undertake these activities with the idea that it is right that we do things in this way and finally, we do it in the hope that something good will come of it. The project of philosophy is essentially architectural, a fact that was not lost on Kant. The philosopher describes, through simulation, the landscape of reality as best as he can. On this he builds his house of thought, which has to be firm, beautiful and accommodating. In that house he designs the machinery of his actions. At the same time the architect is someone who makes our image of the world habitable simply by making her. This course seeks to explore the intimate

relationship between architecture and philosophy by examining the grounds of our ability to judge designs and justify design decisions from the perspectives of four of the main philosophical movements of the twentieth century: phenomenology, pragmatism, existentialism and transcendental empiricism. Each lecture will be concerned with the presentation of a biography of a thought-string. Sometimes a specific problem will take centre stage at other times a thinker or a movement. During each lecture we shall be looking at three things: the landscape or context in which the thinking takes place, the architecture of the thought and the mechanics of action that the thought appears to suggest. All this with reference to concrete examples from the world of design in architecture.

Purpose

Through the concrete examination and critique of specific buildings, designs and urban agglomerations from the perspective of these four philosophical movements, the student will, at the end of the course, be in a position to place their own efforts in design and design thinking within an increasingly refined and well-practised frame of reference, helping him to make considered design decisions within social space and thereby undertake and undergo the odyssey of the design process with greater awareness.

At the end of the course students will be able to:

- Describe the most significant philosophical movements of the twentieth century as they relate to design in architecture and use the resultant insights to help them in the criticism of designs and the critique of design decisions.
- Describe the relevant concepts used by these philosophical movements and apply them in the formulation of a personal position relative to design in architecture and its role in society.
- Place the examples used during the course in their chronological, geographical and cultural context.
- Use the history of architecture and philosophy as design tools through comparative analysis of designs situated within their social, cultural, economic and technical context.
- Analyze epistemological, perceptual, aesthetic and ethical problems and relate them to specific themes in architecture such as, for example, the relation between the body, space and time.
- Formulate specific research questions which can be investigated using literature as well as concrete examples from the built environment in order to form a thoroughly argued personal attitude to the design process.
- Perform research according to the accepted criteria of scholarship.

Program

The program consists of 8 lectures whereby architecture is looked at with a philosophical focus. Taken together, these lectures constitute something of an odyssey along a set of useful concepts.

| # | Date | Title/Theme |
|---|-------|--|
| 1 | 01-02 | Praxis & Theorein: a role for philosophy in architecture |
| 2 | 08-02 | Phenomenology: the spatial body |

| | | |
|---|-------|---|
| | 08-02 | Hand in essay proposal: subject and 1st version of th research question |
| | 15-02 | Carnaval, no lecture |
| 3 | 22-02 | The spatial body part II |
| 4 | 01-03 | R-evolution & territorium: the thing, the machine and I |
| 5 | 08-03 | Utopia – Heterotopia: Place and its relation to being there |
| 6 | 15-03 | An ontology of use, a metaphysics of finding |
| 7 | 22-03 | An ontology of use, part II |
| 8 | 29-03 | Style: background vs. foreground and the making of an entity |
| | 03-05 | Hand-in assignment |

Assignment

The purpose of an essay is to form a carefully deliberated and well argued attitude to a chosen subject. For the purposes of this essay that means that students are invited to formulate a specific research question on the basis of a thorough study of two substantial pieces of literature which can be brought in relation to each other at the hand of a concrete example.

The assignment is intended to allow you to explore your own fascinations in architecture and to begin preparing for your final year. The most important part of this module is to learn to formulate a well-crafted research question. A research question begins by being general but should end up being quite specific. It acquires this specificity as you become familiar with your chosen subject and begin to realize which direction you are taking. When you hand in your essay proposal you will not be expected to have formulated the final version of your research question. In its final form a good research question gives the subject you have chosen to research as well as the means and the angle you have adopted.

The purpose of the exercise is to learn to use research and argument this in the formulation of a well considered design strategy.

Game rules

You begin by choosing a subject (a word, a concept, a privileged theme in either philosophy or architecture, see the list below). The recommended literature can help here, but you are encouraged to explore new paths. The choice of possible subjects is enormous. You can choose for an extremely abstract subject. Or you can choose to investigate a well known and important relationship (such as the relationship between Music and architecture for instance, but you can also choose words that are used regularly within the architectural debate: the notion of place, the idea of symmetry, chaos, harmony, climate, light etc. You do not have to chose a philosophical theme, I would rather you look at an architectural theme from a philosophical point of view.

Once you have chose your subject and begin to sharpen the angle you might want to take, try to find literature that is relevant to your chose subject. This is the divergent part of your research as there is a lot of interesting stuff out there. In the end you must choose no more than two books or substantial articles as well as a concrete example with which you will be able to illustrate your arguments.

The essay is the convergent part. That has to focus on your research question and develop a well considered view on the subject, your view. I want an essay of no more than 3000 words. The research question has to be carefully formulated and given right at the beginning of the essay. The essay should document all used sources properly according to current bibliographic norms.

If you require help in setting up an essay go to my website www.voorthuis.net a consult the *guide to reading and writing*.

Hand-in requirements

On 08.02.2010 the student is required to hand in an *essay proposal* digitally (no more than half an A4) stating your chosen subject, the reason you are interested in the subject, and a first tentative version of your research question. This will be printed out by me and discussed with you during one of the discussion sessions after each week's lecture.

For the final assignment I would like an essay of 3000 words to be submitted both as a pdf *and* a hardcopy. The pdf can be submitted online (instructions will follow). The hardcopy is to be deposited in my pigeonhole on floor 7. The deadline for submission is given at the top of this document. After the essays have been marked they can be collected from the secretary's office on floor 7. All essays handed in on time will receive feedback by email. Essays handed in late will be marked but will start at the bottom of the pile and will not receive feedback. Sloppily presented or incomplete work will not be marked. Any evidence of plagiarism will be passed on to the Office of Education on floor 2.

If you fail the assignment you are free to resubmit the same essay within a reasonable stretch of time, correcting the essay by taking into account the feedback you have been given.

All assignments handed in after 30 June 2010 (including resubmissions) will not be marked. Your right to a mark is thereby forfeited and you will have to redo the course next year.

Your mark

I shall assess and grade your essays according to four main criteria:

- **completeness** (has the assignment been completed according to the above specifications?)
- **commitment and professionalism** (has the student worked diligently and with enthusiasm?)
- **perceptiveness and understanding** (Is the student able to form and argue his own position relative to the material? Is the student able to describe and compare concepts from a specific standpoint? Is the student able to place that standpoint in a broader context?)
- **verifiability and documentation** (have enough sources been consulted and have these been properly documented according to internationally accepted standards?)

I can of course always be reached by email: j.c.t.voorthuis@bwk.tue.nl. If you need to speak to me privately I can usually be found in my office 7.32

Recommended Literature:

Mallgrave, H.F., (ed.), (2006 & 2008) Architectural Theory Vol. 1 & 2, Blackwell

Leach, N., (ed.), (1997) *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, Routledge.

Nesbitt, K., (ed.), (1996) *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture, An Anthology of Architectural Theory, 1965-1995*, Princeton Architectural Press

Heynen, H., (ed.), (2001) *Dat is Architectuur, Sleutelteksten uit de twintigste eeuw*, 010 Rotterdam.

Hays, M., (ed.), (2000), *Architecture Theory since 1968*, MIT.

Thoenes, C., (et. al.), (eds.), (2003) *Architectural Theory from the Renaissance to the Present*, Taschen

Engel, H., & Claessens, F., (eds.) (2008) *Wat is architectuur? Architectuurtheoretische verkenningen*, Sun.

Mallgrave, H.F., (2005) *Modern Architectural Theory, A Historical Survey 1673-1968*, Cambridge Univ. Press.

Kruft, H.W., (1994) *A History of Architectural Theory, From Vitruvius to the Present*, Princeton Architectural Press

Specific Subjects

Ballantyne, A., (2007) *Deleuze & Guattari for Architects*, Routledge.

Sharr, A., (2007) *Heidegger for Architects*, Routledge.

Blattner, W., (2006), *Heidegger's Being and Time*, Continuum.

Damasio, A., (2003), *Looking for Spinoza, Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain*, Harcourt.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F., (1987), *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, transl. Brian Massumi, Univ. Of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Johnson, M., (2007), *The Meaning of the Body*, Chicago Univ. Press, Chicago.

Lefebvre, H., (1991), *The production of space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith (transl.) Blackwell, Malden.

Wenzel, C.H., (2005) *An introduction to Kant's Aesthetics, Core Concepts and Problems*, Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken.

