art + city

a comprehensive design studio led by THA Architecture

How should an established cultural institution continue its expansion in a complex urban environment? Should existing buildings be repurposed or replaced? How can this development best serve art (the institution) and the city (the community)? And what programmatic uses best speak to Portland’s future?

Portland Art Museum (PAM) occupies two full city blocks and is interested in the development opportunities of a third block in its ownership to the immediate north. The property includes surface parking, a historic residential structure and the Northwest Film Academy. Students will construct their own program for a dense, urban, mixed-use development on this site. All projects will include a housing component, education component and active uses at the street frontages. Possible uses could include expanded museum functions, film school or other educational uses, retail sales, or food-related commercial activities. The housing component could range from luxury condominiums to micro housing, student housing or even an urban shelter.

This COMPREHENSIVE STUDIO will be led by Becca Cavell, a Principal with THA Architecture, with shared teaching responsibilities by a second THA staff member. Additional THA staff will attend workshops, mid-terms, and final reviews; THA’s preferred consultant partners including structural engineers, landscape architects and mechanical engineers will be invited to engage with students in focused workshops.

In addition to creating meaningful site and building design proposals for a complex urban site, students will be asked to pay close attention to building systems and enclosure through integrated design.

Preparations: Fall Term 2013

All students are required to enroll in the associated Fall 2013 seminar (1 credit – 5 meetings). Students will visit relevant projects, meeting with representatives from Portland Art Museum, developers and real-estate experts regarding site development potential.

Students will work collectively to analyze the site and its broader urban setting from multiple viewpoints – historical, cultural and contextual. A review of planning and building code requirements will complement this research, and the group will coordinate to produce a graphically sophisticated report documenting its findings.

Students will consider and present a variety of precedents, and will learn how to develop an effective program; each will propose individual programs based on their opinion of the best use of the site - this will form the foundation of the ensuing terminal studio project.
Investigations: Winter Term 2014

Students will study site and development opportunities related to their personal program statement. Each is required to investigate multiple design options during the first half of the term, in a variety of media and scales. Consideration of a larger urban response is expected, with particular attention given to the PAM building complex; however the major focus will be proposals for the single block occupied by the Film School and Roosevelt Hotel. Adaptive reuse of these buildings is a viable option should students choose this path.

Refinements: Spring Term 2014

The second term will focus on the more technical aspects of design development – integrating structural, mechanical and other systems and deepening the students’ focus on materials and detail. A well developed site approach for the entire block is also required. The “high performance building” designs will incorporate meaningful sustainable strategies.

Studio Culture: Collaborative Process

The learning culture for the THA studio is structured to provide a varied environment that encourages group conversation within the studio and engages professionals outside of it. Elegant and successful solutions address both social and environmental factors, while simultaneously serving the building use, generating building form, and enhancing the spirit of the project. One goal of this course is to address the design process including some of the later decisions that influence projects.

Becca Cavell AIA is a principal with THA Architecture in Portland, Oregon. Cavell’s work focuses on buildings in the public realm; she frequently leads the visioning and programming phases for THA’s clients. Cavell has taught as adjunct faculty at UO since 2006. Contact Becca at 503.227.1254 w, 503.593.2751 m, or bcavell@thaarchitecture.com