“Soft Urban Waterfronts”

Re-Imagining Urban Waterfronts in the context of climate change and environmental stewardship.

Introduction

This is a preparatory research seminar for students enrolled in the Advanced Architectural Design Studio, Winter + Spring 2115. The course is open to other students in the Department of Architecture and other fields of the University.

The seminar has two objectives:

▪ To serve as a forum to investigate and discuss environmentally-restorative urban waterfronts.

▪ For students enrolled in the Thesis studio, to support individual project research, preparation of a thesis statement, and documentation of a design program.

    Conceptual and philosophical foundations of the design project.

    Historical and contemporary precedents.
Documentation of the urban context, site and program.

Preparation of the urban context and site analysis

Preparation of a thesis statement and design program.

Themes and Emphasis of the Seminar and Thesis Studio

Two strong themes of emphasis will serve as a foundation for the seminar and studio:

1. “Expansive Thinking”. You are encouraged to think, frame your research and engage in design that transcends a single building and site, as well as a familiar building typology.

   - Documentation of the *regional* environmental context of your project and determine its influences on the design thesis.

   - Development of a master plan and urban design framework plan for the larger urban context of the project. This can be accomplished by a charrette, teamwork or workshop. This step starts Fall term and continues Winter term.

   - You are encouraged to look well into the future, not be limited by what can be built today. Cities and architecture are changing rapidly. Anticipate change through your project. This does not mean you should develop a fantasy. Your vision should be based on solid and creative research about the future.

2. “Environmental Stewardship and Restoration”. What environmentally restorative measures and strategies are possible with the project and larger vision for the context?

   Insensitive urban development fouled and destroyed most urban waterfronts in the developed world during the past 150 years. It will likely take a century or more to heal these wounds to cities and the earth. We need starting points and your project can be a step in this direction.

   The restoration may be as modest as the recent Newark, New Jersey riverfront restoration, or it may be regional in scope such as the IBA Emscher Park in the German Ruhr. These precedents and other projects will be investigated and discussed in the seminar.

   Strategies and technologies of waterfront restoration will be studied. This will include guest speakers and discussion with the City of Portland’s Environmental Services Bureau.

Seminar Format

The seminar format is a mix of instructor lectures, readings, class discussions and student presentations. The instructor develops the organizational framework for the seminar, presents selected topics in lecture-discussions, and critiques student work.
Seminar Products

- For students enrolled in the Thesis Studio, the primary assignment of the term is the “Thesis Statement and Design Program” document. This is an illustrated monograph that thoroughly documents your research, thesis background and design program for your project.

- For students not enrolled in the studio, a final illustrated research paper will be completed.

- During the term, teams of students will make class presentations to the seminar and lead discussion of topics.

Instructor

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Gerry Gast is an architect and urban designer, member of the University of Oregon Portland Architecture faculty, and Visiting Associate Professor in the Program on Urban Studies at Stanford University, where he has taught for twenty years. He is a founding principal of Gast-Hillmer Urban Design in California.

Current and recent projects include design of the new Stryiskyi Park campus for the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, Ukraine; and the urban design component of the General Plan for the City of Redwood City, California. Firm webpage:  www.Gast-Hillmer.com

Professor Gast directs graduate research projects and community outreach through the Portland Urban Projects Workshop of the University of Oregon Portland Architecture Program. For information, go to:  http://architecture.uoregon.edu/content/portland-urban-projects-workshop

Research interests focus on recent seminal and controversial urban design work, including a comparative study of projects in Vancouver, Baltimore, Berlin, the German Ruhr, Barcelona and Curitiba, Brazil.