"Transforming Urbanism: Identifying the Sustaining Patterns Found within Istanbul’s Street Spaces"

Introduction to this part of Istanbul, the Studio Focus, and the notion of several interior and exterior components of the city ...

The focus of this studio design project is on the important multi-use district in Istanbul called Beyoglu (said, Bay-oh-lu), which is located across the Golden Horn waterway, opposite the well-known Old City. This densely developed hilly district is dominated by an almost two kilometer long pedestrian avenue called Istiklal, which serves a very diverse population with largely secular activities. The avenue links several neighborhoods originally settled in the 1700’s when the area expanded beyond the land of the earlier Genoese merchant colony, and became a haven for people of many nationalities and employments. Today, its history continues along the avenue shaped like a bent arm, with many types of establishments tucked behind or inside the side streets and alleyways adjacent. Here, embassies, consulates, residences, hotels, cinemas, music venues, churches, mosques, restaurants, cafes, arts organizations, clubs, book publishers and people of varied backgrounds, co-mingle.

The dynamic and unusual conditions of use in this area of Istanbul represent a thorough mix of eastern and western traditions and activities, while also allowing for freedom and open-ness. Different religions and political beliefs
appear to share space where they would not normally be welcome. The truly diverse set of individuals and groups—from the modern and chic, to the everyday worker, visitor, tourist and bureaucrat—are encouraged at any time of day or night, to be a part of the daily pulsation of tens of hundreds of people passing through and becoming immersed in different aspects of “street space.”

Our studio project, “Transforming Urbanism: Identifying the Sustaining Patterns Found within Istanbul’s Street Spaces” will be centered on the “notion of passage or passing through the city,” and how infill architecture aids the formation of a continuous urban environment, thus contributing to the literal and figural movement of a city.

Istiklal Avenue is bordered by mostly six-storey buildings constructed primarily in the late 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, with additions and later infills built in the 20th C. that continue today. The real estate is either made of tall, narrow contained buildings or large blocks that are a mix of neo-classical or oriental styles, European Art Nouveau, mid-century Turkish Modern or a hodge-podge of anonymous contemporary façade designs. Yet several buildings, from the early 19th C. through to today, have been designed to accommodate or create spaces inside or between them, with different-sized internal carved-like spaces that serve as light ways and passages within multiple entries and exits. These geçit (said, gech-it) and the more widely used “pasaj” (said with the French pronunciation, pah-saj), describe an unusual set of spaces that link different streets, avenues and city parts together. They are what I call “hidden interior architectural potentials,” and are to be part of the focus of the design studio.

**Studio Topical and Theoretical Study, Methods and Travel Option**

The studio “Transforming Urbanism: Identifying the Sustaining Patterns Found within Istanbul’s Street Spaces” was proposed to allow for all students to have the ability to work on an international design project in a region many do not visit or know a lot about. Students have the option to travel to Istanbul (with some financial aid, for approximately one week with the instructor) to gain new and unique study and experiences prior to the start of the studio. Yet, the trip is not required in order to participate fully in the studio, as everyone will research the same material and do the same project. Students will also be engaged in making a public exhibition and will have publication opportunities, plus continued possibilities for research study beyond the studio.

We will ask questions about the global nature of Istanbul’s streets in Beyoğlu, and look to explain the sustaining urban patterns that define the internal passages. The design studio will take this information as a starting point, and students will propose new public internal spaces that address global and local trends and issues central to Istanbul, to begin to rectify the notion of an eastern and western divide. The experimental nature of the studio project will encourage students to take on several issues concerning current local and global trends and debates, to inform their designs. Other related topics and questions will be identified and researched by the students to generate methods for specific design project considerations. For example:

- **Ongoing world events in Middle East and its relation to the west, the specific image and representation of Istanbul as a world city, and the specific local events that began with the Gezi Park “occupy” this past summer, make investigating this place and discerning the local and global contexts important and timely. How and why does the Middle East and Turkey come into the American consciousness through news accounts, economics and religious issues? Why it is important for a designer to understand cultures different than one’s own?**
- **What public urban patterns can be assessed and used to sustain new urban space possibilities?**
- **How do we assess and understand what is authentically of a place and what is hybrid in design, style and use? What does urban form and specific design mean by “exhibiting” both local and outside influences and embedded auras in the built environment?**
- **To expand one’s design knowledge, how do designers assess cities like Istanbul and begin to understand how economics and politics affect the use of space in the city?**
- **What is the living potential of urban infill and adaptive reuse sites to sustain the urban city development?**
How can we study a large and dense city like Istanbul to understand change in the city over time? What is local and what is prototypical or appropriate? And in general, how do we assess urban quality?

Finally, what will the new designs utilize to bring people together? Students will be encouraged to consider experimental cross-sectional gestures with technologies, light and materials to bring global awareness...

**Draft Quick Schedule and Outcomes for Winter Studio 2014**

**Pre-studio Istanbul Tour/Study in December** (dates December 13/14-21 2013 – 7 days and nights)

**Week 1&2:** Virtual Visit/Re-visit to the city of Istanbul, Lectures and Researching the city, streets and other assessments through a series of real mapping and theoretical/suggestive readings and then discussion on the “aura” of the city, research on the history and contemporary populations and ways to “measure” Istanbul, and how “passage of people” affects the city; Student Graphic, Modeling and other Presentations.

**Week 3:** Proposing use: Programs for newly identified design problems, such “public meeting” of various types: discussing politics, arts organizations, commercial trade, secular and religious issues...Design begins in earnest.

**Week 4&5:** Pin-Ups with Models and other drawn and made media; Designing continues.

**Week 6:** Mid-Review in PDX with architectural faculty, professionals and Portland State University Turkish Studies/Middle East Center representatives.

**Week 7&8&9:** Designing Continues with laser cut 3D models and other mixed media collage for designs; Pin-Ups will be assigned.

**Week 9&10:** Documenting/Designing/Presenting a beautiful Exhibition format showing a range of media (from photographic and diagrammatic communications to models and more) used to explain Istanbul’s newest urban infills. Final Review in Week 10.

**Week 11:** Exit Interviews with each student; Final combining of exhibition Booklet for Publication, as required. Exhibition to be shown in Eugene in the beginning of Spring Term.

**A Small Selection of Research and Bibliography (subject to change)**

- Insurance Maps such as Goad (1904-06), Alman Mavileri (1913-14), Pervititch (1922-45), and others.
- Geist, J. (1979/83) Arcades, the History of a Building Type, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA