Helsinki South Harbour: Kirjava Satama

South Harbour’s Open International Ideas Competition
http://www.southharbour.fi/kilpailu

2012 Winter/Spring ARCH 485/586, ARCH 585/586 • James Tice

Introduction
This studio will focus on the South Harbour of Helsinki, Finland, the historic center of the city and a thriving urban district characterized by a wide variety of activities and places. The South Harbour is Helsinki’s marine national landscape and has functioned since the end of the 17th century as a port and quay area neighboring the city center. Today the South Harbour features public markets, plazas, parks, impressive civic buildings, modern master works by Aalto and others and a working port for ferries and cruise ships all of which tie into its expansive setting as it faces out to the Baltic Sea. The South Harbour’s strategic location, symbolic and historic significance and its continuing commercial and civic vitality underscores its centrality to the health of the city and its future development.

Challenge
The challenge that faces the development of the harbour centers on the harbour’s dual roles: first as an honorific, symbolic and “people” center of the city which a strong focus on recreation and second as a working port with concomitant demands for services and infrastructure which support its many activities--primarily those related to the thriving cruise and ferry operations on its edges. This latter condition creates a barrier between the city and its greatest natural asset: the harbour itself.

The Helsinki City Planning Department is sponsoring an ideas competition to address this challenge. The call is for an urban design that integrates the many different demands on the district into a coherent, sustainable urban whole. In the words of the organizers:

The entrants’ task is to prepare a comprehensive ideas plan for the South Harbour. The purpose of the ideas competition is to produce versatile and extensive documentation to be used as a basis for the future development of the South Harbour.

Fall Term
The competition entries are due on September 30 and so the studio will not directly participate in this first urban design phase but students may enter and are encouraged to do so. During the Fall Term the studio will review, analyze and critique the various submissions from the competition with the objective of learning about the site and the several approaches taken. These reviews will be informal in nature and will be slated for three sessions; more specific information and requirements will be posted in September. Students may opt to apply for independent research credit during this phase; all students are required to participate.

Winter Term
In teams of 3 and 4 students will be asked to design a comprehensive urban design for the South Harbour as well as identifying possible “micro-sites” for specific building programs and interventions. These may include, but are not limited to: an aquarium, winter garden, visitors’ center, hotel, mixed-use development and a variety of recreational uses. After this phase students will be asked to individually design their selected building type on its site in consultation with the critic. It is envisaged that by term’s end a preliminary architectural design will emerge which will set the stage for the more focused building design phase in the Spring Term.

Spring Term
Students will be required to develop their project in depth and at multiple scales considering aesthetic and tectonic requirements achieving a design that is both “integrative and comprehensive.”