What If? The Greening of Rome

Arch 485/486 and 585/586 Spring/Winter 2011

Strongly recommended prerequisite in preparation for this studio will be the Fall Seminar, The Micro-Urbanism of Rome.

The terminal studio project goals will be:

• to study Rome and its historic ties to the Tiber
• to articulate architectural, landscape and urban design solutions that reintegrate the river and the city's built fabric into a new vision for the Greening of Rome

This studio asks how could Rome benefit if its river edges were freed of their 19th century encrustations and the Tiber was conceived as natural asset rather than as threat. This project proposes to establish a framework in which students can explore Rome’s historic ties to the Tiber in order to study how the latent potential of the river and its relationship to the city can be re-imagined in new and creative ways using modern technologies and at the same time incorporating sustainable principles of design. The project posits that we can learn from Rome—both its successes and failures—and that these lessons can be relevant to how we approach our cities and their rivers today, in Oregon and beyond.

Major Considerations and Methods

The studio will be held in Spring and Winter Terms of 2011. As described above, it will focus on possible architectural and landscape interventions along the Tiber that will result in a
building/landscape proposal of considerable complexity. Typologically the sites to be explored fall into the following categories:

“hard infrastructure” including bridges, roads, river walls and buildings related to the river’s architectural and urban context

“soft and ephemeral infrastructure” including landscape elements such as gardens, earthworks, water features, river ferries, water mills and the like related directly to the city’s natural eco systems

“hybrid infrastructure” combining elements of the above

The actual sites and program will be chosen by students based on their investigations in the Fall Seminar and the early part of the Winter Term and in consultation with the instructor. Through an iterative, design analytical process, the topics to be explored are:

- Sustainable building and landscape interventions in the context of the city and the river
- Hydrological, geological and environmental imperatives
- Determining activities along the water’s edge that invest the city in its natural setting including: pathways and public space for celebrations, navigation and recreation
- Contextual design, ensuring that solutions capitalize on the genius loci and also explore its latent potential

The teaching method will involve team collaboration in the initial phases of the investigation followed by more independent work as the terms’ progress. A distinct set of design exercises that treat precedents and environmental concerns will be incorporated into the studio as design charrettes. The analytical phase will rely on ArcGis software tools by ESRI, the professional standard for topographic investigations. Students will be introduced to cartographic methodologies such as “geo-referencing” and “geo-rectifying” in order to build robust geo-databases that relate cartographic information to 3-D visuals. Other analytical graphic and visualization techniques that rely on digital technologies and hand media will be integrated into the design process. It will be the student’s primary mission to identify sites and design strategies that can promote the Tiber as a vital force in the contemporary city.

References:
Canevari, Raffaele, *Studi per la sistemazione del Tevere nel tronco entro Rome*, Roma, 1875
*Aquae Urbis Romae: the Waters of the City of Rome* at [http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/waters](http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/waters)
The Interactive Nolli Map Website at [http://nolli.uoregon.edu/](http://nolli.uoregon.edu/)
Giuseppe Vasi’s Grand Tour of Rome Website at: [http://vasi.uoregon.edu/](http://vasi.uoregon.edu/)