Description

The last century of American architecture, as typically presented in museums and history books, is one of singular buildings and singular figures. Yet, a parallel history exists of largely under-examined buildings designed by US architects here and around the world. Under the guise of mass production, standardization and efficiency, this work has played an authoritative role in establishing the fundamentals of architecture today, quietly exporting ideological, social and material forms to every continent and culture. This seminar will examine the work of American architectural offices over the last 100 years (1914-2014) at 10 different scales.

The course will operate under the premise that 1000 of such projects will be collected and displayed at the 2014 Venice Biennale. We will respond to Rem Koolhaas’ provocation that the Biennale be “about architecture, not architects,” and to explore his claim that modernism has produced the “erasure of national characteristics in favour of the almost universal adoption of a single modern language in a single repertoire of typologies.”

Structure

During the first half of the semester, I will begin the discussion with a slide talk, after which two students will lead a discussion of the readings, incorporating 10 examples of architectural projects relevant to the weeks’ topic. All readings will be posted on the carmen class site. Students should come to class each week having completed the readings prior to classtime and should be prepared to discuss the material. The last few weeks of the semester are reserved for student project presentations for review and feedback prior to final grading. Enrollment is limited to 15 students.

Requirements

Students will research and thoroughly document 10 projects at a single scale (to be approved by the instructor) and make an argument for their inclusion in the archive that includes a short text and examples of its dissemination. Full documentation requirements to be issued in class on September 19, but will include plans, sections, images, a digital model, scans of publications, and full bibliographical information.

Grading

20% class led discussion, 20% Assignment 1, 10% class participation
50% final project (based on in-class presentation and final submission)

Schedule

August 22  Introduction
August 29  Modernism and Modernity
September 5  Modernity and globalization from mass-production to junkspace
September 12  Small Assignment 1: 200 projects: 100 years due
September 19  Medium
September 26  Export design and the US Office, Session with A.J. Montero, NBBJ
October 3  Large
October 10  X-Large
October 17  Student Presentations
October 24  Student presentations
October 31  No Class
November 7  Student presentations
November 14  Student presentations
November 21  FINAL REVIEW week, no class
December 5  Final projects Due