DIPLOMATIC ECOLOGIES
A US EMBASSY IN LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

"Defense technology has evolved mostly as a response to improvements in the ability of the offense to pierce through material obstacles. When the mobile siege cannon was first deployed (ca 1494), the high walls of medieval castles were its first victim. High walls, originally designed to make climbing harder, presented ideal targets for the new weapons. Accordingly, defense through height gave way to a new concept: defense-in-depth (several layers of low walls and ditches) and geometric designs which allowed the defenders of a fortress to submit its attackers to a powerful crossfire. Four centuries later, the offense created a radically new vehicle...the aerial bomber. As a response to this new means of communicating destruction, the fortified walls mutated again, in effect "dematerializing" to become the electronic curtain of radar.- Manuel Delanda

I make three classes: disguise (fancy dress), where the animal passes itself off as belonging to another species: camouflage (allocryptic, homochromatic, disruptive colors, homotypes), by means of which the animal is able to blend into its background: intimidation, where the animal paralyses or frightens its enemy (or its prey) without this terror being justified by a corresponding danger.--Roger Callois, Mask of Medusa

The embassy as we know it today, in form and in function, is a distinctively modern typology. The creation of an outpost of one government in the capital of another for the purposes of facilitating political exchange is the product of a globalized world. As that world has changed over the last 100 years, so has diplomacy and its physical manifestation, the embassy. From the re-purposing of existing aristocratic residences that provided living quarters, entertaining spaces and modest chancery offices to today's SED compound, the embassy has transformed into a complex, multi-purpose program occupied by multiple (sometimes conflicting) domestic interests, before even considering external relations and security issues resulting from its location in a foreign site.

Since the bombing of the Beirut Embassy in 1983, security concerns have become the primary consideration in embassy design. Yet, while the US Department of State's Overseas building Operations (OBO) has implemented ever increasing security measures, attacks on US consulates and embassies have escalated at a greater rate. Although this trend parallels a global increase in terrorist activities, the US stands far ahead of other countries as a target. After two decades of security driven standard design, a new initiative, the Design Excellence program was launched in 2010 reviving a debate between inherently conflicting desires of stringent security and a message of openness.

In this context, the studio will more broadly consider architectural space of a diplomatic mission in conjunction with OfficeUS, the onsite office operating in the US Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. With the OfficeUS partners, we will study the history of the embassy wall as an urban technique and material technology that operates ecologically.

If ecology is defined as the set of relationships of a particular organism with its environment, this studio casts the architecture of an embassy as an ecology under pressure. The studio will begin by clarifying through research the nature of the organism (the diplomatic mission) and its environment (the host country). At the most elemental level, we will question what is an embassy? What is the image of the US today? What is its diplomatic mission? What program is part of that mission? What role can architecture play in negotiating the familiar and the foreign. How can we address security requirements, and the resultant architectural implications? Using Roger Callois's three ecological strategies of an organism in a hostile environment: disguise, camouflage, and intimidation as inspiration, we with consider potential strategies for rethinking the future of embassy design.
DESIGN OF US DIPLOMACY

Tangier, 1790s: The Sultan of Morocco bequeaths the legation building to the US government. It is the first property the US government owns abroad.

Istanbul, 1907. The US Constantinople legation gained embassy status. Housed since 1882 in the Palazzo Corpi, and built by Italian architect Giacomo Leoni, was acquired by the US Government in a poker game.

Washington DC, 1957: “Overseas the state department accepts the proposition that good architecture is good government,” reads a statement in Architectural Forum, echoing the widespread sentiment at the time. The massive construction of embassies that followed the World War II was fueled in part by foreign credits, most often paid in materials, thus averting lengthy congressional budget discussions.

Beirut, 1983. A suicide bomber attacked the US embassy, killing 63 people, and marked the first anti-US attack planned by Islamic extremists. US embassy security became a critical issue for the Office of Foreign Buildings Operations (FBO). In the aftermath of this attack, the State Department released the Inman Report in 1985, calling for increased security measures and the replacement of 126 out of 226 diplomatic posts worldwide. However, the changes had no effect on the intensity of attacks, and on August 7, 1998, two simultaneous attacks on US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam killed hundreds of people, prompting yet more stringent security measures, and culminating with the three-scaled Standard Embassy Plan. The key aim for this prototype was to meet the stricter security requirements while also reducing costs through common design features and integrated project delivery methods.

In response to the criticism of both the US foreign policy and of the new crop of US embassies, the Department of State launched the Design Excellence Program in early 2011, which revived the conversation about openness versus security in embassy design. It is no surprise that the most passionate expressions of both positive and negative sentiment towards the US involve its embassy architecture. Suffering the symptoms of larger political currents these sites and architectures provide a particularly valuable opportunity to set the tone of future international relationships. What if the architect’s tools went beyond blast resistant walls and isolating buffer zones to include anticipating or even creating change?

This August, in Ferguson, Missouri, civil unrest and tensions were calmed simply by a police officer who changed uniform and walked with protestors. What could we (US) learn from this example? The security issues we are facing are real, yet students will be asked to propose design solutions beyond the known strategies; students must be simultaneously visionary and pragmatic. Students are encouraged to question the negative and regressive strategies of isolation and fortification. Using the primary tool of an architect—design—the studio will focus on how architecture can create positive and innovative changes to how we engage the world and how they perceive US.
In June 1957, at the height of the cold war, while giving an interview on CBS's Face the Nation, the Soviet Party leader Nikita Khrushchev issued an invitation to the United States for an “academic, cultural, and scientific exchange.” After extensive negotiations, an agreement was reached that Russia would exhibit in New York while the US would exhibit in Moscow during the following year. The US Government spent millions of dollars in the USAID program as a form of diplomacy. The resulting American National Exhibition was the site of the famous Kitchen Debate between Nixon and Kruschev, and included a Bucky Fuller designed dome that exhibited Glimpses of the USA, a twelve minute film by Charles and Ray Eames.

Working in pairs, construct a storyboard for Glimpses of the USA today. Consider the narrative, flow and the topics/sections within that flow. Moreover, the film should have a clear bias. What USA will you project? The full film should be 12 minutes, and students should design story boards for at least 24 sets of stills.

Select from list of precedents an embassy to study. In the format of a repository book, present the embassy as a precedent, and include an analysis of the defensive strategies. In particular, the studio should be considering the development of the wall (through all of its layers of thickness), the site plan, and the transformations of the program that has occurred over the course of the last 100 years.

Although each student is responsible for presenting two embassies, the studio as a group should work together to develop an understanding of the transformation of the typology in response to the historically contemporary concerns of its production. You will both present you own, but the studio should present the collection of embassies as a single trajectory in chronological order. The studio should develop a consist methodology to draw and present material, while repository book template on carmen as a starting point. This material will become part of the OfficeUS archive.
PRECEDENT LIST

From the US Foreign Buildings Operations ambitious embassy design program of the 1950s and 1960s to the implementation of the Inman Report in the late 1980s to present day, the US has witnessed an evolution of the embassy typology.

US Embassy in Stuttgart (or Frankfurt) SOM, 1955
US Embassy in New Delhi, Edward Durell Stone, 1958
US Embassy in Oslo, Eero Saarinen, 1959
US Embassy in the Hague, Marcel Breuer 1959
US Embassy in London, Eero Saarinen, 1960
US Embassy in Manilla, Alfred L. Aydelott, 1960
US Embassy in Athens, Walter Gropius, 1961
US Embassy in Baghdad, Josep Lluis Sert, 1961
US Embassy in Dublin, John Johansen, 1964
Australian Embassy in Paris, Harry Seidler, Marcel Breuer, and Pier Luigi Nervi, 1978
US Embassy in Malaysia, Hartman Cox, 1980
US Embassy in Moscow, SOM, 1983
Nordic Embassies in Berlin, Berger and Parkkinnen, 1999
Embassy of the Netherlands, Berlin, OMA 2004
Dutch Embassy in Maputo, Claus en Kaan Architects, 2004
Dutch Embassy in Addis Abada, Bjarne Mastenbroek and Dick Van Gameren, 2005
US Embassy in Berlin, Moore Ruble Yudell 2008
US Embassy in Beijing, SOM, 2008
US Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Integrus, 2010

READINGS


PROGRAM

From the first commissioned US embassy in 1926 to today, the embassy program has evolved continually. While the new security standards outlined in the Inman Report have never fully been implemented, the implementation of a standard design/build model (SED) fixed the form and program of over seventy embassies built in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

As part of the design process for this studio, students should consider contemporary social, political, cultural and technological issues as an opportunity reinventing the embassy for tomorrow. In addition to the program elements noted below, Students should consider the potential for alternative energy systems onsite.

A typical embassy (chancery building) program is approximately 80,000 gross square feet in area and includes other programs within the consular prescinct that can total an additional 160,000sf:

- Chancery (including State Department offices, other federal agencies with a presence in the country, a cafeteria, library and health unit)
- General services office/support buildings
- Parking structure (125 cars)
- TDY lodging facility (temporary duty lodging)
- Consular residence
- Marine security guard quarters (MSGQ)
- Chief of missions residence (CMR)
- Deputy chief of missions residence (DCMR)
- Staff housing
- Compound access control (CAC) facilities (multiple, roughly 2000sf each)
- RSO annex (Regional Security Office)
- Utility building
- Community center
- Shops
- Bathhouse/Cabana
- Vehicular/pedestrian screening facilities
- Public space protected from the elements for waiting.

Typically, 3 entrances (service, consular and main) are provided.

Final Presentation Minimum Requirements (Metric Units)
Plans: 1:200 (All floors, ground floor to include site)
Sections: 1:100 (minimum 2)
Massing Model to fit in Site Model: 1:1000
Model: 1:250
Perspective Renderings: Minimum 2
Diagrams
Outpost reports compiled into a single booklet
SITE

The site is in the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana, between the medieval castle and the park, and in the embassy district. Until 2011, it was the site of the Kolizej, a multi purpose building designed as a residential business and leisure center for the Austro-Hungarian army in the nineteenth century.
SCHEDULE

Week 1: August 27, 29
August 27, Introduction
August 29, Film Screening, Repository Assignment, Begin Site Model

Week 2: September 1, 3, 5
Glimpses of the USA
September 3, Pinup 1: Glimpses of US Storyboards
September 5, Reading Discussion, Repository

Week 3: September 8, 10, 12
Repository Analysis
September 8, Outpost: Repository Report
September 10, Pin-up 2: Repository and Defensive Strategies Timeline

Week 4: September 15, 17, 19
Urban Concept: Disguise, Camouflage, Intimidation
September 17, Pin-up 3, Ljubljana Research and Strategy

Weeks 5 and 6: September 22, 24, 26, 29, October 1,3
Travel weeks
September 23 Depart for Venice and Ljubljana
September 27 Pinup in Venice
October 3, Outpost report: Site (and site model complete)

Week 7: October 6, 8, 10
Urban Interface and Massing

Week 8: October 13, 15, 17
Sections and Envelope
October 13 Outpost report: Envelope-Interface

Week 9: October 20, 22, 24
Midterm
October 22 Midreview

Week 10: October 27, 29, 31
Development
November 27, Baumer Seminar, Studio on October 28
October 31 No Class

Week 11:November 3, 5, 7
Development
November 3, Baumer Seminar
November 7, Pin-up Review

Week 12: November 10, 12, 14
Development
November 10, Out-post report: moving forward

Week 13: November 17, 19, 21
Synthesis, Refinement and Presentation Strategy

Week 14: November 24, 26, 28
Presentation Strategy
November 24 Final Pin-up
November 26, 28 Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15: December 1, 3, 5
Presentation
December 4 Final Review