ARCHITECTONICS OF SILENCE

Knowlton School of Architecture I Ohio State University
Vertical Studio ARCH 3420-4420 I Spring 2014

Instructor: Isabela Gould
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Leong Leong, Door 1, 2012
Edward Clug, Architecture of Silence, 2006

“Now we will count to twelve and we will all keep still.
For once on the face of the earth, let’s not speak in any language; let’s stop for one second, and not move our arms so much.
It would be an exotic moment without rush, without engines; we would all be together in a sudden strangeness.”

From Keeping Quiet, by Pablo Neruda

INTRODUCTION:

The studio proposes an exploration of the notion of “silence”, its tectonic expression and translation into architectural space through a new Center for Meditation, Retreat and Contemplative Arts in Columbus, Ohio.

The first part of the studio will be dedicated to understanding the nature of “silence” by identifying various “situations” through research in form, light and materiality. The second part will unfold with the challenge of designing the new Center for Meditation, Retreat and Contemplative Arts, an agency for social well-being and cultural interaction seeking a quiet refuge in the hectic urban fabric of the city. The ultimate intent is to open a dialogue between architecture and the city, in an attempt to join the practical with the poetic through the development of architectural research and inquiry. A reiterative process of experimentation through drawing and three-dimensional modeling will be used to articulate the translation of conceptual ideas into built form.
BRIEF

The studio will operate on the assumption of a client-architect relationship and within socioeconomic constraints and buildable premises.

Your “client” is the Shambhala Meditation Center of Columbus, a community of people of all ages and walks of life and a place for gathering that offers public meditation, a core curriculum of Shambhala and Buddhist teachings, as well as advanced contemplative practices. Through a range of disciplines built on the core ethic of “wakeful intelligence”, the center aims to provide open meditation space, instruction and a series of programs targeted towards the discovery of compassion and wisdom in everyday life.

The Shambhala Meditation Center of Columbus is currently in the process of developing a new vision for a larger residential contemplative hub, which would not only enlarge and enrich the current operations of the center but would also become an interface for a greater and deeper engagement with the local community. The client would like to develop a feasibility model for this new vision and is asking you for proposals that could further define their vision and thinking. The design process is intended to target larger questions of community engagement, social innovation and sustainable living within the urban setting of Columbus. In this process you are expected to engage in generative constructive thinking through sustained research as you articulate questions for design, construction and detailing within the larger frame of programmatic, socio-economic and environmental issues.

As a first step in the process you are asked to research, digest, analyze and synthesize existing buildings and structures that invoke a sense of silence, stillness, sanctuary and sacredness, in an effort to establish an understanding of strategies and attitudes and establish your own framework of possibilities and limitations. As a second step, you will then formulate your own strategies for designing and developing your solution to the site and program. Your proposals should be articulated on a buildable premise and should explore in depth the poetic, programmatic and technical dimensions of your design. The expectation is that your exploration will be manifold, at various scales, from site to program, to structure, volume and detail, as parallel threads of design thinking and engagement.

The design process will be structured in four phases:
1. Precedent research and site analysis
2. Concept Design: articulate a design logic and strategy
3. Schematic Design: develop design components
4. Design Development: detail and refined resolution

Specific assignments and drawing requirements will be given out with each design phase of the project. Production of complete, legible, and coherent verbal and graphic representations will be expected at each design review.

SITE + PROGRAM

The site for the proposed center will be on the Whittier Peninsula, a 160 acre piece of land which juts into the Scioto river just South of downtown Columbus. Historically, the Whittier Peninsula has been an
industrialized area. Municipal uses included incinerators, dumping and impoundment. Commercial and manufacturing operations consisted of steelworks, warehouse storage and distribution and a railroad-switching yard. The Peninsula has undergone significant redeveloped since 2003, when a partnership between the City of Columbus/ Metro Parks and Audubon Society proposed a plan to reclaim and restore the peninsula from a brownfield site into an environmental and recreational destination, with the ultimate goal of reconnecting people and the edge of downtown back to nature. With the opening of Scioto Audubon Metro Park and the Grange Insurance Audubon Center in 2009, the Whittier Peninsula has become a premier destination for recreation and environmental education as well as a bird and wildlife sanctuary.

The property for the Meditation, Retreat and Contemplative Arts Center is a 7.4-acre lot currently under the private ownership. It is assumed that the client will acquire the property, demolish the existing industrial warehouse and further develop it in collaboration with the City of Columbus/ Metro Parks, building upon the vision set forth for the entire peninsula.

The new center will be a 30,000 SF new facility. The program will consist of living, meditation, retreat and contemplative arts spaces, such as: gathering spaces, kitchen and dining areas, meditation halls, classrooms and educational spaces, children’s spaces, Shambhala arts spaces such as tea ceremony, ikebana, kyudo range, library, art gallery, retail store, 30-40 residential rooms for retreat and outdoor gardens. You will receive a more detailed program within the first few weeks. Meetings with the client in the beginning and during the design process will facilitate a better understanding of the Shambhala philosophy, practice and vision.

OBJECTIVE

While there are certain number of constraints that you will have to embrace in your project it is expected that you will recognize opportunities for advancing your design work by thinking beyond given parameters and simple form making. You are therefore encouraged to further define the program based on your research, your vision for how the new center could operate as a social and cultural hub, as well as the overall relationships it would establish within the larger Whittier Peninsula and the city. You will be required to develop proposals that deeply question the relationships between the programmatic elements, the various user groups, issues of access and privilege, public versus private, viewer versus viewed, bounded versus boundless, material versus immaterial, natural versus man-made, etc.

It is the overall goal of the course to engage your ability to build abstract relationships by fostering a dialogue on multiple theoretical, socio-economic, cultural, technological and environmental contexts. Your design process should therefore be one that integrates critical thinking, investigative questioning and applied research in determining function, form and building systems and their impact on human conditions, behavior and the environment. Your proposals are expected to be not a mere sum of required parts, but rather a synthesis of your design thinking skills, technical knowledge and representation skills.
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**Notes:**

- **Introduction:** “Snippets On Silence”
- **Assign:** Precedents Analysis
- **Site Model Due Pin-Up:** Concept Design, Ideas, Sketches
- **Pin-Up:** Final Review, Production
- **Final Review:** Exams End
- **Exams Begin:** Production
- **Documentation Due:** Final Review, Production
- **Exams End:** Final Review, Production
Policies

Course Format: Studio meetings will be of two types: collective meetings that engage material as a group, and studio sessions that engage individual efforts. Collective meetings include pin-ups and reviews. Studio sessions will be desk critiques and studio exercises. In all cases, the entirety of studio time will be spent on the studio project and students must be ready to present at the beginning of class. Studios are based upon ongoing research. Assignments and requirements are subject to the discoveries of previous work and substantiated by communications between the instructor and studio. Students must check their university email daily.

KSA Lecture Series: Although not required, students are strongly encouraged to attend the KSA Lecture Series. The Series is an invaluable source of information made easily accessible.

Deadlines: Students who miss deadlines due to valid and documented extenuating circumstances may submit the required work at a date agreed upon with the instructor. University regulations limit such circumstances to serious personal illness and death of an immediate family member, and both cases require written documentation to: a doctor’s note or a newspaper obituary. Unexcused late projects will not be accepted, incomplete projects will be evaluated in relation to their degree of completion, and a student is present only if he or she presents sufficient work to the instructor. A student will be warned by email after the first unexcused absence; a student’s grade will drop one letter grade after the second and third unexcused absences; and a student with four unexcused absences can be immediately dismissed and given an “F.” Again: you are required to check your OSU email daily.

Documentation: Students must provide hardcopy and digital reproductions of all final projects. Hardcopy reproductions will consist of images of all final models and 8.5” by 11” reproductions of all presentation drawings. Digital reproductions of both models (as jpegs) and drawings (as Illustrator and PDF files) will be stored on CD’s, one CD per student. Students must place documentation in their instructor’s KSA office mailboxes by 4 PM Monday, April 21, 2014. Failure to meet this deadline will result in a grade of “Incomplete.”

Evaluation: Studio work is both individual and collective. Evaluation will include not only individual design excellence, but also a student’s contributions to the studio through collective research, documentation and discussions. Grading is based on a comparison with other students in the course, with students who have taken the course previously, and with the instructors’ expectations relative to the objectives of the course. Evaluation of projects is by jury review involving reviewers from other courses, other academic institutions, and architectural firms. For an "A", the student must satisfy the course objectives excellently; for a "B", in an above average manner; for a "C" in an average manner; for a "D" in the lowest acceptable manner; and an "E" denotes that the student has not satisfied the course objectives.

Evaluation Criteria
1. Active participation in the class during all phases.
2. Effective response to all assignments and tasks.
3. Sustained interest in the topics presented through applied research and independent investigation.
4. Demonstration of critical thinking and design thinking skills.
5. Demonstration of effective use of fundamental design skills.
6. Ingenuity, creativity and effectiveness in responding to the design challenges.
7. Clarity in communication and representation.
8. Quality of the final product.
9. Timely completion of assignments.
10. Overall contribution to the class.

**Sexual Harassment:** O.S.U.’s Sexual Harassment policy, which applies to all faculty, staff, and students, includes lewd remarks and inappropriate comments made in the studio environment, classroom, and computer labs as well as the “display of inappropriate sexually oriented materials in a location where others can see it.” Students can file a complaint by contacting Student Judicial Affairs at 292-0748. Sanctions include reprimand, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

**Students with Disabilities:** If a student requires accommodation for a disability, he or she should immediately arrange an appointment with the professors and the Office for Disability Services. At the appointment, the professors, disability counselors, and student can discuss the course format, anticipate needs and decide upon accommodations. Professors rely on the Office for Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies.

**Studio Safety:** To provide the best education, the KSA must act as a community. As such, its members (faculty, students, and staff) must respect and watch out for each other. The studio is available for KSA students 24/7. The University escort service provides safe transportation to and from Knowlton Hall 7:30AM–3AM. Call 292-3322.

**Studio Behavior:** Students must work in the studio. Students are responsible for keeping their areas clean, their floors free from obstructions, and all studio furniture in good condition and its original location. All presentation materials must be removed from review spaces following reviews and all studio materials must be removed from the building at the close of every quarter. Students may, however, store material in their credenzas over winter break. Studios are inspected on the last day of final exams – negligent students are subject to grade withholding and maintenance costs.

Please also note:
1. The following items are prohibited in Knowlton Hall: non-KSA furniture, liquor, weapons, bicycles, skateboards, rollerblades, and pets.
2. The following tools are prohibited in Knowlton Hall: spray paints, foam cutter wands, welding devices, heat guns, and any flame or gaseous liquid device.
3. The following safety compliances must be observed: electrical power cords cannot be connected in a series or extend over traffic areas; fire extinguishers must remain accessible and in full view; access to stairwells, corridors, and aisles must maintain a 44” clear width and handrails must be unobstructed.
4. Building surfaces cannot be marked, anchored to, or penetrated.
5. Installations may not occur in any part of the building except by permission of Philip Arnold, KSA Building Coordinator.
6. Power tools are restricted to the mat/fab lab except by permission of Philip Arnold, KSA Building Coordinator.
7. Loud noise is forbidden.
8. Graffiti and vandalism are grounds for disciplinary action.