

AR-302(ah)

Studio BA6 (Malterre-Barthes)

Malterre-Barthes Charlotte

Cursus	Sem.	Type
Architecture	BA6	Obl.
HES - AR	E	Obl.
Mob. AR	E	Opt.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	12
Withdrawal Session	Unauthorized Summer
Semester	Spring
Exam	During the semester
Workload	360h
Weeks	14
Hours	6 weekly
Lecture	2 weekly
Project	4 weekly
Number of positions	

Remark

Inscription faite par la section

Summary

To face the climate and social emergency, the construction sector must change radically, as does architectural practice. This studio examines the profession's economic model, and how the traditional 'office' can be challenged by alternative forms of architectural practice.

Content**Fix the Office**

Spring 2024 Design Studio

Instructors:

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Teaching Format:

Depending on enrollment, students will work in groups of two/three after the first week. Each desk crit will require the attendance of at least (2) student groups for peer-to-peer feedback. Desk crits will happen on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. All group attendance is required for episode reviews, guest lectures, mid-term and final reviews. Note that some of the lectures may be online.

This studio is a joint effort with the Chair of Architecture and Design Station+ at ETHZ.

Course Description:

Nota Bene: This studio is part of the 'Moratorium on New Construction' cycle, one of RIOT's meta agenda, following a series of topics seeking to center systemic change in architecture and the building industry. This means the class will prioritize radical designs that engage with repair, remediation, care, tactical interventions, system design and policy making, and interrogate architecture as the sole 'art of building buildings.' Architecture is here at the forefront, considered as a powerful tool for change, if and when it is used as such. In this case, architecture is asked to scrutinize its own functioning toward larger power shifts.

"Work, work, work, work, work, work"

Rihanna, "Work," Ritter / Graham / Brathwaite / Moir / Samuels / Fenty / Thomas © Monte Moir Music, Sony/ATV Music

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"Fix the Office" examines the way architects produce economic value and how to change the exploitative business model of "the office" toward addressing the social and climate emergency. It explores how architects can design emancipated forms of practice for themselves that then translate into spatial solutions for the ongoing social, ecological, and political crises. Researching power dynamics in design offices, financial and legal frameworks of the profession, honoraria and billing schemes, liberal constricts, and labor conditions, this studio is curious to uncover the causality between operative ways and built work. How does the functioning of an office, its business model, its economic status, and institutional framework impact the architecture it generates, and how to edit these structures to achieve a non-extractive architecture? Another underlying agenda is to educate ourselves on the economic system that underpins the production of space, aiming to illuminate the division of labor and class created between intellectual design workers in the office and the manual and executive labor force on site, as well as unpacking questions of land and material value against labor organization. Unions, negotiated labor contracts, self-management models, resistance movements, and workers empowerment initiatives will be useful tools to think about challenging existing power structures. Candidly addressing 'who can afford to be radical,' the studio seeks what are the possible ways outside of accumulative economies, learning from past and present resistant labor movements and what such structures entail for building and architectural design? As a design task, once understanding alternative ways of 'not being an office' is better outlined, we will think about emergent forms of world-making that diverge from the status quo. While this topic can come across as introverted, navel-gazing and slightly insular, the studio (and RIOT at large) believes it is essential to engage with uncomfortable questions about what is the value of architecture. This is a necessary work to challenge why our discipline is at the heart of the profit-generating machine of construction despite its mandate of sheltering humanity and serving the common good.

Site

"Fix the Office" is not a literal investigation of office spaces - instead it aims to think about our offices as spaces of labor, but also as entities located within what we call "the commodity chain of space production" - namely as entities that participate in how architectural products (i.e., the built environment) are supplied as a commodity by an array of actors that by processing land, materials, and labor are located both in local and world economies. We treat the office as our primary site, one that needs reform - primarily within the Swiss context. While we therefore will be ready to make visible the issues that plague the industry and redesign labor systems accordingly, the studio will not exclude the possibility to deal with very tangible and real spaces if some arise as the right locale to intervene.

Scales

This studio is based on a conception of urban design as a multidimensional trans-scalar discipline. Not only political, economic, social, cultural, and geo-tectonic forces affect and shape the built environment at the planetary and global scale, at the territorial and landscape scale, at the neighborhood and urban scale, down to the architectural and material scale - and to the body of the human and more-than-human, but space and its arrangements have a reciprocating effect on these forces, humans, and non-humans acting upon them. We will design within these gradations, positing that each constituent scale is distinct and can be considered on its own, yet the piece as a whole is only complete with each scale, resulting in the sum of all the small scales producing a large-scale total. The studio engages with complex issues surrounding the political economy of space production, the actors, forces and mechanisms that generate the spaces we inhabit. We will also think around temporal scales to challenge "impatient capital" as it dictates architectural, urban, and landscape projects for immediacy, exploring seemingly contradictory notions of ephemeral and impermanent, durable, and longevity as frameworks for operation.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Critique a specific project brief and a specific context and respond with a meaningful data-driven design concept.
- Translate a data-driven design concept into meaningful architectural and/or urban practice propositions at appropriate scales and levels of granularity.
- Produce coherent architectural representations at sufficient levels of detail.
- Formulate the morphogenetic narrative and create convincing arguments for the design propositions.
- Develop convincing final diagrams, drawings, renderings, simulations, and digital or physical models

Keywords

architecture, urbanism, practice, labor, political economy

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Critique
- Structure
- Compose
- Argue
- Analyze

Teaching methods

Structure/Method

Choreographed by episodes that set the tone both graphically and politically (i.e. templates, graphic standards, references), the studio will engage with exploring the different frameworks that regulate the architecture office and its actors, forces and systems globally at times asking students to mine their own background, surroundings and experience. Investigating cases of offices, their financial mode and the buildings they generate, we will produce works of various formats (i.e., diagrams, drawings, various media such as film or animation) that will help us understand and articulate complexities of our profession, and how economy, labor and materiality are intertwined in architecture and its practice. While engaging in this research, we will gain literacy in legal and policy frameworks, economic schemes, and organizational structures surrounding labor and its corresponding resistance movements. Readings of texts reflecting upon intersectional social, labor and spatial justice will be used for theoretical help, from Sergio Ferro to Keller Easterling. We will ultimately draft and draw our field of action to produce design works. The studio articulates the design project as the product of cultural, social, economic, and political mechanisms while seeking to imagine an emancipated future, but is fully aware of the necessities to engage with the world, and traditional formats will be considered (i.e. plans, sections, models). Episodes are paced across the semester with a counter-crescendo, first rapid and later slowing down to let the project emerge.

Assessment methods

Evaluation

The grading will be based on the consistent engagement and learning/un-learning curve of the students with each episode in the Studio. The grades will be proportionately distributed over the episodes listed as follows.

Episode 01: 15 %
 Episode 02: 20 %
 Episode 03: 15 %
 Episode 04: 50 %

Supervision

Assistants Yes

Resources

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