ALL INSTITUTIONS

Inspired by Louis Kahn's passionate and enigmatic interest in institutions and their origins, the aim of this studio is to investigate the possibility of a primordial architecture. A search for a "small" but essential architecture, able to define the character of an institution. What is substantial? What is really defining a theatre, a library, or a school? We are looking for new approaches that transcend the functionality of pre-established programs and discover their hidden nature, the invisible condition that characterizes each type of space and building, allowing us to redefine and rediscover the architecture of the institution.

STUDIO ROGER TUDÓ
ETH SPRING SEMESTER 2022

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We aim to redefine and rediscover the architecture of the institution, "an organism that carries out a function of public interest" (according to the dictionary), "a world within the world", "a center around which existential space is organized" (according to Kahn).

The Studio will take place in a specific location in Zurich: a small but complex plot, cohabitating with various pre-existing elements that surround and condition it. Each student will be assigned one of these possible institutions:

LIBRARY - MUSEUM - SCHOOL - TEMPLE - TOWN HALL - MARKET
THEATRE - HOSPITAL - BATH - COURTHOUSE - GYM - ADMINISTRATION

The chosen site is voluntarily small - smaller than could be expected. The lack of space must be a positive condition, forcing us to take radical decisions. Necessary steps to discover the essence of the space: what is a priority, far from inherited or pre-established solutions.

To design the primordial (what really defines a place and the institution) we will need to go back and free ourselves from a part of what we have learned. To re-investigate the genesis of human activities, the sources and origins of what has historically set architecture.

This research requires a critical positioning. A confrontation with the established form, what could be a convention or just a trend. A fight against the status quo to allow us to redefine our values and our priorities, to discover the indispensable that qualifies as architecture.

We propose to deconstruct the great institutions, extracting the insubstantial and unnecessary to find their most elemental definition, their substance.

In the design of a new „small" institution, as in a good poem, it will be necessary to synthesize, reconstruct and retain only the fundamental. To find what awakens the most emotional dimension of architecture. What is necessary and unnecessary. What supports its meaning, its form, and its character. How is it built. What is it made of. How it behaves. It will be a precision exercise: learn to prioritize.

The reduction to the essential does not mean giving up ambition. It is an opportunity to find the most decisive expression of architecture (where nothing is superfluous or missing). A unique architecture that remains convincing over the years. Architecture that transforms inert matter into something vivid and extraordinary.

We will look for architecture that activates these processes from a pragmatic and reciprocal approach. From thermodynamics and interactions with the environment to the structure and tectonics of construction techniques. From space composition to social behaviors. Everything necessary to design and calibrate exceptional spaces. Spaces of inspiration, precision and interdependence.

Pre-institutions (or small primordial institutions) that redefine our priorities. A soft but radical plot twist, that perhaps can show us a different understanding of architectural space.

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