

Intermediate Unit 3 2008/09

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Narrating Infrastructures

What is the use of conquering nature if we fall a prey to nature in the form of unbridled men? What is the use of equipping mankind with mighty powers to move and build and communicate, if the final result of this secure food supply and this excellent organization is to enthrone the morbid impulses of a thwarted humanity?

Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, pp366

Unit Meta Discourse

Inter 3 explores via a strong design oriented agenda the crossbreeding of industrial landscape and architecture. Infrastructures often occupy remote locations – “the edge” or the undergrounds of a city, creating an almost invisible complex interconnected network of services and facilities which our contemporary urban life style is based and dependent on. Superstructures like cultural manifestations, social rituals, power structures and institutions rely on those infrastructures in order to exist and progress. Although the two are carefully thought through and strategically planned against each other, they are constructed on seemingly contraries and remote places. One is perceived as light, beautiful and lively; the other is considered as dark, sinister and smelly – necessary but unwanted, hidden and isolated from the city’s organism. The extensive consumerism of modern societies allied to our social alienation stresses not only the existing infrastructure, demanding constant growing and improvement, but also allows us to accept the concept of segregation between supply and demand. The increase of vehicles, disposable goods, electronic components and water misuse consequently calls for new technologies, faster roads, invisible waste dumps and sewage systems, power plants, gigantic hydroelectric dams etc.

Specifically during the 08/09 academic year the unit will investigate the contemporary production and consumption of goods. It is well known how the proliferation of material goods has turned to nauseating proportion during the XX century usurping from religious narratives the dictation of collective desires and individual expectations. In the western world this exponential material growth was paralleled to mass migration from country to cities, generated new challenges upon urban infrastructures and stressed, even further, the separation from production (fabrication, farming, manufacture) and the consumer (us!). Nowadays such alienation and ignorance of the impact of our lifestyle upon the local and global environment has created social, economic and *psycho geographic* consequences. The unit’s departure point is to work with such unawareness.

Inter 3 will investigate and propose through a series of semi-independent briefs how production and consumption can not only be effective (the well oiled machine myth) but also culturally provocative and aesthetically daring.

The academic year will focus not only on the production of biological goods, but also on extending the term farming to mechanic modes of fabrication, assemblage and manufacture. From this unnatural bound between the organic and the artificial, students will explore how architecture can become the transition between productive enclaves and

urban life. Could culturally provocative manufacturing landscapes nested inside active city communities shorten the gap between supply and demand? Through a series of creative exercises hardcore production lines will be explored alongside genetically modified organisms setting up the mood for hybrid fields and atmospheric spaces. The assessment between the two will be carried by each student's individual agenda and ruled by critical concepts of the role of their experiments in relation to the people's lives. To be 'creatively engaged' shall be the motto.

Inter 3 is open to individual talents/skills and multiple forms of presentation/design output, however, three aspects shall unify the rather diverse research and output:

- 1- The production of an interdisciplinary architecture able to transit between effective and poetic modes (documented through process and identified on the final product), architectural spaces and infrastructural fields;
- 2- A personal and inquisitive view of architecture, one engaged with broader societal issues
- 3- Fictional and literary inspirations informing process and/or programme.

A series of workshops, talks and individual tutorials will clarify how digital drawings and physical models define the project's ambience and ambition. Elegant drawings, processual diagrams and dense crafted models will inform the design. Students are encouraged to research precedents not only in architecture but also in art, science and literature. Bearing in mind that the intense research led attitude of Inter 3, students will be asked to constantly challenge the role of research and references within their portfolio (enough of google pictures!).