



2014

Thoughts on the Design of Homes in the City

Cities are models of social diversity as an upshot of spatial compaction. They support difference because we have built ways to live and work that enable both density and discretion to co-exist. Our formal inventiveness in dealing with intense collective agglomerations is part of our secret sauce to civility. Architecture is not only everywhere, as Hans Hollein once said, but also perhaps *filters everything*.

We work on the design of housing structures as a proxy to a careful re-consideration of our future as urban species. Multi-family housing represents the potential of orthographic compression in architecture. Why? Because residential buildings must be both efficient and excessive. This is architecture under an exceptionally specific kind of pressure: to be both investment and ideology.

We develop organizational tools that enable us to think about what happens when we reach the extremes of compaction. How does this affect connectivity and diversity? We work through operations that produce dense ensembles out of specific processes such as stacking, nesting, folding, etc... that in turn disrupt their own logic of adept closure. Our purpose is to establish an "in-house" lexicon of organizational patterns of compaction that each student can develop into proposals.

We analyze the norms associated with residential construction in New York City in order to find the means by which we can surpass the limits of our existing types. The reappraisal of typology enables to see, as Rossi would say, connections that are prior to form. We are in search of specific patterns of inhabitation that might lead to new forms of collectivity.

We are particularly interested in the idea of communal extension. In an environment of increasingly publicness, the expansion of space for private use becomes a typical hinge point between economic inequality and social cohesion. How can we make the city more **affordable**? How can we foster **new cultures**? How can we **cultivate alternative economies**? Multi-family housing in the city offers us the opportunity to rebuke the conventional market-driven narrative of affordability and imagine different strategies of communal association that inspires a consciousness of how we fit into this city.

What is Domesticity in such a place of outlandish connectors and threatened

ecologies? Can we think of new social totalities that reframe our ideas of privacy, solitude and family?

We operate on the premise that context is an important but ambiguous design archive. It can be mined as a means of developing an intuition about materials, rhythm, spacing, scale and proportion. We foster conversations in the studio about the qualitative aspects of the site and catalogue the ways in which character relates to built form.

Housing is notoriously besotted by the specter of the loss of the individual. Symmetry, coupling, alternation, and disruption are some of the means by which individuality exists within formal ensembles. Can we envision ways of living in increasingly close proximity with one another without jeopardizing difference?

We start by looking at the specific ways in which the existing housing types have been able to aggregate multiple living situations in the smallest possible footprint. We develop a kind of measurement of compactness. Our focus, however, is not efficiency but moments of organizational relaxation. We study episodes of partial transformation when an articulated form gives way to another. If pattern-making is our chemical agent then the precise nature of the relationships between figures in states of transformation or adaption are the physical phenomena we want to study. Transmutation for its own sake is not sufficient. We need to classify and take ownership of the how new totalities emerge within housing's desire for differentiation. We live in world wherein mass customization is demanded so we must be able to understand how to think of design in terms of this sociopolitical shift.

We think of representation as a system not so much of communication but of regulation and exchange that enable us to comprehend how objects interact with their environment. Drawing, diagramming and model making are our disciplinary means for parsing complexity. We model the vagaries of contemporary urbanism through projection. Projective geometry offers a tool for compressing multiple realities onto one operational frame, thereby serving a kind of proxy for our theoretical obsession with compaction and diversity.

Finally, in the act of inventing new forms of dense living we necessarily confront the issue of community. How is a building more than a typological breakthrough? Housing is always already in excess of itself. It means more than what we think. It holds more than what we plan. In such a relationship, how can we design spaces that are outside of each person, spaces that describe a set of relationships and enable the creation of new and unforeseen worlds, "with the

curious property," as Foucault once wrote, " of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect."