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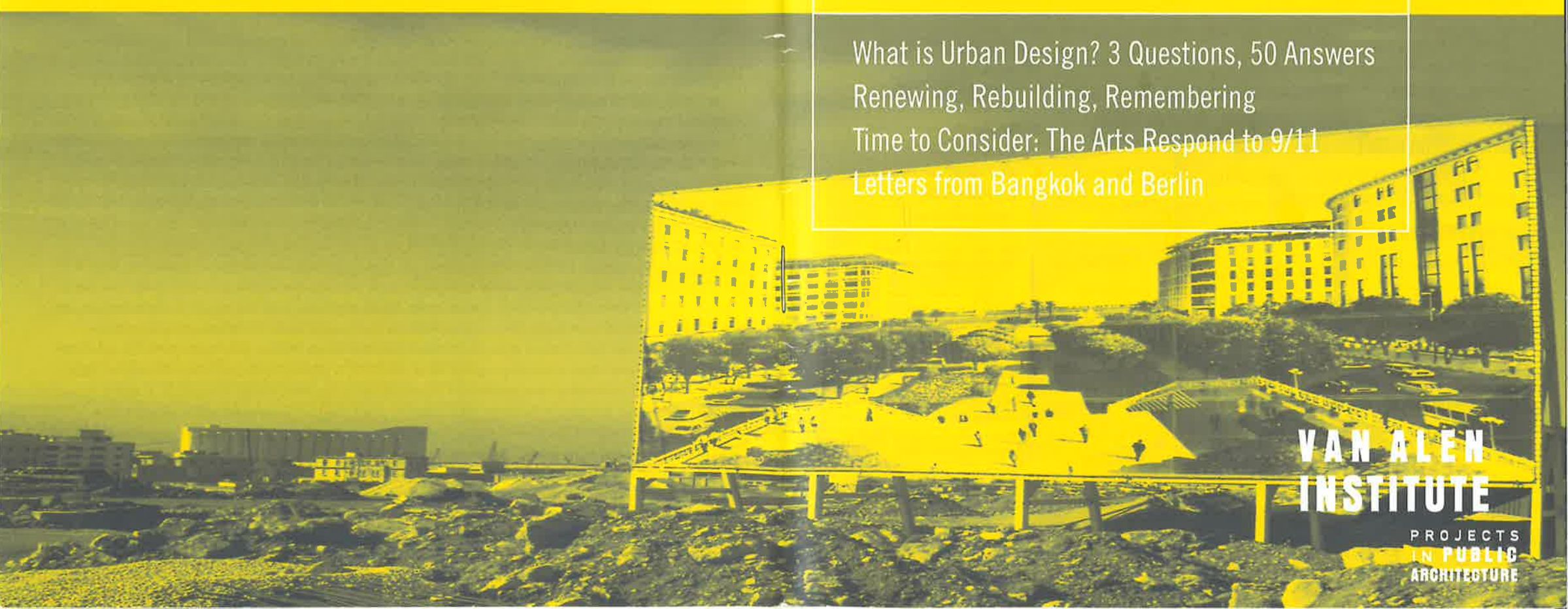
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urban design now

What is Urban Design? 3 Questions, 50 Answers
Renewing, Rebuilding, Remembering
Time to Consider: The Arts Respond to 9/11
Letters from Bangkok and Berlin

VAN ALEN
INSTITUTE

PROJECTS
IN PUBLIC
ARCHITECTURE



Van Alen Institute is committed to improving the design of the public realm.

Our program of Projects in Public Architecture promotes education and action through design competitions, workshops, studies, forums, web sites, and publications including the Van Alen Report.

While the Institute grounds its work in New York City, we structure our projects to engage an interdisciplinary and international array of practitioners, policy-makers, students, educators, and community leaders.

director's letter

In the mid-1990s, Van Alen Institute's trustees set a new course for the organization — dedicating its resources to improving the design of public architecture, and more broadly, the public realm. New York was the focus, yet the agenda of competitions, forums, and studies was in a global context. The city was a laboratory for ideas about the future of public life, from Governors Island to Times Square to Queens Plaza. New York, for all its residual twentieth-century glamour and grit, had a hard time designing or building a compelling contemporary environment. To go forward, to get the right ideas in place and to ultimately build them, it needed a cross-disciplinary approach that comprehended planning, landscape, architecture — urban design.

New York now has a site where every challenge of an urban design curriculum—and practice—is at the fore: from infrastructure to finance, culture and form, all measured against a human disaster that defies normal discourse. VAI initiated **RENEWING, REBUILDING, REMEMBERING**, an exhibit on seven cities that have come back from disaster, all of which had to engage design to rebuild. From the **TIME TO CONSIDER** poster campaign to the collaboration on **NEW YORK NEW VISIONS** principles, VAI has asserted that urban design has to begin now, and that discussion is not irrelevant, but invaluable. By the end of 2002, this initiative will culminate in an exhibit on the best new public spaces in the world.

This spring's **PRACTICES, PEDAGOGIES, PREMISES** conference, co-sponsored by VAI and the urban design programs of Columbia University and Harvard University, with major support from the National Endowment for the Arts, is at the crux of this program—a vital opportunity to define what urban design can and cannot do, and what it must try to do, not just for Lower Manhattan, but in the bright glare of that one site, to better define its promise for North America and the world. This issue, guest-edited by conference organizers Margaret Crawford and Andrea Kahn, is dedicated to expanding the range and impact of this discussion. **RAYMOND W. GASTIL**

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Raymond W. Gastil
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Andrea Kahn Guest Editor

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Hello Graphic Design

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Cover: Sign in Beirut Central District showing rendering of new promenade from Martyrs' Square to the waterfront

Photo: Corinna Dean and Klaus Würschinger/SOLIDERE

William Van Alen (1882-1954), the Institute's namesake and historically most significant benefactor, was the architect of New York City's 1930 landmark Chrysler Building.

newsfront >

RENEWING REBUILDING REMEMBERING

CITIES COME BACK Following the World Trade Center disaster, a look at how some other cities have renewed, rebuilt, or remembered offers some constructive lessons.

Following September 11, there has been no shortage of looking inward among Americans and New Yorkers. Bearing witness, sorting out the meaning of the tragedy, and thinking about how to answer the question "what next?" is a process that begins in the heads of individuals, including those that make up New York's large and diverse planning and design communities. As these communities and citizens at large now seek to help define the rebuilding process, looking outside the New York bubble suddenly seems important.



Renewing Rebuilding Remembering Exhibit, Van Alen Institute.
NATHANIEL H. BROOKS

Nine days after the towers fell, Van Alen Institute staff with the board of trustees, talked about how the institute could contribute to the desire to learn from other places. The subsequent exhibition, *Renewing Rebuilding Remembering* (on view through April 26), is not a show about memorials, although parts of it deal with memorials. It is not an architecture show, although there is architecture in it. Ultimately, the exhibit explores the particularities and complexities of process employed by seven cities around the world that have revived following disaster in the past 15 years. "The show lays bare how different cities have come back and made the urban environment vital again," says Zoë Ryan, who co-curated the exhibit.

Columbia University's Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, is currently running a lecture series focusing on eight cities and how they were revived after disasters. "The first lectures in our series have made it clear that there is a great deal to be learned from this kind of comparative and cross-cultural perspective," says center director Joan Ockman. "One has to be reminded of the complexities of a problem like this." Since their first lecture in February, the series has been moved to a large auditorium. "The tremendous response we've gotten shows that there's a real hunger for this kind of thinking."

TELLING THE STORIES

The Van Alen show examines the recovery process in Kobe (after the 1995 earthquake); Manchester (after a 1996 bombing); Oklahoma City (after the 1995 bombing); Beirut (after the civil war's end in 1992); Berlin (after the reunification in 1990); Sarajevo (after the siege ended in 1996); and San Francisco (after the 1989 earthquake permitted the removal of a freeway).

The exhibit, designed by Thomas de Monchaux and Donald Shillingburg, tells the story of each city through chronological narrative, photographs, and drawings mounted on kiosks. Ryan believes that the timeline was just the right lens for this subject matter. "It is fascinating to see how long things take, who is involved, if or when the community gets a voice, and how much of a voice they get," she says. Raymond W. Gastil believes that the context of time is important. "We wanted people to compare how fast things happened in one place or another," he says. "Beirut took five years to start a master plan, Manchester's was under way in one week, and many aspects of Kobe's emergency response effort were virtually complete in just a few weeks."

R12.4



Info-Box, Potsdamer Platz, Berlin, ©JÖRG HEMPEL, GERMANY

The kiosks' interlocking plywood panels create vertical and horizontal surfaces with text and photos adhered. A rectangular cut-out in the center provides a view through the kiosk to a wall of seven-ft-high photos that provide an atmospheric glimpse of each city. The yellow and black color scheme and the plywood scent give the sense of a construction site. Landscape architect (and Van Alen trustee) Diana Balmori admires the huge photos for lending a "keen sense of the different cities." She finds that the fenestrated kiosks provided just the right amount of transparency and connection to the other elements of the show and other people viewing it.

"The installation had a perfect ad hoc spirit," says Margaret Helfand, architect with Helfand Meyerberg Guggenheimer and past president of the AIA New York Chapter. The show includes a well-furnished study area, which includes a model of the World Trade Center foundation (by Cooper Union students), notebooks stuffed with additional information on each city's process, and a bulletin board with information about ongoing developments in Lower Manhattan. Helfand notes that the simple idea of the bulletin board "highlights the fact that, right now, our process is all about communication and accessibility of information."

Jayne Merkel, architecture critic and editor of the AIA New York Chapter's *Oculus*, likes the raw, nuts-and-bolts installation. "This is about building and it isn't pretty — it's tough," she says. Parsons School of Design professor Jean Gardner finds the show timely and packed with information; she assigned graduate students to choose one of the seven cities as a research subject. "This and other events and exhibitions are synergizing a flow of energy from the design profession in New York that I have never experienced before. How this will affect the decision makers is on everyone's mind," she says.

WHAT CAN NEW YORK LEARN?

In Kobe after the earthquake, temporary housing, a move to save damaged housing, several master plans, and a powerful volunteer movement defined the comeback.

By 2000, all temporary housing residents had moved into permanent dwellings; the memorial, *Cosmic Elements* by Shingo Kusuda, was unveiled; and the designers for a proposed institute and museum about earthquake renovation, Showa Sekkei Architects Planners and Engineers, were selected. The institute will be finished this year. In Kobe, after dealing with temporary housing, the city took pains to memorialize the event in several ways. "They left a broken section of the pier in the water as a remembrance, with new building all around," Ryan says. "This relates to the idea of keeping a piece of the destroyed Trade Center." New York architect Yoshiko Sato of Morris Sato Studio has studied Kobe and consulted with the Van Alen team. "I think we can learn from Kobe," she says. "There, a volunteer committee jumped into the middle of the process and proposed something different. They involved the community, conducting exhaustive workshops before permanent housing was built." An additional project, the Nojima Fault Museum, built on the fault line, was a controversial idea in Kobe; but on completion, support for the "living laboratory" is strong. Volunteerism played a big role in Kobe, and the architectural community had a remarkably cohesive voice.

In Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, amidst a frenzy of building and reconstruction, the city hosted a competition for a small but significant project that wound up providing a kind of psychic glue for the city's revitalization, an Info-Box/exhibition space and viewing platform. Schneider + Schumacher Architekten's winning design, a 50-by-200-foot red box, opened in late 1995; more than two million people visited each year during its five year existence. "The Info-Box as a central forum relates directly to the discussions in New York about a viewing platform and other centers for information and visitation," Ryan says.



Archaic Procession, Phase 3: Martyrs' Square,
April 1998- December 1999. NADIM KARAM



Exchange Square, Manchester, England. DIXI CARRILLO/EDAW LONDON

In Beirut, a war-torn landscape remained bleak for many years while a master plan took shape, but temporary art helped to bridge the gap between destruction and reconstruction. From the summer of 1975 through 1992, Beirut suffered a civil war between the Muslim coalition (and Palestinian groups) and the Christian-dominated militias. Destruction, rebuilding, and segregation lines drastically altered the geography (and social structures) of the city. According to Ryan, "The five year lapse between the end of the war and the Master Plan was a long stretch to wait without visible signs of hope. Temporary public art installations by Nadim Karam helped to break up the war-torn landscape and also keep aspirations for rebuilding alive." This feature of the Beirut situation seemed to resonate with many visitors. "The scale of these sculptures was appropriately bold," Helfand said. "These were powerful gestures."

Balmori notes that cities with multiple "solutions," including temporary ones, are probably the best models for New York. "Here, there will not be a single entity or single competition," she says. "The happiest and best results will be achieved via multiple paths, with a chance for multiple voices. Temporary memorials can give a chance for multiple expression, and allows for healing along the way, as the necessary time is taken to establish agreement about the larger elements that will result. These temporary expressions could be oral, visual, musical, or other means. I think this is a more modern response, by including time in the remembering process."

Helfand, who is actively involved in the New York New Visions process, a plan of action developed by 21 professional and civic associations (including Van Alen), finds a common feature of the seven cities' processes. "In each, it was taken for granted that the

public would, in one way or another, control the process and outcome and that the private property owners who may have been afflicted were not calling the shots in these extraordinary situations," she says. The solution, it was acknowledged, would need to represent the common good and the collective aspiration for something better.

Also universal to several of the redevelopment schemes: an acknowledgement that public space was a priority and a commitment to demonstrate sustainable design principles. In New York, Helfand notes, "We have an opportunity here to demonstrate such a commitment in a very artful way." Randy Croxton, of Croxton Collaborative, helped draft the Design Excellence and Sustainability chapter of the New York New Visions report. September 11 and its aftermath, he believes, should push New York to abandon the monoculture approach to buildings and energy. "We can think about buildings and infrastructure as more resilient, flexible, and adaptable," he says.

Meanwhile, downtown, activity is brewing. Larry Silverstein, who holds the lease on the 16-acre site, has announced plans to begin rebuilding (to a design by SOM's New York office) on the World Trade Center 7 site this summer. Will he be able to proceed? City officials seem to want the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation to be in charge; the group of 14 (bankers, Wall Street executives, former Giuliani administration officials, and the chair of Community Board 1) was appointed in November (and expanded by three by Bloomberg in March) by Governor George Pataki and outgoing Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. But that group is still getting organized and staffed (not a single architect or planner was appointed to the board, though planner and architect Alexander Garvin was hired in February).

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's Vice Chairman Charles Gargano, also the state's development executive, has said his organization is amenable (though other Port Authority officials sound more cautious). The support of Gargano is seen by some observers as firmly linked to the Governor's desire to see construction underway—"visible progress"—during his re-election campaign this summer and fall. John Whitehead, chair of the LMDC, has hinted that Silverstein would need his group's approval, but whether it has the teeth to prevent construction is unclear. The LMDC is seen as a quasi-independent body, though it is technically a subsidiary of the Empire State Development Corporation.

Some see job creation as the most important driver of Lower Manhattan's revival (more than 100,000 jobs were lost in that area and it is expected that half will not come back, according to The Downtown Alliance). This issue is being used by some people as an argument supporting a fast-track process.

As the process begins to take shape, Van Alen and other organizations, as well as the host of alliances formed in response to the September 11 disaster (New York New Visions, The Civic Alliance, The Rebuild Downtown Our Town Coalition, and more) continue their work. Looking outside of the political complexities of New York can be enlightening. "For me, the most inspirational thing is that people want to rebuild," Ryan says. "Cities do come back. Even when the reconstruction is limited, as in Sarajevo where to date only the national library and post office have been renovated, the resurgence is a powerful symbol for the people who live there." KIRA L. GOULD

NEW YORK NEW VISIONS NOW

The New York New Visions coalition of 21 civic, professional, and cultural organizations, after an intense dialogue with community members, public agency representatives, and other stakeholders, issued Principles for the Rebuilding of Lower Manhattan in February. Seven interdisciplinary teams, with more than 400 participants, drafted the report, which called for: an open memorial process, a flexible mixed-use future for Lower Manhattan; a more connected downtown; a renewed relationship of Lower Manhattan and the region; design excellence and sustainability for New York City; an effective and inclusive planning process, and a series of immediate actions. Van Alen Institute members, board, and staff took part in this unprecedented collaboration, from researching alternative memorial strategies to distributing the group's Around Ground Zero and Downtown Now maps.

The principles are supported by research and outreach. Now, the coalition is moving from education to advice and recommendations. The greatest challenge is how to both grapple with the formidable technical and political challenges, and at the same time call for the most imaginative urban design solutions possible. White papers and proposals have already appeared on the nyvn.aiga.org web site, which serves as a sounding board and schedule for the coalition's ongoing efforts.



Time to Consider: The Arts Respond to 9/11 posters on hoardings on 6th Avenue. JAMES ROGERS, INC.

TIME TO CONSIDER: THE ARTS RESPOND TO 9/11

In an effort to garner creative responses to the events of September 11, a multi-disciplinary collaborative including VAI, Creative Time, Poets & Writers and Worldstudio Foundation came together in December 2001 to sponsor a poster competition—"Time to Consider: The Arts Respond to 9/11." Inviting artists, designers and writers to contribute designs, the group received over one hundred submissions. Four posters, each very different, were chosen—one by Eric Liftin, a New York-based architect, another by Croatian artist Nebojsa Seric Shoba, the third with text written by poet Elena Alexander and the last the work of a student group, the Anti-Bias Squad—and during the week of February 11 were sniped across the five boroughs. Eric Liftin explains the importance of this project. "In an urban context the connection between the street, experience and memory is critical. People are exposed to the limits of experience in public space, but bonded by the communal environment of the city. My poster design is an attempt to explore a complex, traumatic event through life on the street and people's recollections." Entitled "Contribute a Memory," Liftin's design incorporates video stills taken on 9/11 and 9/12 with speech bubbles superimposed over them but left blank so "passers-by who encounter the poster may reconnect with their experiences of September 11 and spontaneously write recollections in the bubbles," he explains.

Alexander's poem "How the Lurking," contemplates human fragility in times of crisis; the Anti-Bias Squad's message-driven design reads—"De-Fuse the Minefield of Anger," and Shoba's "Remote Control, 2000," is a bold graphic statement critiquing the powerful influence of the media by reducing complex subjects such as war, religion and happiness to commands on a remote control. Anchoring the project, an exhibition of a selection of all the submissions is on view at the Deutsche Bank Lobby Gallery, 31 W 52 Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues through March 22, 2002. To check out all the submissions and download your favorites go to: www.timetoconsider.org, which also has links to downtown cultural organizations and their calendar listings. ZOE RYAN

THE ILLUSTRATIONS THROUGHOUT THIS SECTION HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS THE BEST URBAN DESIGN PROJECTS BY THE RESPONDENTS IN PLATFORM (P. 17)

urban design > practices, pedagogies, premises...

FATHER DUFFY SQUARE, TIMES SQUARE, NEW YORK, 2001. VAI. (PROJECT SELECTED BY PD)



EXAMINING THE MULTIPLE REALITIES OF URBAN DESIGN TODAY



VILLAGE OF YORKVILLE PARK, TORONTO, ONTARIO DESIGNED BY KEN SMITH LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT. STEVEN EVANS. (PROJECT SELECTED BY UL)

MILWAUKEE RIVER WALK DESIGNED BY KEN KAY ASSOCIATES. COURTESY KEN KAY ASSOCIATES. (PROJECT SELECTED BY ED)

What is urban design? Architects operating at the scale of the city? Planners coordinating urban development projects? An alternative form of architectural education? The process of producing cities? A public domain in which debates over the physical form of the city take place? All of the above?

Not an official licensed profession (like architecture or planning), is urban design a 'sub-profession,' a discipline, or a way of thinking? Situated somewhere in the amorphous territory in between large-scale architectural design, physical planning, policy making and landscape design, the contours of urban design must be continually reshaped to fit the ongoing changes in municipal finances and private sponsorship, in the city's economy and its policies, and in the public's habits and expectations. This mutability, while undoubtedly an asset, also produces uncertainty in defining urban design as an endeavor.

In spite of, or perhaps precisely because of this uncertainty, urban design itself is flourishing. Across the country, university urban design programs are proliferating, courses on Urbanism are oversubscribed. An increasing number of architecture, planning, and landscape practitioners are adding urban design to their list of skills. Competitions, cities, and developers are continually producing new design projects. Whether they appear in the media or on the city council's agenda, these projects inevitably provoke intense public response, both positive and negative.

Over the last ten years, a lively and often contentious debate about the shape of American cities has emerged, widely covered by both the professional and popular press. The ongoing deliberations over the future of Lower Manhattan, following the events of September 11, have brought a new level of urgency to these developments. Almost daily, the newspapers report struggles over the representation and organization of urban space in downtown Manhattan.

Questions about issues ranging from scale and symbolism, to transportation connections and 24-hour programming, to power and decision-making are currently being argued over. All of these concerns fall squarely within the traditional domain of urban design — but almost no one has identified them as such.

Everywhere there is evidence of a growing interest in urban design, and a renewed concern for cities, yet urban designers are still struggling to define their role in the city making process. More often than not, practitioners, educators, policymakers, planners, not to mention the public, proceed with significantly different understandings of how urban design works (a wide selection of possible definitions of urban design can be found in the PLATFORM section of this issue). Operating without a professionally institutionalized domain, urban designers (and there are many types, as PLATFORM also reveals) are frequently characterized as consultants or marginal, late-entry players, following up on "real" decisions made by architects and developers. Observers often mis-read their contributions as superficial, literally and urbanistically. They dismiss their work as beautification efforts — street lights, street furniture, banners, planters and the like. Does this accurately describe urban design? We don't think so, but these misperceptions reveal that urban design today sorely lacks a public identity that accurately reflects its concerns and potentials. In the wake of September 11th, clarifying urban design's role in the process of city making has become even more pressing.

How can we understand such a complex and ambiguous field? The Urban Design: Practices, Pedagogies, Premises conference will do this by examining what urban design has been, what it is now, and what it could become.

Although, as one of our respondents observes, urban design is an ancient activity, as a concept it is a recent invention, first defined in 1956. That year Jose Luis Sert, Dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Design, convened an international conference at the school, inviting an illustrious group of participants including Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, Victor Gruen, Edmund Bacon, Garrett Eckbo and Hideo Sasaki. Sert proposed a new field, urban design, which he defined as "the part of planning concerned with the physical form of the city." He added that the urban designer must first of all believe in cities, their importance and their value to human progress and culture. Thus, as Alex Krieger notes, urban design began with two competing definitions, one professionally focused and the other broadly inclusive.

Urban design was Sert's answer to a uniquely American problem, the decisive separation between architecture and urban planning. Beginning a decade earlier, urban planning, increasingly less focused on the physical organization of the city, had established its own independent academic and professional territory, based on the methods of social science. This dual structure replaced the more comprehensive practice of "urbanism" still dominant in Europe and Asia. Hoping to heal this breach, Sert ambitiously envisioned urban design as an alternative arena where the work of the architect, the city planner, and the landscape architect might be reunified. One of the conference's most important outcomes was the founding of the Harvard Urban Design program, followed by others at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Washington University in St. Louis, and Columbia University. As Anne Vernez-Moudon points out, this is an unusual beginning. Unlike other design fields, urban design originated in academia rather than professional practice. Perhaps for this reason, the academic setting has played a particularly important role in delineating its shifting contours.

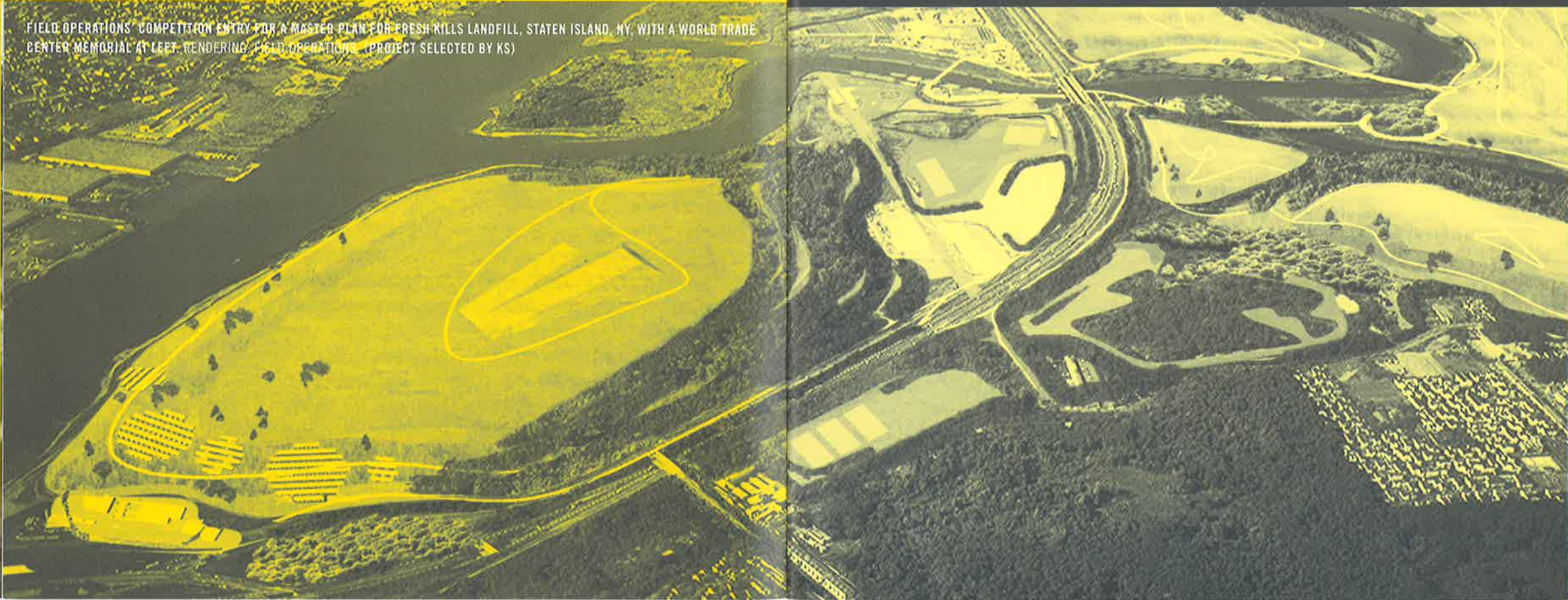
This was certainly the case twenty-five years later, when a new generation of urban designers felt the need to rethink the field. In September of 1980, Harvard hosted the Second International Urban Design Conference. Three years later two smaller conferences occurred, sponsored by the Urban Design Institute and the University of Washington. Both used education as a lens through which to examine developments in the field. Participants such as Kevin Lynch, Jonathan Barnett, Denise Scott Brown, Allan Jacobs and Donald Appleyard, recognizing a crisis in urban design practice, looked to the schools for solutions. Although Sert's modernist model had been replaced by postmodern contextualism, many of the same issues persisted: the difficulties of depending on large-scale government support, the need to reconnect with urban planning; and the necessity of defining an identity separate from that of architecture. Again, the result of these discussions produced conclusions at divergent scales: urban design must be specifically focused on design yet broadly accountable to society at large.

Now, twenty years later, the panels and public discussions that make up the Urban Design: Practices, Pedagogies, Premises conference will offer a similar reconsideration, asking what urban design means now — as a concept, a discipline, a practice, and a public enterprise.

We believe there are noteworthy reasons to revisit these issues today. On one hand, much has changed since 1983. Rather than facing a crisis, urban design is now ascendant. Yet many of its new opportunities are ambiguous, forcing those involved with urban design to continually evaluate their work's positive and negative social, political, and cultural implications.

One notable change has been the proliferation of new projects developed by public-private partnerships. This type of urban development process, a response to the withdrawal of public sponsorship, has restructured the relationship between private and public in cities, challenging

FIELD OPERATIONS' COMPETITION ENTRY FOR A MASTER PLAN FOR FRESH KILLS LANDFILL, STATEN ISLAND, NY, WITH A WORLD TRADE CENTER MEMORIAL AT LEFT. RENDERING: FIELD OPERATIONS. (PROJECT SELECTED BY KS)





WATERFIRE, AN ANNUAL INSTALLATION BY BARNABY EVANS IN PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND, THOMAS PAYNE ©2001 BARNABY EVANS (PROJECT SELECTED BY ED)



traditional notions of civic responsibility and public access. Similarly, the increasing importance of aesthetics in cities can be seen as a mixed blessing. Many have welcomed the appearance of a newly aestheticized cityscape as an appropriately symbolic urban economy, while others have interpreted it as a dangerous concealment of social realities. In addition, by focusing primarily on “urban” concerns when the nation as a whole has become increasingly suburban, urban designers may be lessening their relevance. In both urban and suburban areas, community organizations, neighborhood associations, and other groups have become powerful new constituencies. Demanding a guiding role in urban development, they represent both an engaged citizenry and a challenge to professional authority and expert knowledge. At the largest scale, societally important issues such as environmentalism and sustainability seem to have bypassed urban design altogether.

On the other hand, some things have not changed. Today, the academy continues to play a central role in defining the premises of urban design — its underlying assumptions as well as its ‘place’ in the city. In the past three years alone, five of the eight master-degree granting urban design programs in North America have been started or substantially re-structured to reflect recent urban transformations. The new curricula, courses, and studio topics demanded by these programs have generated an enormous amount of focus on and reflection about the nature of urban design. As a result, these curricula offer (implicitly if not explicitly) the most easily accessible “working definition” of urban design currently available. We have structured this conference around these representations of the discipline because, as basic texts, each is also necessarily shaped by assumptions (rarely stated outright) about what makes a good city. And behind these assumptions lies a further set of social, political, and cultural values.

While we use academic curricula to spark the panel discussions, the conference's title attests to the fact that we are concerned with issues beyond the purely pedagogical. This gathering provides a (much needed) forum for dialogue, bringing together groups who rarely have the opportunity for shared reflection and discussion — public sector representatives, urban design practitioners and academics from related urban and design fields — in an exchange of ideas with urban design educators (who, unlike their colleagues in urban planning or architecture departments, don't have the benefit of annual academic conferences dedicated to their discipline). Over the course of two days, four panels and two moderated public discussions will explore the multiple realities of urban design.

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

URBAN DESIGN: PRACTICES, PEDAGOGIES, PREMISES begins Friday evening, April 5th at the Lighthouse International, considering urban design's role in the process of city-making. The first panel, **“Shaping Civic and Public Realms: What is the Role of Urban Design”** brings the perspective of public policy makers to the table. Amanda Burden (*Chair*, NYC City Planning Commission), Maxine Griffith (*Executive Director*, Philadelphia City Planning Commission), Tim Carey (*President*, Battery Park City Authority) and Rosalind Greenstein (*Senior Fellow*, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy) will engage in discussion with Alex Krieger, Richard Plunz and Michael Sorkin, directors of the Harvard, Columbia and CUNY urban design programs, respectively.

On Saturday, April 6th, at Columbia's Avery Hall, the conference continues with a morning session exploring the relationship between urban design education and professional practice.



BATTERY PARK CITY, LOWER MANHATTAN, FROM STATEN ISLAND FERRY. V&A. (PROJECT SELECTED BY RC)

platform >

We decided not to wait until April 5th, the date of the Urban Design: Practices, Pedagogies, Premises conference to start a conversation about urban design: What is it? Who practices it? What does it contribute to urban life? What are the best North American urban design projects of the last decade? So we invited a broad range of people with some connection to or interest in the field, architectural and urban design practitioners, professors, planners, writers, recent graduates, in New York and across the country to respond to these four questions. The response was so great we received far too many comments to publish here.

Five representatives from public sector, community, development and corporate urban design practices (John Chase, City of West Hollywood; Karen Phillips, Abyssinian Development Corporation; Charles Reiss, Trump Organization; Denise Scott Brown, Venturi Scott Brown; and Marilyn Jordan Taylor, Skidmore Owings & Merrill) will share the **“Urban Design Practices”** panel with three urban design educators (Sandro Marpillero, Jacqueline Tatom, and Anne Vernez-Moudon). Their conversation will be followed by a moderated public discussion with the audience and panel centered on the question: **“How can urban design improve cities?”**

The first afternoon session focuses on how urban design is defined, taking the curricula of the participating schools as a point of departure. The interdisciplinary **“Urban Design Pedagogies”** panel, with Rodolphe el-Khoury, Roy Strickland and J. Michael Schwarting (urban design), Robert Beauregard (urban planning/policy), Carol Burns (architecture), Robert Fishman (urban history), Walter Hood (landscape architecture) and Jerold Kayden (urban law), will examine how each school’s program construes the discipline. The accompanying moderated public discussion, **“What is Urban Design?”** will include the audience in a follow up session exploring the implications of these ‘working definitions’ for the world of urban design practice and policy making. We welcome anyone with an interest in design and cities to join us in exploring these questions. Following this public discussion, the **“Urban Design Premises”** panel will unite the Directors of the eight participating Master of Urban Design programs in the event’s final session.

By revealing and reexamining all of the dimensions of urban design, we hope to evaluate its current successes and failures, as well as assess its potential to play a more significant role in urban discourse and development. **MARGARET CRAWFORD AND ANDREA KAHN**

The following is a representative selection of answers to the first three questions, and the illustrations throughout this issue are the *best projects* identified by the respondents. But, since we appreciate the time and thought that everyone involved put into their answers, we have posted all of the respondent’s complete answers on www.vanalen.org.

As you can see from these responses, urban design is not so much an activity as a complex, dynamic, and contested arena. We invite you to join this public conversation about the making of cities and make your voice heard. We welcome participation by professionals, educators, citizens and anyone else interested in making good cities. The questions are still open.

1. What is Urban Design?
2. What does it contribute to urban life?
3. Who practices Urban Design?

THE RESPONDENTS

ROBERT CAMPBELL [RC] *Architecture Critic, Boston Globe*

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HARRY BRIDGES PLAZA DESIGNED BY ROMA DESIGN GROUP, IRA KWHN (PROJECT COLLECTED BY JK)



WHAT IS URBAN DESIGN?>

> What is urban design is a trick question and the title of the first chapter of my forthcoming book. I have studied urban design in various guises for most of my professional life since the 60's. Many people say that urban design does not exist. Other people say it is like a *scrambled egg*, a part of everyday living. After all these years I welcome any light that can be shed on this question. DS

> ... Urban design is both production and consumption of urban space . But: What is its logic? Who defines those rules? What sets the principle? These questions define the outcome of design as a process... UL

> Urban design is the design of the framework that directs the uses and physical form of future development at a scale larger than a single building or property owner ... generally comprised of a set of plans and drawings ... as well as proposed design guidelines, ordinances, regulations, or other policies to govern the processes of implementation... EDJ

> ... Jose Luis Sert defined it as planning as done by architects . That's pretty good. It's planning and organizing communities with respect to their physical spatial three-dimensional form. RC

> Urban design is a designer label . It is contemporary packaging for ideas and ideals that have been around for thousands of years. AK

> ... Urban design integrates and organizes land uses, circulation systems, open spaces and building forms .

... To think of urban design simply as the design of multiple buildings or several linked landscape projects is incorrect. Urban design creates the framework which informs the design of the architecture and the open spaces. CS

> Urban design is three-dimensional policy . DK

> ... Urban design is not a separate discipline but a specific way of practicing architecture ... simultaneously in different scales ... Without confusing *scale* with size, an urban design project is not necessarily and perhaps should not even try to be large... EV

> In theory , urban design is a Civic Art whose purpose is to create and nurture a distinct public domain ... In practice , urban design is the continuation of politics by other means — to paraphrase Carl von Clausewitz's famous dictum about war. MG

> Urban design is a dynamic process... a mode of rethinking logics and relationships that evolve the living patterns of city . PD

> To answer this question requires dislocating the idea of urbanity from density and the idea of design from form-making ... Design may be the making of strategic physical interventions or the crafting of policy that realigns the relationships between urban inhabitants or the players in the construction of the city. Urban design is a bit like throwing rocks in a stream . Each increment alters an existing flow, the effect is neither entirely predictable nor always proportional to the effort. WS

> ... Because it is constituted as much by social relationships as by any built form, urbanity cannot be as such, designed . Rather, the urban designer may conspire with the forces at work in the making of the city; extending, subverting or re-channeling existing programmatic and physical patterns. RS

> The practice of urban design in this market-driven society is a bit like herding cats — trying to organize, for public benefit, an array of forces and fantasies that at best are grand, fiercely independent visions and, at worst, despotic, territorial desires dictated solely by self-interest. MW

> Urban design is the art of envisioning the future and interweaving this vision into the complex fabric of the existing city so as to direct its destiny... The urban designer creates the armature ... to which the public's organic construction work attaches itself. Great armatures provide the basis for great urbanism . BW

> ... It's de-professionalized, all-embracing, animate in spirit, and savvy ... I would call it a field of design practice that intervenes strategically in the organizational regimes of material culture for the purpose of producing new effects and changes in the urban realm, in urban life and urban consciousness. DM

> One of the main challenges in contemporary urban design is redefining the nature of urban open space ... The big master plan has been replaced by smaller, smarter and more strategic design initiatives. Today the most interesting work is occurring within the context of existing and reworked urban fabric ... a new concern for marginal sites, reclaimed areas, dis-invested neighborhoods and underutilized resources ... Flexible and conceptual models are the new norm for making urban space, building neighborhoods and protecting ecological resources. KS

> Urban design is the intersection of form and process ... RL

> The art of defining the physical and cultural form of a settlement by working with the built environment, the natural landscape, and the citizens who inhabit it. DH

> I've never been really sure ... The definition, evolved over several years of working with urban designers, seems to be that urban design is concerned with the relationship of buildings to streets, people to streets, and people to buildings . PL

> Urban design is the design of space, structure and movement. The urban design project consists of three components: structure, strategy, and scenario. Architects must consume potential; urban design must create potential. Architecture must define and communicate a specific character; urban design must infuse an apparently neutral structure with potential. AW



WHAT DOES URBAN DESIGN CONTRIBUTE TO URBAN LIFE? >

YERBA BUENA CENTER, SAN FRANCISCO, CA. COURTESY SAN FRANCISCO REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY. (PROJECT SELECTED BY BW)

> Urban design, toward the end of the 20th century, has helped to make the city sexy again (in North America anyway). AK

> At its best, urban design can contribute and protect ... nurturing the human spirit and providing for a sustainable environmental, social, economic, and physical order. DK

> Urban design contributes to the quality of the public realm — [it] promotes social interaction, which is the very basis of urban living ... We need only look back a few months to witness the tremendous value of urban open space as an outlet for individual expression and as a gathering place where individuals could find solace and comfort with others during a time of severe distress... CS

> ... Urban design enables city dwellers to use the city in new ways. PD

> Urban design creates meaningful and memorable places for the present and the future. Its emphasis is (or ought to be) the public domain, the purposeful design of the city's streets, squares, parks and boulevards, as distinct places, inhabited public rooms ... Urban design thoughtfully coordinates interventions at various scales... This requires thinking strategically ... and acting tactically concentrating on the specific site under consideration. MG

> It depends on the principles of the urban designer — it can help contribute density, mixed-use, presence of nature, positively formed and useful spaces, streets as more than traffic sewers ... RC

> It contributes a wide range of effects ... It is potentially enabling, crystallizing, spatializing, formalizing, stimulating, channeling, optimizing, maximizing, minimizing, expanding, exhilarating, challenging, stifling, regulating, comforting, sheltering, reassuring, revealing, concealing, integrating, relating, dissociating. DM

> In its capacity to map both existing and possible future cities, urban design may reveal the contents and potentials of the city to its inhabitants, thereby making them better allies in the use and remaking of the city ... RS

> Urban design can create a symphony out of what otherwise would be a cacophony of visual noise. It can humanize the anti-social behavior of architecture and make it habitable. MW

> This question is posed backwards: we should be asking what urban life contributes to urban design ... what purposes have the capacity to establish a common ground and what setting reinforces those purposes... WS

> Through urban design, an architect can try to find the equilibrium between stimulating qualitative urban life without eliminating the option of urban life to develop and grow by it self. This question is more important than its answer ... EV

> Urban design provides the setting that enables the processes of succession and engagement. RL

> To make the city usable and recognizable. To make the streets and public spaces — and the movement that nourishes them — the representative experience of the city. AW

> Visual pleasure in the physical expression of social complexity; concern for economic development for working people, affordable housing, support for physical mobility for all citizens, including women, children, and the elderly. DH

> Urban design has become a code word for sanitizing the city ... an effective measures to control public space ... a servant of the hegemonic power structure. Urban design shouldn't and doesn't have to be like this. It is something we all do frequently ... and sometimes our individual activities bound to a collective activity, to city-building processes in the best sense of the word... UL

> If urban design is done properly, always a subjective term, it contributes to a better urban and civic environment and street life... PL

> This depends on how urban design is defined: as an artistic process, it is practiced by designers... (urban designers, architects, landscape architects and physical planners). As a technical expertise, it is (by default) practiced by civil and traffic engineers. As an economic process, urban design is driven by property owners and developers, occasionally by donors and/or government grants. As a political process, all the above plus city and community planners, public servants, elected public officials, appointed commissions, government agencies, community and civic groups ... MG

> ... Two kinds of people... the professional — trained to deploy professional knowledge of how to design space, and a more loosely defined urban design practitioner... the urban inhabitant who plants their garden, the graffiti artist who imprints his or her point of view on the concrete walls of today's cities, the hot dog vendor who transforms urban space for a limited time... Ideally, engage in city-building processes. UL

> Anyone who calls themselves an urban designer. DM

> ... an urban designer coordinates the designs and ideas of several professions into the design of the city. To some degree, architects and landscape architects practice a form of urban design when they see beyond the defined limits of their specific projects and seek to integrate their work into a broader context. Urban design requires the exact opposite thinking process used in the creation of individual objects or monuments. CS

> Architects and developer teams. Unfortunately architects often confuse urban design with big buildings and/or lots of buildings. AW

> Everyone performs Urban design. Those who practice urban design actively seek to assess and/or alter the physical environment and intellectual understanding of human settlement patterns: Architects, Landscape Architects, Planners, Engineers, Politicians, Economists, Real Estate Developers, Social Activists, Philosophers, Academics and Artists ... (urban and design are not necessarily relevant to the practice of urban design). AK

> Urban design is practiced by professionals who are both designers and mediators, typically working between the public and private sectors as civic midwives who co-ordinate and orchestrate the work of other design professionals, usually architects, urban planners, and landscape architects... DK

> All parties to the construction of the city practice urban design, the unwitting efforts often having greater effect than the intentional ones. Legislators, bankers, contractors, labor unions, developers often have a greater role in defining the playing field than the self-designated players: planners, architects, landscape architects and urban designers. WS

> Sometimes I think nobody in this country. Or what amounts to the same thing, everybody. RC

> To practice urban design in an innovative, effective way requires a compelling idea (or several) about what the contemporary city is ... also a cross-disciplinary sensibility. Along with the skills of an architect, other talents may be brought to bear, those of the cartographer, ethnologist, game-theorist, ecologist, community activist, traffic engineer, script writer, morphologist, real-estate developer and archeologist ... While many claim the mantle of urban designer... rare is the urban designer willing and able to engage the broad network of spaces and programs that constitute the 21st century American City. RS

> Urban design without implementation is meaningless. The accomplished urban designer is also a master of political skills—a visionary and an activist. Urban designers come from all walks of life ... BW

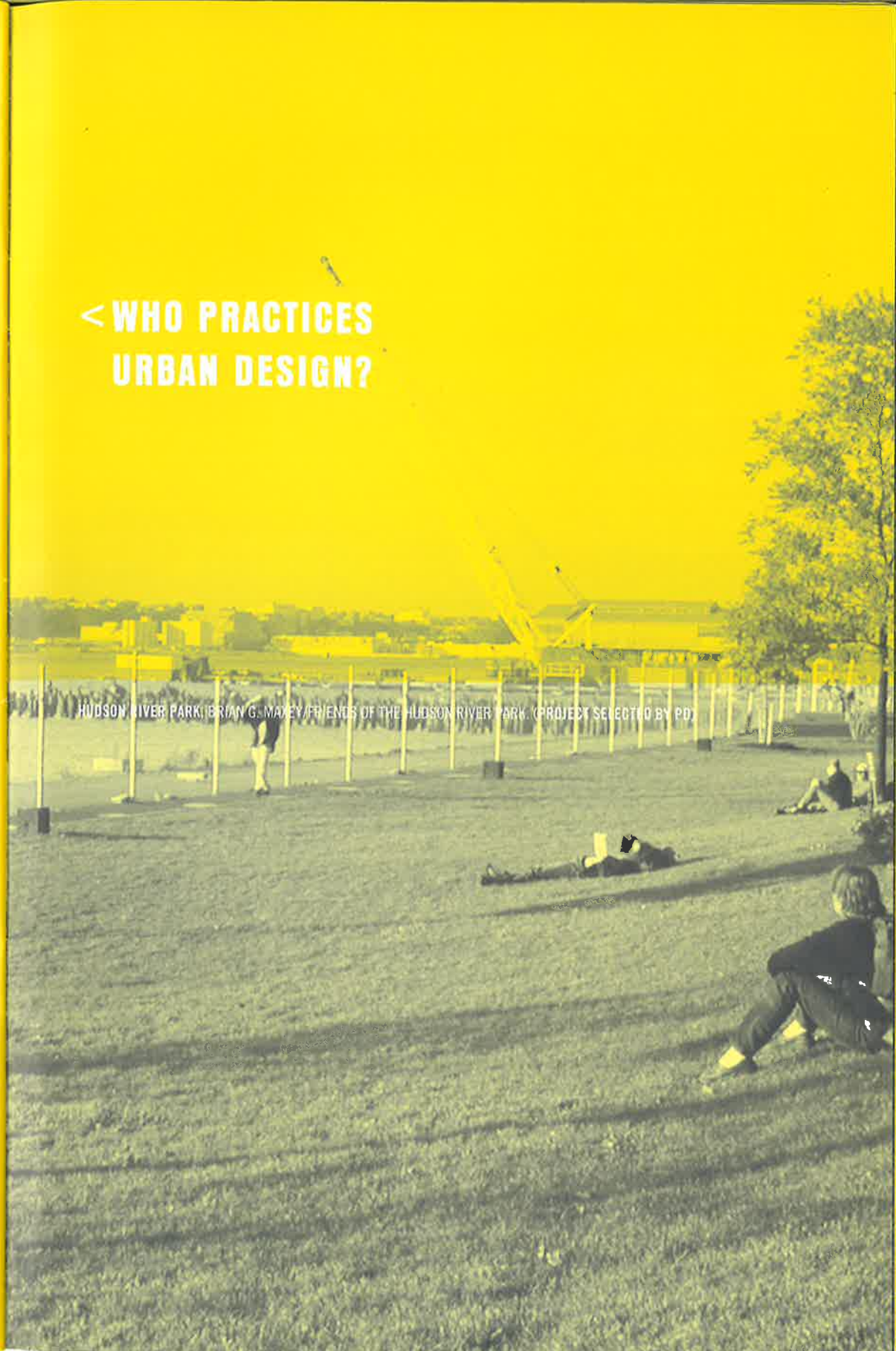
> Architects, planners, urban designers, and plenty of people who don't have experience in any design fields... PL

> Urban historians who engage with urban preservation and public history; architects who care about the context of both old and new buildings; landscape architects who make public places; and urban planners who deal with careful land use, affordable housing, public transportation, and community advocacy. All practice urban design in the public interest. DH

> Urban design is practiced by design professionals and civic actors; citizen stake holders, architects, planners... RL

> The true practitioner of urban design is a self-effacing soul who is striving to shape a consensus out of a wide variety of voices and visions that ultimately will amount to more than the sum of its parts. MW

< WHO PRACTICES URBAN DESIGN?



letter(s) from abroad

FROM BERLIN
PROGRAM FOR URBAN PROCESSES
UNIVERSITÄT DER KÜNSTE BERLIN

I: Berlin as Urban Laboratory

Teaching urban design in Berlin today offers opportunities unavailable in most American cities and universities. In the post-reunification period the city has undergone a profound change and, as the new capital of a united Germany, it has added yet another chapter to an already rich and often contested legacy of urban experimentation. The Großsiedlungen of the Weimar Republic and the constructions of the National Socialists had already given Berlin strikingly divergent visions of a modern metropolis. After the destruction of the Second World War, the Cold War divisions of East and West engendered further, often competitive, visions of urban organization (including three Internationale Bauausstellungen, the formidable Stalinallee, the great housing estates, and the Wall). Seeking to unite former divisions, post-reunification construction has added greatly to an already impressive urban repertoire. The new Potsdamer Platz, the vast new government facilities of the Spreebogen encompassing the former Reichstag, the memorials to the victims

of the Holocaust, and the *critical reconstruction* of the inner city have all received extensive coverage in the architectural press and the popular imagination. Local bookstores display prominent *Berlin* sections marketing everything from postcards and city guides to videos of late pre-war *Großstadt* and early post-war *ruin* films to Wim Wender's *Wings of Desire* and the trendy, techno *Run Lola Run*. Ideological divisions may still run deep, but the fabrication of the *new* Berlin, both as fact and fiction, is a collective and popular effort.

Generally, German architectural education places a far greater emphasis on urban issues than its American counterparts. Moreover, there is a significant exchange between the university and the work environment. In Berlin this has obvious advantages and for students, this tempers their fascination with the idealized architectural object and the image of the singular architect. However, if the combination of an energetic environment understanding — even promoting — itself as an urban laboratory and a sensitized student body sounds ideal for developing a program in urban studies, there are reservations that deserve mention. Despite the drama associated with the reconstruction of Berlin, the leading figures directing this effort exhibit a conservative cast. This conservatism is easily carried into the university via the German tenure system, which greatly favors practitioners and technocrats over those engaged in other forms of research and architectural production.

Thus the reciprocity between university and city often serves less to vitalize the urban debate than to

diminish the university's critical voice. For students, the emphasis on praxis and the paucity of courses in history, theory and criticism denies them the tools that they might use in developing alternative points of view. While this may prepare them for an easy transition to the office, it does little to develop critical abilities — including those necessary for urban studies.

II: The Program for Urban Processes at the UdK Berlin

In the topography of Germany's higher education, the *academies* distinguish themselves from the mainstream Technical Universities and Polytechnics (Fachhochschule) and offer some fundamental advantages. Smaller and more flexible than their brethren, the academies are more exploratory in their approach. Whereas the larger universities emphasize technical skills, the academies focus more on conceptual skills. Berlin's University of the Arts (Universität der Künste or UdK, formerly HdK) is no exception. Originating with Berlin's renowned Akademie der Künste, the UdK has produced some of Berlin's most progressive contemporary architectural luminaries. Financial reform requirements of the mid-1990s prompted the Department of Architecture to reorganize as the Department of Design (Fachbereich Gestaltung), allowing it to integrate with other departments, including film, graphics, and music. It has also initiated several experimental programs addressing the design demands of the new economy. Interdisciplinarity is encouraged and curriculum requirements

grant much latitude to students' exploration of fields beyond their major. Underlying this is the strong conviction that the architectural profession is undergoing a profound change and that there is no longer a need for great numbers of architectural graduates.

The *Program for Urban Processes*, which we are currently developing, reflects this period of transformation in its very name. Avoiding the term *urban design* in favor of *urban processes* was decided upon after much discussion: we felt the former placed too much emphasis on the architectural tradition of a singular, controlling vision rather than an integrative one. Within the trajectory of urban history, the connotations of design also lay too close to a concern for form alone, thus obscuring the political, economic and social forces shaping urban environments. Within the German context, it is also aligned with the planning instrument of the *Leitbild* and attendant modes of representation such as typology and the *Schwarzplan* (figure-ground plan), the latter reinscribing an ideology insisting that urbanism's primary objective is the replication of the perimeter block. In Berlin this has led to a polarization between what is touted as the *European* city and what is derided as the *American*. We also had one other option in naming the new

program. In Germany, *urban design* is termed *Städtebau* (literally, *city building*) and many departments are so designated. However, foregrounding the constructive is bound to planning concerns and therefore this was also rejected. Thus *urban processes* designates a program with a strong design component contextualized in a cultural (rather than simply physical) framework. *Culture* is understood as having an empirical component (economic, social and political facts) as well as a more subjective and ephemeral one. The latter is most aptly described as the *urban imaginary*, partaking of literature, film, advertisements and, increasingly, *city marketing*. To us these aspects are as instrumental in constructing both an *image* of the urban and a sense of the *sustainable* as the built environment.

Using Berlin as both an empirical case study and a conceptual starting point we have, in varying



Structure on the Berlin Autobahnring. RALPH STERN

contexts, also pursued exchanges with universities and cities in an international context. In the contemporary hybrid of local and global as *glocal*, understanding the urban is predicated on comparative research and we have traveled with students to cities such as Venice, Paris, Hong Kong, Cairo. Most recently, within the framework of a project entitled *Memory and Identity: Los Angeles — Berlin*, we have examined Southern California. Refocusing on Berlin, this spring we will cooperate with a new *World Heritage Studies* program developed by the Brandenburg Technical University — a program in which these sites are understood not only in terms of their historical and national origins, but also in terms of their role as destinations for global tourism. In the summer this will culminate with a workshop involving universities from America and the UK.

Taken together, it is our intention to facilitate our students' ability to engage the rapidly changing matrix of opportunities in the field of urbanism. Operating within an international context exposes students to issues of history and theory and sharpens their critical abilities while maintaining the close proximity of university to praxis expected within the German system. Finally, ongoing exchanges with other universities, both as longer term cooperative efforts and as short-term workshops, exposes students to other forms of praxis while granting them opportunities to develop the networks that will enable them to pursue their interests within a greatly expanded horizon.

Nicole Huber and Ralph Stern
UNIVERSITÄT DER KÜNSTE BERLIN



Paluhwan Intersection, Bangkok. BRIAN MCGRATH

FROM BANGKOK

Mobilizing the Geographical Frame: Globalization, Sustainability and Social Equity

Ten floors above the intersection of the Saen Saeb Canal and Bangkok's new Skytrain, one can see the city's past and future unceasingly flow past one other. The canal cuts a 72 kilometer green swath, connecting eastern palaces, slums and suburbs to the Golden Mount, an artificial hill marking the outer moat of Rattanakosin, the royal city. Below, the old 'elephant bridge' crosses the canal where the first motor cars traveled between the Pathumwan and Phayathai Palaces. It is now a multi-lane thoroughfare, quieted only for a few minutes daily when the police stop traffic to allow Princess Sirindhorn to depart from her palace. Towering above the bridge, massive concrete piers support the snaking skytrain viaduct linking central Bangkok's multi-level shopping/hotel/office/condominium complexes. Just beyond lies the campus of Chulalongkorn University, founded in 1933 by King Vajiravudh, and named for his father and sited in a vast 500-acre rice field along the canal. Rice cultivation has gone while the university has grown with the city; it is now a green commons bracketed by two new mass transit rail systems and its peripheral properties comprise some of the most valuable real

estate in Bangkok, currently occupied by shopping centers, hotels and office buildings.

The Faculty of Architecture was instituted in 1959, and its current Dean, Dr. Vira Sachakul later founded the Masters in Urban Design Program, which graduates its first students this year. He began with the simple realization that Western urban design models only partially apply in the Asian context, and local expertise needed to be cultivated to tackle Bangkok's unprecedented design challenges. While history, land-use, social, cultural, environmental and climate differences are obvious to even the casual visitor, according to Dr. Vira, it is the impact of Siamese history and philosophy on daily life that makes American and European urban design values inappropriate in Thailand. An urban design research group was therefore established in parallel with the new degree program. Studio and research projects are currently reexamining Western-led redevelopment plans for the most historically sensitive parts of the city. The economic bubble of the 1980s and early 90's gave Thailand the resources to commission foreign consultants on many critical sites in Bangkok,

but comprehensive re-evaluation has found those studies inadequate and contradictory. The work at Chulalongkorn challenges the tendency of previous plans to sweep away vital communities which cohabit with historical, religious and tourist landmarks. Based on the success of the studio and research groups, Dean Vira is currently forming an interdisciplinary research framework for Thailand's sustainable city development, instituting a shared data base integrating planning, landscape architecture, conservation, housing and urban design.

Since a critical urban design practice always questions site boundaries, this perspective from Bangkok both widens the geography of the conference's discussion and reframes it. The most problematic distortion in drawing an American frame around urban design practice is it ignores economic and environmental imbalances between world cities. While income inequality can be measured by GNP, the greatest disparity lies in the enormous amount of waste created by first world cities. American cities are great engines of consumption, and to use them as internationally applicable models for urban design invites environmental catastrophe. While de-industrialization has given Europe and America the impression that it they are leading a green revolution, industrial production and pollution has merely been relocated to Latin America and the Pacific Rim. The wholesale, media-fed importation of such unsustainable urban design(ed) life-styles leads to social, economic and environmental havoc in newly industrialized countries such as Thailand.

The Thai social critic Sulak Sivaraksa is a harsh judge of his country's reliance on Western

development and intellectual models, as well as Western educated elites who return to Thailand out of touch with the social realities of their home country. This knowledge gap presents a considerable dilemma for Chulalongkorn, which has invested enormously in the Western education of its faculty, an education Sulak argues is inadequate to the challenges at hand. For Sulak, Western development and education models degrade human life and leave no room for spiritual development or indigenous local cultures. He offers an alternative plan for intellectual and economic development for Thailand, one based on principles of self-reliance and observation, reducing one's wants, and a deeper attentiveness and awareness of human and natural interconnectedness. New sustainable and cooperative — rather than resource-depleting and competitive — paradigms are suggested as part of a contemporary interpretation of Siamese Theravada Buddhist intellectual tradition, not only distinct from Western philosophical concepts but also those from Confucian societies. For Sulak, a progressive development strategy essentially requires rigorous self-examination and self criticism at the individual, community, and national levels. A just and sustainable socio-economic order should be the highest priority in national and urban development. On-going, collaborative research that takes advantage of local knowledge for personal and societal well-being is better equipped to tackle contemporary challenges in a globalizing Thailand than current competitive academic and professional models imported from abroad.

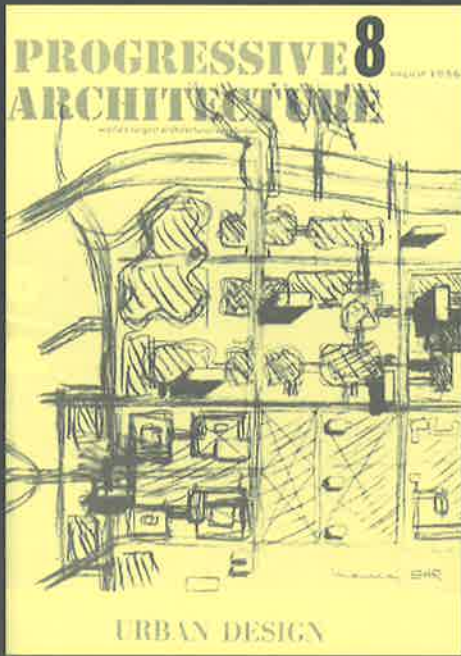
There is no Outside: Informatization, Accessibility and Opportunity in the Open Global City

The recent emergence of graduate urban design programs around the world marks a pivotal moment in the historical relationship between International and American schools of architecture. Previously, Bachelor programs in developing countries were delegated to providing the raw material for more *highly developed* programs. Now, American universities need to look towards mutual alliances — two-way exchanges between graduate degree programs internationally — rather than to a one-way pipeline of overseas applicants. The popularity of American urban design programs to international elites should be reciprocated by sustained cross-cultural research — more common in social sciences than in architecture — and financial support for students from every economic range. Cultural exchange is critical in positioning urban design programs within globalization discourse, and should be part of any program's mission to diversify its curriculum by developing collaborations with graduate programs and sites of study around the world. For several generations, American universities have trained architects with little knowledge or consideration of the geographic context in which their graduates return to practice. This is an arrogant underutilization of a considerable global knowledge base. The internationalization of North American cities, faculties and student bodies should make clear that urban research, histories, theories, sites and programs cannot continue to be culturally or spatially narrow.

As a teacher of mostly international students at Columbia, I have come to appreciate the universality of Sulak's self-knowledge paradigm. A new, technologically sophisticated generation has emerged, equipped with 'transna-

tional knowledge', having grown up living and thinking beyond nation-states. Larger cultural gaps now exist between generations and economic groups than across national boundaries. Our students are part of integrated global communities, building new networks of culturally inclusive common knowledge. Urban design practice can be redirected from a concern with the city as the representation of power towards cities of broad access to information and knowledge. Transnational knowledge pools can help to solve the North American urban crisis, a crisis of spirit, of rational and technological fallibility, of environmental management, as well as the crisis which comes from considering the rest of the world as *outside*. The internationalization, computerization and informatization of urban design programs are first steps in facilitating the creation of a new transnational urban design practice. Paradoxically, perhaps, by narrowing our frame around the emergent transnational urban subject, we will gain a deeper sense of urban design, human life and social change in the 21st century global city.

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20th century history

PROGRESSIVE ARCHITECTURE, AUGUST 1956. COURTESY ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE, ARCHITECTURAL FORUM, JUNE 1955

EXCERPTS FROM A TALE OF TWO CONFERENCES: URBAN DESIGN AND URBAN DISCOURSE IN THE MID-20TH CENTURY

The emergence of an American urban design discourse can be read in the proceedings of two conferences held in the mid-1950s. In 1955 Architectural Forum and the National Retail Dry Goods Association (NRDGA) sponsored *How to Rebuild Cities Downtown*, attended by an elite group of merchandising, banking, real estate, entertainment, transportation, highway planning, government, construction, and public education leaders. The next year the Graduate School of Design at Harvard hosted another group of architects, planners, landscape architects, government planning officials and one developer. A special urban design issue of Progressive Architecture featured their discussions. This pair of conferences can be understood in several ways: as oppositional, as similar, and as eclectic. Each of these frames offers important historical lessons about urban conceptions, interventions, and audiences.

The first framework opposes the two conferences: the NRDGA conference pragmatically focusing on the *business* of the city while the GSD conference examined the social and cultural dimensions of the *design* of the city. The former aimed to repair the city as an economic engine first and a social realm second while the latter argued that improving the physical shape of the city was necessary for its social, economic and, most importantly, civic life.

A second reading reveals their conferences' many shared assumptions and values about how the city should function, what was wrong with the city and who should make the decisions to solve its problems. Both operated inside the apolitical, consensus-based organizational thinking of the 1950s, participating in a discourse based on a positivistic view of social change, a reluctance to see the politics of master planning or urban design and a paternalistic view of *the public*.

A third reading of the two conferences finds a less unified or coherent set of assumptions about urban intervention. Several figures implicitly or explicitly challenged the ideas about city making that dominated both conferences. Gyorgy Kepes, Jane Jacobs, Garret Eckbo, Charles Abrams and Edmund Bacon framed urban intervention in ways that broadened, albeit unevenly, the discursive picture to include other conceptions, audiences and processes.

These three interpretations raise important questions about urban design and urban design pedagogy. What kinds of audiences do urban designers assume or solicit? How do the precepts of urban design practice and teaching reinforce or challenge the institutional structures in which they operate? How is urban design effected by, and how does it participate in the political and social apparatus of its time? **DAVID SMILEY, Columbia University**

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