

Utopia Building the Public City. Theory and Practice in contemporary Italian Architecture



ARCH 3308/6308 (ROME PROGRAM

ONLY)

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Course Overview:

A desire for the construction of the public realm permeates the visions and the concrete experiences in contemporary Italian architecture. This desire, deeply rooted in the past, from the roman basilicas to the piano sistino, has generated various attempts to design and build the utopia of a public city: since the beginning of the XX century architecture has been the tool to shape not only the space of the contemporary city, but also the communities inhabiting it. As a mean to build the public city architecture has been therefore a public activity in itself, strictly connected to the political and cultural context, in which it has found unique conditions to make real some visions and theories about the contemporary city. This specific utopia of the public city rooted in the Italian situation, that we call itopia, has generated all over Italy many experiments where ideas coming from abroad has been mixed with original contributions related to the specific Italian context. Particularly Rome, due to its peculiar political and social situation, has been an exceptional ground for these kind of realized

utopias.

The Architecture Theory course at Cornell will therefore focus on this main issue of Italian contemporary architecture, opening the theory field to the confrontation with concrete experiences, and with the multiple relationships that this kind of public architecture establishes with the cultural context. "Getting out" could be the keyword of this program structured in three main sections of confrontations between theory and reality, practice and society.

on site: four "open-air" lessons will give the opportunity to explore the city of Rome following some major issues, and visiting some outstanding examples of realized utopias, from the garden city model of the Garbatella, to the neorealismo of the Tuscolano, to the radical piece of Ville radieuse of Corviale.

at work: four meetings in some representative architecture offices in Rome will actualize these issues concerning the construction of the public city in the actual practices and dynamics of transformation on the territory.

in context: four speakers will be invited to trace a profile of Italian architecture seen from the intense relationships established with the contemporary culture, each time focusing on the peculiar dialectics in between architecture/politics, architecture/media, architecture/landscape, architecture/history.

These series of lessons will be introduced by a joint lecture to introduce the program and to put in perspective all the following themes and subjects. As an optional integration to this program there could be some on site and at work sessions to be held during the field trips all over Italy, in order to explore some contemporary architectures and to meet some interesting architectural practices out of Rome.

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