Urban Legends

Città Ticino

GayMenzel Studio addresses the complexity of the context as a source of development of a narrative linked to the site itself. This highlighting tool reveals the inherent qualities of the place and integrates projections or personal aspirations into it, with the broad ambition of reconnection to the environment.

Urban legends are short fictions that come close to myths, contemporary tales, which spread in popular culture by oral transmission and proliferate through social networks. These stories that circulate and that everyone knows. Your uncle told you about that alligator living in the sewers of New York, your father’s girlfriend confirmed it. These legends are mysterious, terrifying or funny. They are adapted to the local folklore by word of mouth, through hearsay. Each city produces these murmurs. Like an echo.
The Making of Sense

In these times of crisis and post-confinement, a reassessment of our way of life is essential. The quality of our relationship with nature, with the territory, and our way of living is questioned. Maybe a solution would be “resonance”, of which the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa speaks, proposing us to redefine our relationship with the world, to create what he calls the axes of resonance? Is it the “care” that Heidegger talks about that induces an exchange with the environment? Are there other ways to be explored?

Architects are actors at the heart of these fundamental questions. They have a role to play in implementing visions of how to live and work, as well as in shaping the environment: to establish a link between people by promoting the social, to reconsider the relationship to the built and the non-built, to think of new strategies in order to generate quality and meaning, in the contemporary context of responsibility.
Unveiling Narratives

The development of a project strategy is addressed through the narrative, as a crystallization of personal imagination and understanding of the site. How does the architect generate anchor points to make places legible, porous and appropriated in order to give them meaning?

The studio explores the way the project operates. It studies how the design process is constructed and develops reading keys for the establishment of a coherent discourse. The narrative becomes the tool for the fabrication of the architectural project. The objective is to develop the proficiencies of observation, reading of site complexity, and imagination. Furthermore it is the ambition to create, in spite of all the constraints of the project, an architecture which refers to something and which revives collective and shared experiences.

The studio develops a coherent idea of a project starting from the territory and its landscape all the way up to the very detail. A prototype of a lamp will reflect these influences and enable evocation. This is an opportunity for you, students, to assess what you can contribute to architecture by revealing your secrets.

Lamp prototype by students Gilles Gasser and Maxime Theuvenat, MA1 2020
The canton Ticino is fragmented by steep valleys and mountain ranges. The passage across as well as through the Alps has evolved continuously since ancient times and the arrival of the Gotthard railway in 1882. Today, with the completion of the tunnel under the Monte Ceneri, the Alptransit project, a major transport axis between northern and southern Europe, has been achieved. At the scale of the canton, an urban network connected by public transport comes to life: the Città Ticino. How does a super-efficient transport system effect the choices of habitat and work? What does site specificity – place – mean within a network?

The second semester of our academic year dedicated to the Città Ticino will investigate the urban potentials of the municipality of Lugano. Its extraordinary geomorphological situation, with its interlocking of wooded mountains and the lake, constitutes the breeding ground of the agglomeration. Here, urban expansion truly resembles to the reckless growth of a tropical forest. Constructions have spread up the slopes of Monte Brè, like parasitic plants making their way up to the canopy. Demographic pressure combined with limited flat constructible land - the notorious ticinese fondo valle – has led to a questionable, yet fascinating occupation of the territory. Having focused on the periphery last semester, we will now take a stance on the city center. It will provide the backdrop for reflections on public space, new forms of housing, production, service and leisure as a territorial and societal issue. It is about sharing and caring. It is about a respectful, resilient and sustainable inhabitation of the city through the architectural project.