

AAVS MELBOURNE: Catalytic Interventions 2

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Brief

After last year's urban explorations of Melbourne's urban fabric and the projection of systemic catalytic interventions to foster an innovation precinct between RMIT and Melbourne Uni, the studio welcomes this year's AAVS focus on the city's laneways to further the investigation into spaces that enable existing as well as radically new social patterns and practices.

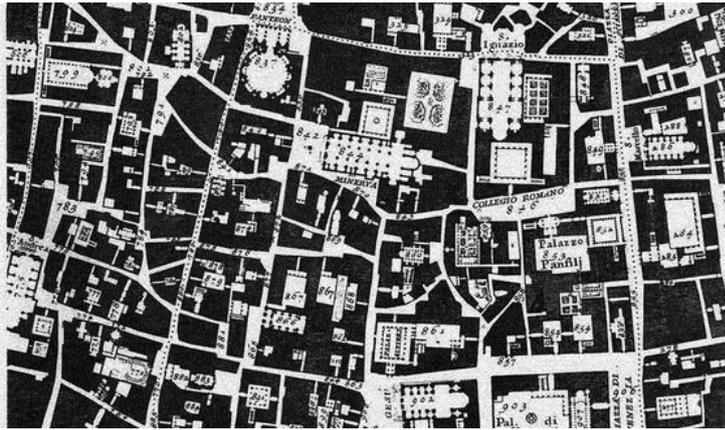
Melbourne's laneways are so renowned and successful through their unique and constrained formal character as secondary interstitial alleys that in turn foster and safeguard a robust and vibrant social diversity. They work in conjunction and across scales with the architectural structures and programs and the city's mainframe grid layout.

Socio-technological context

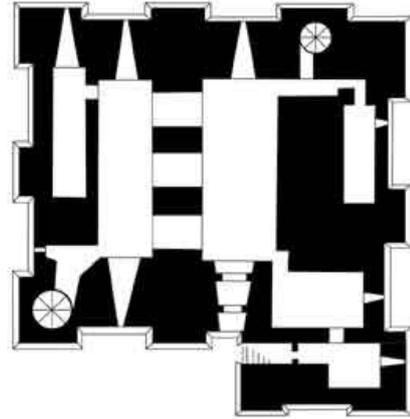
As the Internet continues to infiltrate every sphere of life, the distinction between spaces for working, dwelling, learning and leisure is collapsing, affecting the way we design and experience boundaries in architecture. Following the mass digitization of the world, architects have to address widespread building obsolescence and the need for architecture to simultaneously accommodate those changes while providing resilient and more permanent civic anchoring points. The portability and wear ability of technological devices and greater connectivity has triggered an increase in informal use of space and radical changes in occupancy that suggest new ergonomic strategies in architecture. The characterization of space through function doesn't matter that much anymore. What is more important today is for architecture to address the coexistence of a multiplicity of activities and timeframes within one space and to provide a clear spatial framework for both acts of socialization and solitude. As a studio we will reconsider the behavioral attributes of architectural and infrastructural form for their capacity to enact and affect participation, stimulate the corporal experience of space and provide a framework for social life.

Studio Culture

The studio's cultural framework will be informed by contemporary concepts of fields and relational thinking through readings of Allen, Kwinter, Eisenman and Rajchman among others. Of paradigmatic impact will be Semper's concept of the stereotomic in opposition to the tectonic. On the one hand, we will develop an obsession with figure-ground, solid-void and poche spaces, thinking and designing through subtraction as well as additively. This will be guided by the principles of Gianbattista Nolli's famous map of Rome that by clearly rendering all private space as the solid mass of the city amplified a reading of public space as interstitial, continuous and formally distinct and transgressing from outside to inside.



Giambattista Nolli, Plan of Rome 1783



Dover Castle, UK 2nd floor plan

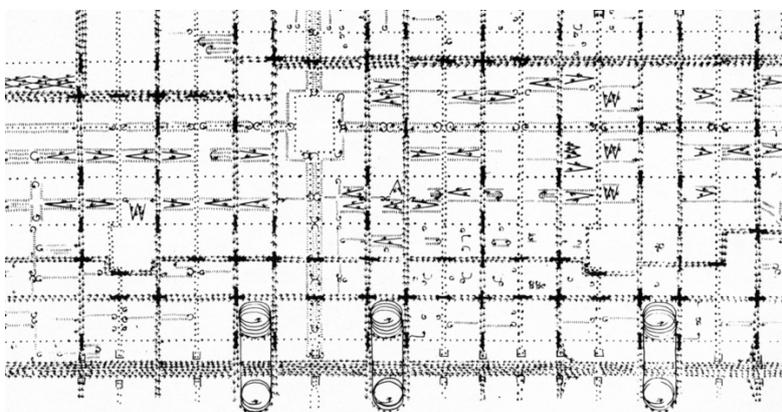
On the other hand, Claude Parent in his “Function of the Oblique” argues that by destabilizing the body through the use of the oblique plane, the body is confronted with dialectic between the effort to climb up and a potential to let go. The body cannot relieve itself from its environment but rather is fully engaged with the real. “After the separation of partitions or vertical walls generating the classic opposition of front and rear, the oblique and horizontal floorings no longer set off the above and under, that is, the surfaces and the undersides of the surfaces. Thus, the artificial floor becomes an actual “floor to be lived on” – a living ground.

Claude Parent and Paul Virillo, *Architecture Principe*, éd. de l’Imprimeur, 1997, p.8

The studio will oscillate between those two fundamental and complementary considerations of the architectural project.

Scale

The studio will experimentally gauge the scale and relationship between architectural and urban interventions. We will develop strategies of distributed micro-interventions as markers that engage a socio-political context, focusing on a redefinition of common space within the city. We will develop and employ techniques for 3D mapping and productively aligning permanent with transient conditions and scenarios, synthesize and sometimes invert the relation between form and content, structure and event, space and time. A series of urban interventions as catalysts in a network of interconnected facilities.



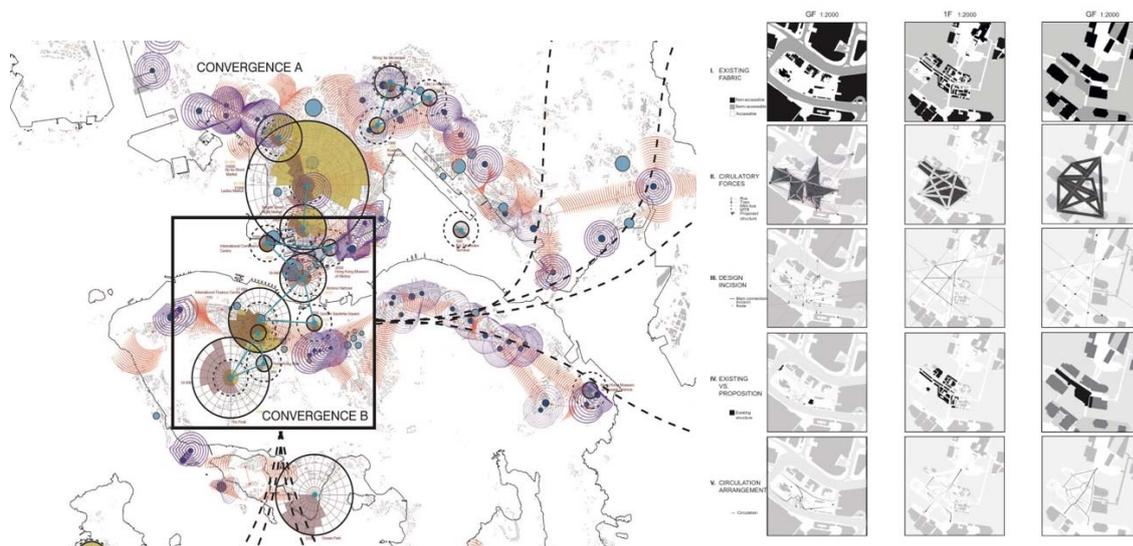
Louis Kahn, traffic study for Philadelphia 1953

Design Methods

The studio aims to critically engage and strengthen the role of architecture within the tide of virtualization. Digital techniques will shift analysis, augmentation and projection of sensitive and adaptive relational systems, fostering tight interconnectedness, communication and exchange across all levels and disciplines. Students will be required to develop diagrams that operate across scales and domains. These will engage a diverse set of techniques, from hand drawing to data-driven strategies and become key means to driving architectural concepts, developed through the interplay of bottom-up and top-down thinking. Beyond the formal elements of program, key to a successful design is enabling a diverse mix of public gatherings, informal events and 'chance encounters'. We will be developing our projects as both, spatial and constructive strategies capable to adapt to a variety of sites in constant transformation, intrinsically interwoven with their surrounding milieu. Through a series of design workshops involving 3D modelling and seminars, we will aim to understand how form plays a catalytic role in deriving distinctive organisational principles, flow, visual connections and a variety of social interactions.

Sites

The studio will conduct urban analysis of Melbourne's extensive laneway systems through a combination of top-down figure-ground mapping with viewpoint-specific and time-based experiential recordings to pinpoint a range of fertile sites for intervention. Opening-up, charging and expanding thresholds and interfaces to ultimately further blur the distinction between private and public, inside and outside, solid and void, will be a prelude to decidedly intervene deep and carve out public space and new nodal articulations to bring Melbourne's laneways into the 21st Century.



Convergence: mapping of MTR system, MArch2, HKU

TIME SCHEDULE

Site Analysis - 3rd and 5th July

As one group, we will be grasping urban systems as pulsating and transitory multiplicities in flux-ephemera and events, as well as invisible social and economic forces reciprocally augmenting the physical and material environment. The studio will analyze and transcribe these sites through recording and mapping the existing massing and its impact on spatial relationships and events, duration, cyclical events and changes. These temporal mappings and diagrams are sought to circumvent normative spatial hierarchies and conventions and instead may address how subjectivity is being constructed. This exercise enables students to understand urbanism and architecture as one continuous field and provides them with a set of analytical techniques and geometrical operations which helps determine their strategies for the following design projects. Students shall identify species of sites that present similar morphological attributes. They will be situated as nodal parts of a network, drawn and articulated as contemporary sectional Nolli plans with a hard-edged distinction of public and private demarcation within the city. These large-scale drawings will be discussed during a pin-up on the 5th of July.

Tectonic explorations: 6th to 8th July

Working towards an understanding of the reciprocities between tectonics and performance, circulation and program, the studio will develop new kinds of instrumental and inclusive toolset to intervene in the city. We will start the projective phase by investigating and employing novel spatial as well as constructive strategies in the form of digital and physical model making and material testing. We will explore geometrical integration as a means to develop tectonic strategies that synthesise multiple design objectives such as spatial experience, structure and circulation, the organisation of perception and the definition of public realm. These spatial and political goals will be offset with experimental form making explorations.

Catalytic Interventions: Generating an Ecosystem: 9th to 14th July

The maps and indices on the one hand and the geometric instruments on the other will be employed together as 'plastic' instruments that enable the inflection of time and space through the concept of formation: form and material organization will be directly and indexically generated in a response to the complex accumulation of urban dynamics and simultaneously in carving out spaces of resistance that slow down and arrest time- for contemplation, rest, learning, freedom and subjectivity.

As a group we will speculate on the dissemination of new leisure spaces and public modes of engagement with the city that are based on collective and individual action and spaces of hybridized occupancy. Newly projected interstitial architectural structures are sought to further enrich the laneways interstitial character and role in diversifying social life. We will develop strategies of distributed micro-urbanism that engage a socio-political context, focusing on a redefinition of common space within the city.