Florian Beigel
Philip Christou
Translations

FB:

The title of the talk is "translations" and the subtitle is "continuity of architectural thinking and knowledge". In this lecture we will try to describe our attempts to work with architectural references as part of the process of making an architectural design.

The lecture begins with two projects that we have designed. Quite a few of you might know these projects well. The first project that we will discuss is a theatre. It is more than 25 years since we worked on this. It's the Half Moon Theatre in London, and really the more projects we do, the more we find that they all seem to refer in one way or the other to this project. So, we still like it very much. The other project, completed one year ago is an 'urban folly' in the city of Gwangju in South Korea. The two design projects show something of a journey of 25 years between the beginning and where we stand at the moment.

The second part of the lecture is about the study of architectural references that we have been doing for many years with our students in London. We do this quite intensely, and the students have compiled these studies into a design resource book each year for the last 6 years.[1]

The third part of the talk is a description of three student thesis design projects, and how three different individuals have made use of architectural references in their work each in their own way.

PC:

I would like to say, here at the beginning, thank you from Florian and myself to Paulo Providência and to all the people who have helped to organize this conference. It is very very well done, and it's really good to be here, again in Coimbra. I would also like to add one thing to the initial words that Florian has said. The talk that Alexandre Alves Costa gave yesterday, as the beginning of the conference was, I think really important because it set the agenda for what we're going talk about, particularly the way he spoke about making sketches and drawings of existing architecture, as an important part of our education and of designing. What we want to try to do here today, is take the next step, which he didn't have time to speak about, I think. How do you take that knowledge and make a design? It's a delicate thing, how much you take and how little you take of something that exists already. How you do this, different ways of doing it, that's what we're going to try to discuss.

FB:

We have written most of this lecture down, so we will read it out. However, sometimes we will try to free ourselves from this constraint.

We at first want to say that we love architecture and sometimes and so often it happens that people surrounding the project don't love architecture. This is especially the case in England. And so, it is for us absolutely wonderful to be among architects, real architects, here in Coimbra.

1. Romanesque church near Cognac, France. Photo: P. Christou.
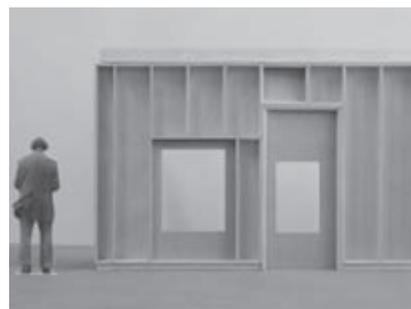
2. New Studio spaces for the Sir John Cass Faculty of Art, Architecture, and Design, London Metropolitan University. Design study model fragment of 'the boulevard', 2012.

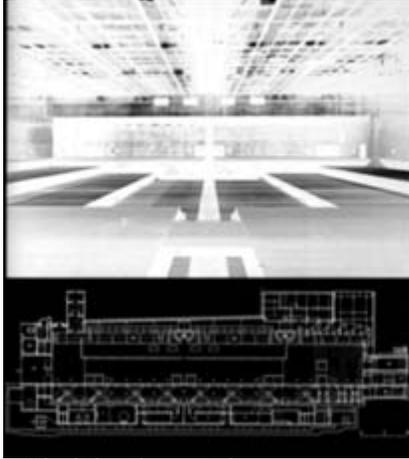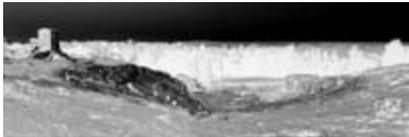3. Half Moon Theatre, London, 1985. Photo: P. Sayer.

4. Schaubühne Theatre, Berlin.

5. Ancient Greek theatre, Siracusa, Sicily, 5th Century BC. Photo: P. Christou.

6. Commedia dell Arte, Piazza Navona, Rome, 14th — 18th Century.

7. Shakespeare's Swan Theatre, London, 1596.

PC:

And as a teacher, I think Paulo has explained that an architectural tutor can give some of that enthusiasm and joy of being an architect to the student, some of that passion.

FB:

Architecture can bring culture and civility to people. To have the opportunity to study architecture is to have the opportunity to imagine and make proposals about what more cultivated and civilized houses and cities might be like. We think the city and its public spaces are the duty of care of the architect. In the city, culture is constantly being debated, argued, translated, transformed and celebrated. We think architecture can make a gift to the city. The city is the place where cultural expressions rub up against each other and the architect is often the guardian of this discourse.

An architect's education is ongoing throughout one's lifetime. In this conference we are talking about schools — but I think that what one experiences at school is not enough. An architecture school might be an extremely good one, but what one learns about architecture at university must be seen as only the beginning of one's education. It's a matter of looking, seeing and having a critical understanding of good architecture throughout one's lifetime. That's very important. One must be able to store these ideas and impressions in your memory. When designing, they come back into play, usually without intending them to. It is a body of knowledge and personal experience that helps you to understand what you are making as a designer.

We seem to have neglected in our time the potential beauty of proportion in buildings. With a good sense of proportion one can offer meaning, magic and beauty. I can think of two architects today who are intelligently using proportions in their work. One is Peter Märkli, and the other is Álvaro Siza. Now when I think about it, if you want to communicate proportion it's easier to do it in figures and numbers, but in the end it is a good sense of judgment and a good eye, based on an understanding of good proportions that comes from experience of looking and seeing.

The Half Moon Theatre, London, 1978-85

Many years ago we had the opportunity to design a theatre in London. The given site was next to a large road in east London that was built by the Romans to connect the city with the East coast. We were looking for the most authentic (perhaps archaic) version of theatrical space that we could — an urban space, not an interior. It is a theatre connected to the city.

PC:

Most contemporary theatres are spaces made up of mechanical devices — lights, sound effects backdrops that are within a 'black box' space, a place set apart completely from the world and removed from everyday

experiences. It's assumed that one can have a better experience of the theatre in this way.[2]

The Schaubühne Theatre in Berlin was originally designed by Eric Mendelsohn as a cinema in 1927. It was redesigned by Jurgen Sawade in the early 1980's as probably one of the most accomplished examples of this type of technical theatre.[3]

When we look at ancient examples of theaters, for example this one is in Siracuse, Sicily, we see the ancient Greek theatre is set within the landscape. They had a stage house at the back of the stage, (this is not there anymore in this example) and the sea was in the background. In ancient times the forest beyond the back of the stage was probably not there and the edge of the sea was probably much closer to the theatre than it is today. Being set in the real context of the world, the imaginary theatrical space is not separated from the real world.[4]

In many cities in Medieval Europe theatre was found in the public space. They called it Commedia dell Arte in Italy, and it's a place where a little stage and a little backdrop, a little back cloth is erected in the space of the public square in the city. The people watching the performance were both engaged in the daily life of the city and all the other things that were happening in the square, as well as the imaginary world that was made by the musicians and the performers.

In England, people were using existing spaces in the city like squares, or in this case they were inn yards with several floors of open galleries. Theatrical performances were played inside these inn yards.[5] William Shakespeare took this one step further, by adapting these types of theatrical performances being played within the galleried inn courtyards. He made a version of this space as a galleried courtyard theatre, open to the sky with a stage and a stage house.

At about the same time as Shakespeare was inventing new forms of theatre in London, Palladio designed a small theatre in Northern Italy that combined the feeling of sitting in a classical Roman theatre with the sky above you, and the idea of a theatre in the street as Serlio had drawn some years earlier with his comic and tragic street set designs. Palladio's Theatrico Olympico has an illusionary street built on the stage as a false perspective.[6] Serlio's stage sets also work with an illusion of a street. The focus on the city in both Serlio's and Palladio's work is delightful and continues to be inspiring today.

FB:

We were thinking about these examples when designing the Half Moon Theatre. It is a scenic street with a roof over it. The theatre offers a public space within the city. From the galleries that look down into the main hall, one can detach oneself from the performance — only a little bit — and have *"that boxing ring scenario"* as Bertold Brecht once put it.[7] We thought — it was something of that sort of thing that we needed here. We wanted a little bit of stepping back from the event to create a more social space.
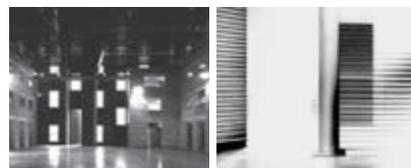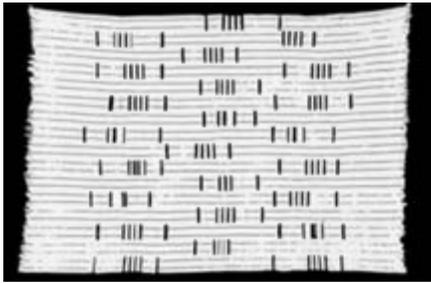

8. Andrea Palladio, Theatrico Olympico, Vicenza, Italy, 1584. Photos: P. Christou.
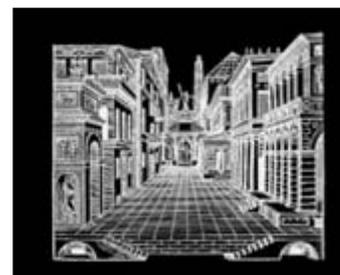
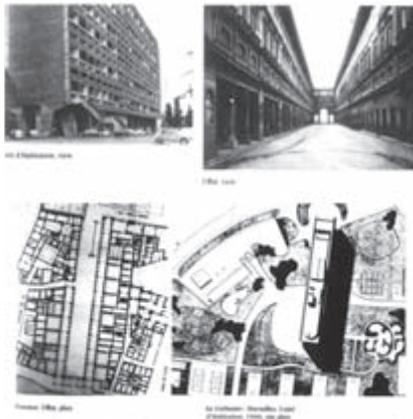

9. Sebastiano Serlio, The tragic scene, from: *Architettura, Book II*, 1545.

10. Half Moon Theatre, London, Photoss of the main hall of the theatre 1985, and site plan with interior and exterior theatre spaces. Photos: P. Cook.

11. Textile, Ghana, Africa.

12. (top left and bottom right) Le Corbusier, Unité d'habitation, Marseille, France, (1952) (top right and bottom left) Giorgio Vasari, Uffici Gallery, Florence (1581).

13. Half Moon Theatre, East End Festival, 1985.

14. Urban Folly, Gwangju Biennale, Korea, 2011. Photo: P. Christou.

We were trying to find architectural means of making clear tectonic distinctions between the architectural elements we were working with in the building — what is a wall, and what is a screen or fabric-like element. The ceiling is dark like a sky at night. The cement block work facades that form the main theatre hall are given an order almost like a child's drawing of a house. There's an idea of the street theatre as a space, and the street is formed by the theatrical buildings. The simple proportions and arrangements of the windows give the scenic street an ambiguous quality of part real and part theatrical.

In contrast to this, the screen wall that divides the main theatre hall from the entrance courtyard is constructed with a dark powder coated perforated and corrugated steel sheet material with translucent openings evenly spaced in a shifting pattern. It is like a large textile hanging in the street. We think of it like a curtain. It's a steel wall but it has the meaning of a large textile, which comes from the transparency of the material and the offsetting of the light parts of the façade.

The space of the building is conceived as a void. Colin Rowe in his book "Collage City" made the observation that the figure of the Unité at Marseille would fit into the void made by the Ufizzi Palace in Florence.[8]

The void is the figure. That was a new concept for us. I mean, this is such a different space, this void space, from other spaces, and the void space is for us the essence of space. It is called emptiness; the most important space is emptiness.

Urban Folly, Gwangju Biennale, Korea, 2011

Last year we designed an urban folly. This was one of ten follies to be built by a selection of international architects and financed by the Mayor of the city of Gwangju, Korea to enliven the public space of the center of the city. We were given a very long narrow site between the pedestrian pavement and a street. It's an architecture without a particular use. This is interesting. This is why I'm bringing this into the debate. This folly, has no particular use. It is only architecture. In the end it has many uses. It is a bus stop, and it has a big lamp, which we call a street lantern. It is a small theatre with a stage. It is a social condenser, a meeting place for the school children of two schools in the neighbourhood. It is a shrine, a house for an important stone monument that commemorates the Gwangju Democracy Movement and public massacre of 1980.[9]

There is also a tectonic concept in the design of this little tower. It consists of a base, a piano nobile and the space of the lantern above, with a bird's nest at the very top. It is given stability by a tectonic of 'L' shaped frames of different sizes at each level. You can see these 'L' shaped elements in the design sketch.

We made many of these sketches, to investigate what we called the 'memory pavement' and the idea of a stage. We were working with several design references.

We were inspired by the seemingly impossible fragility of the Roman aedicule paintings at Pompeii. When we look at these wall

paintings from Pompeii we are amazed about the fragility of these structures. When you look at the columns, you can see they are very thin and very high, they're very beautiful. This and other modern examples supported and inspired us to bring the design to a realisation.

PC:
What we're showing you here are some images of references that were part of the design process. They didn't come at the beginning and they didn't come at the end. We were thinking about how to make an ephemeral architecture that is as imaginary as these paintings. I mean, the Pompeii example is a painting on a wall, high up on a wall of an ancient Roman house. Of course it's really an imaginary architecture depicted in these paintings, but we thought, perhaps there is a way of making this almost unreal structure into a real construction.

This is a related example in a cemetery in Northern Italy. It's a modern structure and it is also somehow impossibly thin and very elegant.[10]

Then came the opportunity to make a little stage, up at the top of the large steps. There is an existing extension of the pavement where the audience could be, so the folly became a small street theatre, amongst the many other things it could also be used as. Adolphe Appia's theatre stage designs in the 1920's in Zürich, also come to mind here.[11]

FB:
Appia's stage designs are artificial topographies, artificial landscapes, a stage platform, yes?

PC:
As architects in our own work and in the work of our students we are interested in finding ways of bringing a continuity of cultural knowledge and experience to the contemporary architectural project. Cultural knowledge in architecture is embedded in the fine buildings and cities that exist around us. When we're designing we are bringing images and ideas that we've seen, and appreciated. We like to let our students understand that they can learn from things that already exist, either from a long time ago or from recent times. One can use this knowledge, but **one must translate**. One must understand some of the main principles that underpin these references from the past, and translate or transform these principles into a current project.

It is a matter of taking a careful look at good works of building art, to try to come to a deeper understanding about what the architects and master builders of the past were trying to achieve. We ask our students each year to visit selected architectural examples either contemporary or from the past, and make sketches of what they can see with their own eyes. These should be explorative and searching sketches, not illustrative. In this process we are learning from the great building artists as much as we can, to build up a larder of spatial concepts.
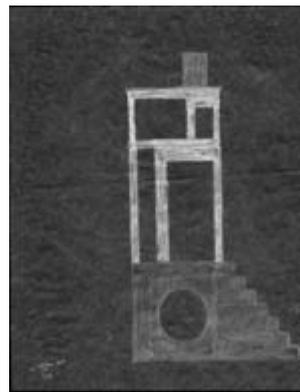
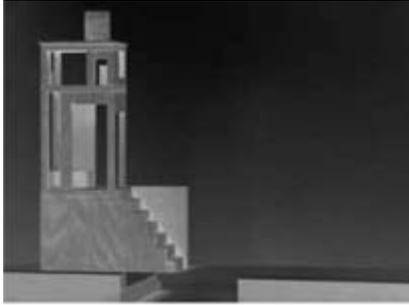**15. Urban Folly, Gwangju, Korea. Design concept sketch elevation. Drawing; F. Beigel.**

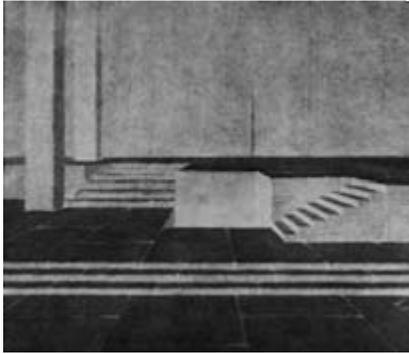**16. Roman aedicule wall fresco, Pompeii. Italy, (79 AD).**

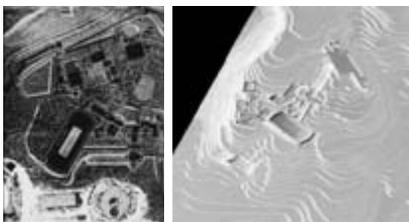**17. Pino Pizzigoni, Baj Tomb, near Bergamo, Italy, 1946.**

18. The little theatre stage at the top of the stairs facing the raised widened street pavement.

19. Adolphe Appia, theatre set design, Zurich, 1920's.

20. Urban Folly at night, Gwangju, Korea, 2011. Photo: P. Christou.

21. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, one sheet of an annotated plan of Hadrian's Villa, published in 1781 (left), and a student made topographical study model by Davood Kiani, Dingle Price, Nicola Read (right).

This process of translation requires a delicate sense of judgment and intuition. This is what we are trying to discuss today. Of course we can't completely understand everything about these things from the past, because they were made in different times and places, and within different cultures, but I think we can understand a lot of it, particularly when we go and visit the buildings. And we've seen this also in some other presentations.

Student precedent studies

We make a list each year of selected buildings and places for our students to visit in groups of one or two people. The places are related to general themes each year. Sometimes the selected buildings are contemporary examples and sometimes they are from ancient history. Sometimes they're a few hundred years old. We ask students to make sketches, a lot of sketches.

They must go there and make sketches with their own hands. They draw what they're looking at, not from a photograph or from what they think the thing is. That's very important. So it's a matter of seeing, looking and seeing again, to understand what's interesting about that architecture. They also make scale drawings and concept models of these things. We have made a series of books as a collection of these studies that the students have made. There are now six of these books, each year one book. The students use this collection as a resource for their design projects. So when we are discussing a design project with a student and they say: "I don't know what I'm doing, I'm lost!" you can say to them: "But didn't you... weren't you the one that studied the swimming pool in Bellinzona designed by Galfetti? Why don't you go back and look at that in the book?." And all the students are familiar with all the examples in the book, so even if a student didn't study that particular example, one of their fellow students did, and they can go back to it. It's a reference. They can say, "Ah yes, that's it!" And the project suddenly makes sense again.

I would like to say one more thing again about the drawing, which Alexandre Costa spoke of yesterday. These drawings should be explorative and searching sketches and drawings. So you're searching when you're making a sketch what is it that's important or perhaps magical about the place you are drawing. The sketch does not need to be literal, we think. They shouldn't be like a photograph, or like a picture of the thing. It should be about the tectonic relationships in the architecture. Basically, it's a kind of collection of spatial concepts that we have in these books.

Several years ago we visited Hadrian's Villa with students. We were trying to understand why Hadrian built in this way. After taking a very close and careful look at the historical remains of the archeological site, we asked the students to make design proposals within the archeology.[12]

On another occasion about 5 years ago, we went on a week-long visit to the Cognac region in South-West France. In fact Peter Märkli had recommended that we take students there. We spent a whole week,

everyday sketching many of these little village churches in the region, all day long. Here are some examples of the types of sketches that one student did. They're charming little buildings that have a lot of character. That year we were trying to have the students think about one general direction of enquiry: Can a building have an urban figure? Can it have a figure, be like a figure, could it have a figurative quality? And can that have an urban presence? So we took the student group to these little churches. Some of them are in small towns, and others were out in the countryside. They have a lot of character, almost like an individual person. They even have a stance, a gesture. Sometimes when they're in a town they are standing slightly dislocated from the neighboring buildings, with a sort of independence of spirit, like a person.

We think that an architect like Peter Märkli, when he designed La Conjiunta, the house for the sculptures of Hans Josephsohn, in Giornico, Switzerland was perhaps unknowingly making a kind of translation of buildings like these Romanesque churches. The Märkli building and the Cognac churches both have a very special timeless quality, and they have a lot of charm.[13]

FB:

At La Conjiunta there's this wonderful idea of three different proportions put together next to each other. And I think this idea of three different personalities, or buildings, put together is wonderful and that is enough. Then the way it is standing lengthwise to the valley, with the railway line running in the same direction further up the hillside. I think it's quite powerful.

PC:

An example of a more recently built place that we sent the students to see is the Economist Building in London, designed by Alison and Peter Smithson. These sketches were done by Davood Kiani. We have studied this project many times with many different students. Davood was trying to understand how the different elements of the three buildings that make up the project, each have a different character, and each have a different proportion on the façade. He made a lot of sketches. I think these sketches are wonderful because they are evidence of a very personal way of seeing. We want the students to be individual, be personal with their drawings. We are not interested if they draw what they assume is a good drawing. The kind of drawing that we want them to make are drawings that come from the one's own character and one's own personality.

Last year we had the opportunity to send five students to South Korea. They studied an early 16th century garden in the south-west part of the Korean peninsula called Soswaewon. It is a very beautiful example of how artificial and natural elements and qualities of the place are brought into an intimate dialogue and harmony with each other. The students made many sketches and they actually also made a design project there, using the garden as a site.

**22. Sketch study at Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli, Italy. Drawing: Raphael Pennekamp.**

23. Sketch studies by Alex Bank of Romanesque village churches in the Cognac region of South-West France. (above) and photo: P. Christou (below).
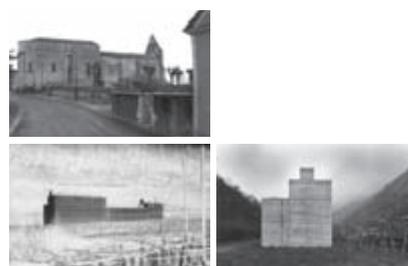
24. Romanesque village church near Cognac, France (above) photo: P. Christou, and Peter Märkli, La Congiunta house for the sculptures of Hans Josephsohn, Giornico, Switzerland, 1992, (below). Photos: M. Spiluttini.

25. Alison and Peter Smithson, The Economist Building, London, 1959-64. Photo: P. Christou.
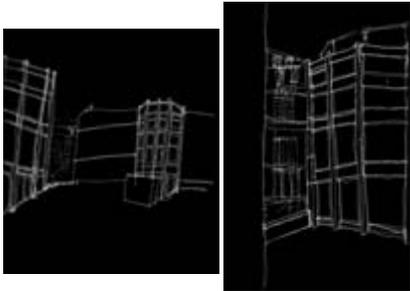
26. The Economist Building, London. Sketches: Davood Kiani.

27. Soswaewon Garden, Korea, early 16ᵗʰ Century. Photo: P. Christou.

27. Soswaewon Garden, Korea, early 16th Century. Photo: P. Christou.

28. Soswaewon Garden, Korea. Sketch: James Decent.

29. Robert Smythson, Hardwick Hall, 1597, near Chesterfield, Derbyshire, England. Photo: P. Christou.

When we make translations we use this body of knowledge of spatial concepts within the design process. The idea of translation, we think it's really important. One must not take an example and copy it directly in another situation or place. This is completely meaningless work, although it is being done all the time by the postmodernist and style conscious commercial architects all over the world. The point is to come to an understanding of the principle spatial or tectonic relationships of a given example, and to be able to use this as a spatial concept within the work, not using an image directly or adopting the style of the example. So, as a result, the translated version will usually look quite different, almost completely different to the example it's related to. Just as a poem that has been translated from one language into another will not sound anything like the original, the architectural translation will also not necessarily resemble the reference. The translation will be adapted to completely new conditions, because we have a new site, and a new time. It will probably be made with different materials and might be a little simpler or more complex in construction. One hopes though, that it shares some of the similar meanings or spatial experiences that have been understood in the existing example.

Now we'd like to show you three examples of students' projects, from different times. In the examples we've selected there's sometimes a more direct translation from the design references that have been studied and sometimes quite an indirect translation. So, different students and different architects take this idea of translation in their own way.

James Decent — *cultivation and culture* — Hardwick Hall, England, 2012

The first student project was made last year when we were working with Hardwick Hall in central England. This is a building that was built at a time when classical Italian architecture was just arriving in England. The architect Robert Smythson had never travelled outside England. He had only seen drawings of classical architecture in some books from France or Italy that were available to him. And so it was a fantastic moment when a Medieval solidity and robustness (the lower floors are a more Medieval architecture), meets a new classical language of Italian Palladian architecture, (the upper floors are beginning to be a lighter and more finely proportioned classical architecture).[14]

FB:

In the entrance gallery on the ground floor, we can see the beginnings of a classical language. This building designed by Smythson was conceived under quite clear directives from the owner who was the wealthiest lady in the whole of England at that time. She owned a glass factory that produced all the windows in this building. You can imagine windows of this enormous size were quite an adventure to attempt at that time and they would have been extremely expensive. There's a darker world on

the ground floor and then the interior spaces become higher and full of light on the upper floor. There was an old hall next to the building that is now a ruin. One can see when one visits that the old Hardwick Hall building was used by Smythson as a type of prototype or reference project when designing the new Hardwick Hall. In this student project, James Decent had the idea to integrate the New Hardwick Hall and the Old Hardwick Hall together with several of the other ancillary buildings into an urban field. He transformed the existing walled garden and walled entrance courtyard spaces into the beginnings of an urbanity.

PC:
So, after making a lot of design alternatives, James was trying to find a way of bringing this place back to life by thinking of it like an urban situation. You know in England we have many of these historic monuments and nothing can be done with them. They're usually owned by the state, and they become museums. We're not allowed to touch them and they become a kind of dead weight, and they are also very expensive to run and maintain. James thought that by taking a little bit of the singularity of the new hall away, by treating the existing other building elements in the composition more seriously, the place could be reinterpreted as a small urbanity. He put a long backbone-like route, along the line of the front wall that connects all the urban elements together.

In this student drawing of the courtyards or quadrangles at Cambridge University, there are different sized courtyards along the river, large and small. That is a certain type of urbanity. It's very dense and it's very open at the same time. James thought that maybe his proposal could be the beginning of an urbanity something like this, made of a series of large courtyards formed by buildings and garden walls that are connected together with a continuous spine. You can see this in his plan drawing.

Robert Grover — *baukunst* — Paestum, Italy, 2011
We are often bringing the students to work in places that are already really very beautiful places. It's a challenge to work and to add to a situation that doesn't need to be added to. These places are often important historic sites where it is forbidden to add or change anything. However, all sorts of change happens anyway, out of necessity or as a result of neglect. This is the ancient city of Paestum, south of Naples in Italy. It was originally built as an ancient Greek city, and it is situated in an absolutely wonderful landscape.[15]

The Greek people came in the fifth century B.C. and they colonized this plateau next to the Mediterranean Sea. They built a walled city with three Doric temples situated between the sea and the mountains. The sea probably used to come right up to the city walls, where there are very flat farm fields today. The temples and the city as a whole were designed as an artificial mediator or connector between the sea and
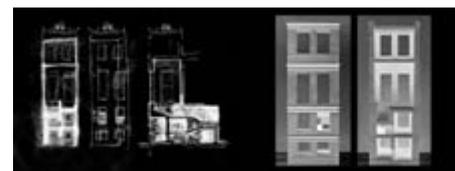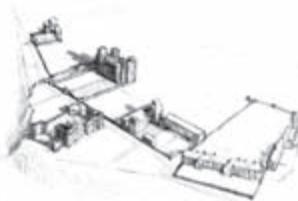

30. Hardwick Hall, sketch study sections and elevation of one of the six towers. Sketch: James Decent, and, study model of one of the six towers of Hardwick Hall. Model: James Decent and Joseph Little
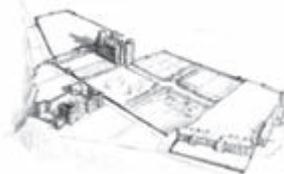
31. James Decent, Hardwick Hall design sketch aerial perspective of site as existing.
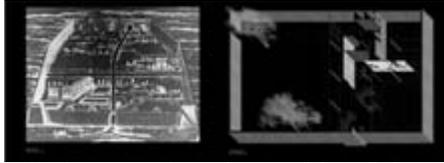

32. James Decent, Hardwick Hall design sketch aerial perspective of site as proposed with the addition of two new building ensembles.

33. from the sea towards the ancient city walls and the mountains in the background. Photo: Adam Gielniak.

34. Paestum, Italy, view of the excavated part of the city where the ancient Greek temples still exist. Photo: P. Christou.

35. Constantino Gatta, drawing of the walled city of Paestum, 1732 (left) and Robert Grover study drawing of a walled courtyard house in Berlin designed by Mies van der Rohe in 1931–35, (right).
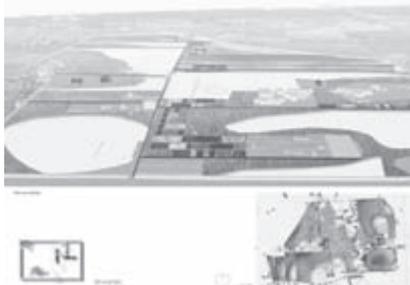

36. Robert Grover existing view of the Roman forum at Paestum (left), and a photo montage study of the same space flooded, (right).

37. Casper Francis Cropsey, 'Evening at Paestum', 1856. The Temple of Hera II at Paestum standing in a watland.
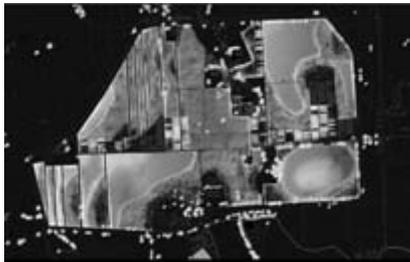
38. Robert Grover, plan of the proposed wetland city at Paestum.

39. Robert Grover, aerial view of the proposed wetland city, looking towards the Mediterranean Sea.

the mountains. The experience of this connection is still very strong today. Paestum was dedicated to the Ancient Greek God of the Sea, Poseidon, and this is where its name is derived from. Now it is an archeological site, partially excavated around the temple area, and it's very beautiful. But again, you can see that there's no money to do anything with it, or to maintain it very well. No one really knows what to do with these types of sites. So we asked the students to make a project here, within the archeology, and without a specific brief. We didn't give them any particular functional brief. We didn't ask the students to design a museum, or a school. We asked them to just work within in the remains of the city, and to try to bring back some of the qualities of the ancient city that can be understood when taking a close look.

The huge stone city walls still exist, and the three classical Greek Doric temples are standing in a line. The Mediterranean Sea is to the west and the mountains are to the east making a backdrop to the city. This has always been a very fertile plain since ancient times.

At the beginning of his design project, Robert Grover studied the courtyard houses that were drawn in the early 1930's by Mies van der Rohe, intended for sites in Berlin but never built. (The Barcelona Pavilion is perhaps the building that is closest in spirit to these courtyard house projects.) [16] Robert made this study before he visited Paestum, and he got very involved and excited by it. He came to the realization that the walled city of Paestum could be thought of as an analogy to the walled garden of the Mies courtyard houses. In his view, the various ancient monuments such as the temples within the walled city are something like the large Georges Braque wall size paintings or the figurative sculptures that Mies would place within the interior and garden spaces of the houses. He made an analogy between these two scales. The Roman Forum that was built within the Greek city was a huge public meeting space, as you can see in the photograph. It used to be surrounded with columns. Some of the columns are still there.

Robert proposed to flood Paestum, so the Ancient Forum and many other parts of the city would be flooded. He wanted to bring Paestum back to a state it had been in for perhaps more than 1000 years (from approx 500AD to 1700AD).

This idea was based on images like this 19th century romantic painting showing the Temple of Hera II at Paestum standing in a wetland. He argued that if Paestum was flooded like this, the archeological remains would actually be better preserved than if they are left in their excavated state exposed to the weather and the sun and oxygen. He proposed to bring an aqueduct from the mountains to supply water to the fields within the city. On his proposed site plan you can see the outer city wall. A series of islands are made in this new wetland city by constructing a series of embankments to retain the water according to the topography of the site. These embankments

are placed according to the grid of the Greek and Roman street plan. The aqueduct coming down from the mountains runs next to the main East-West street axis, the Decumanus Maximus of the Roman city.

FB:
And there's a small viewing station, looking towards the temples.

PC:
Due to the gentle differences in the topography, the city becomes a series of islands. In this aerial view proposal drawing we're looking down towards the three temples with the sea beyond. The aqueduct is built on the foundations and archeological remains of the buildings next to the Roman Forum.

One can see one of the Ancient Greek Doric Temples behind the aqueduct in this photo montage. At the scale of the forum site, he's making a little building, a little viewing station on the aqueduct, at the former intersection of the two Roman main streets. The project got smaller and smaller as he developed it.

This little station is placed next to the water in the canal on the aqueduct. Water buffalo (whose milk is used to make the best mozzarella cheese in Italy) are standing in the water under the aqueduct and they are sheltered by the building above.

The building proposal is made of little porticos or little viewing porches that address the main views within the site, so it's really a place to look out from. It is something like the Erechteum in Athens, (420–460 BC). The Erechteum is not a regular type of temple. It's an agglomerate building made of a number of porches that look out towards Athens and towards the other buildings on the acropolis. The porch with the caryatids looks south towards the Parthenon. Another façade of the Erechteum looks west towards the Propylaea, (the gate and main entrance building to the Acropolis), and another north towards the city of Athens. So that's what he's doing, he's trying to make a building that connects all these elements back together visually. Each of the porches has a different proportion in relation to what they're looking at. The porch that is facing the Roman forum and provides a view of the little temple on the other side of the forum is a long 'galleria'. The one that looks towards the Temple of Hera I is something like a little stepped theatre. Another porch is looking down towards the sea, and it has very tall proportions.

In the end the proposition was almost invisible. It's there but very discrete. The concept of the project to partially flood Paestum strangely makes the archaeology more visible and the newly proposed building is almost invisible.
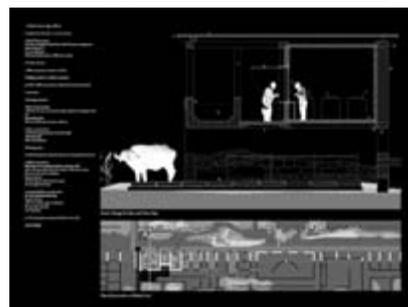

40. Robert Grover, photo montage of the proposed flooded Roman Forum with the new aquaduct and the Temple of Hera II at Paestum in the background.


41. Robert Grover, plan of the proposed flooded Roman Forum and temple complex at Paestum showing important viewing angles from the location on the small viewing station on the viaduct (above), and cross section through the new viaduct and viewing station, with water buffalo at ground level (below).

42. Alex Bank, 1st floor plan and section studies of the Hôtel de Beauvais, Paris, (1660).
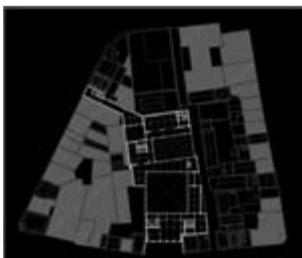
43. Courtyard of the Hôtel de Beauvais. Photo: Alex Bank.
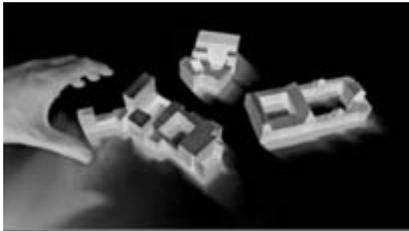
44. Alex Bank, Urban Figures, models studies of the design proposal (left), the Hôtel de Beauvais (middle), and the Hôtel Carnavalet (right) all at the same scale.

45. Alex Bank, sketch study of the design proposal with courtyard voids as figure.

46. Alex Bank, 1ˢᵗ floor plan of the design proposal in context.

Alex Bank — *urban figures* — Soho, London, 2007

The third and final student thesis project that we would like to show is by Alex Bank, the person who made sketches of the Romanesque churches in Cognac that you have seen earlier. The project that we gave the students that year was to design an 'urban figure'. At the beginning of the year, Alex made a careful study of several examples of the 'hôtel particulier', a building type that occurred during the 17th and 18th centuries in Paris and other cities in France. Wealthy people who came into the city at that time built an urban version of the grand villas that would normally be in the countryside. Placed within the dense urban fabric of the city, they tried to build a chateau, comprising an entrance courtyard with horse stables, and a garden behind. Many were built in the Marais district of Paris.

Alex studied the Hôtel de Beauvais (1660)[17], a very special example, and the Hôtel Carnavalet (1548), a more typical example of this building type with its entrance courtyard and garden. The design proposal was very much guided by many of the lessons he learned when doing these precedent studies.

The Hotel de Beauvais is built within a very dense and awkwardly shaped site in the city. The architect has transformed this awkwardness by making a beautiful void figure as a courtyard. It becomes a very theatrical and powerful space embedded in the city block. On the upper level there is a garden courtyard. As there was not enough space for this to be built beyond the entrance courtyard, it was built within the building up on the first floor level, and it was fitted into the shape of the site asymmetrically to the main courtyard. Alex studied this very carefully and intensively, and drew it obsessively. When it came to selecting a site for his own thesis project, he found a similarly dense situation in London that has been partially empty, with several built structures that have been left unfinished for many years.

He started to find ways to make translations of the hôtel particulier typology, and insert it into this site. He designed a series of courtyards and thought of these void spaces as figures — the figure as a void. His approach is similar to Hôtel de Beauvais, the main courtyard is connected to the entrance through a passage, and as at Beauvais, the garden courtyard is located on the first level.

An important part of this study was the design development of the tectonic resolution of the facade that forms this void space. He thought carefully about how it is proportioned and how it is constructed. He wanted to find ways of making the masonry construction more refined and lighter — more elegant.

For example, when Bramante was working in the cloister of the Convent of Santa Maria de la Pace in Rome, he very ingeniously created a thin pilaster on a rather thick pier, to make the pier appear lighter that it actually is.[18] It's a kind of magic that he achieved by putting a thin pilaster onto the surface of the pier. If it wasn't there the arch would

seem very thick and massive. And then, by placing a series of slender columns on the upper level, with a completely different proportion to the lower level, the architecture on top appears extremely light.

So, Alex tried to understand and utilize some of those similar techniques in his design project. In his own way he tried to interpret them to make a building construction of brick piers with cement render pilasters that has some of the theatricality of the courtyard void space of the Hôtel de Beauvais with its sequence of spatial experiences from one urban void to the next, and the elegance and sense of lightness of the cloister of Santa Maria de la Pace.

We would like to conclude by saying again that a very important part of this discussion about translating architectural knowledge from the past, is to understand that the design doesn't begin by choosing a reference. One might say they'd like to design a building something like the Hôtel de Beauvais, but it does not end there. An architect is responding to specific qualities and conditions of the site they are working with, the project brief they are developing out of the requirements and desires of the client, and one's own personal imagination and emotional intelligence. So, as architects, we're bringing all these things together. The most important thing, I think, is to be able to bring one's own experience and understandings of the world to the project. It's a personal thing. Design is a synthesis process that always requires a certain sense of risk and quite a few stabs in the dark before it begins to come to life and have its own internal logic. So it's never complete at the beginning. It usually requires a lot of detours and false starts. Finding an existing architectural example that can be used as a reference or as an inspiration during the design process is often really helpful, but it should not be used as a model that is directly replicated. It is there to strengthen and focus the spatial ideas as they are developing in the design. A deep understanding of a good reference can give one a sense of self confidence and something firm to anchor your thoughts when you are in the process of forming the design project. The reference is not there to copy. In the end, it is a matter of having a good eye. Thank you.

FB:
Thank you.

47. Donato Bramante, Cloister of Santa Maria della Pace, Rome, (1500-04). Photos: Anna Crosby.

48. Alex Bank, design proposal model and drawing studies of the proportions of the courtyard facade.

49. Alex Bank, the void figure seen in an aerial view over central London.

1 → The following books are design research studies of historical and contemporary architectural projects in various European cities made by students of architecture at the London Metropolitan University tutored by Florian Beigel and Philip Christou: Urban Figures (2007), Landscape as City (2008), City Structures (2009) Architecture as City (2010), Baukunst (2011), Cultivation and Culture (2012). See: http://aru.londonmet.ac.uk/news/#news-March-2012
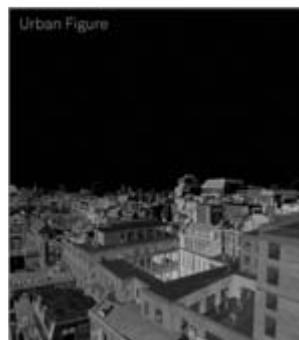2 → The Architectural Review, 'Beyond the Black Box', by Peter Blundell Jones, July 1986, p.46-51.
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3 → Breton, G., <u>Theatres Theaters</u>, Editions du Moniteur, Paris, 1989,
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is one of several fine examples still existing on the island. Others include:
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<u>dogadobisangdo, Gwangju Design Biennale 2011, Exhibition Book 2</u>, Gwangju Biennale
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11 → Bablet, D., <u>Adolphe Appia 1862-1928, actor-space-light</u>, John Calder, London,
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16 → Ábalos, I., <u>The Good Life</u>, Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2001, 'Zarathustra's
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