TWO STUDIES IN ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM
Perth, Australia, 31°57'8" S 115°51'32" E, 21st Century

Design Studio  Ursa Rosner
Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts - The University of Western Australia
PARTICIPANTS
Participants in the Urban Study

STUDENTS - SECOND YEAR
Leon Allison, Sofi Antonas, Caroline Brennan, David Crudeli, Lijana Galas, Rowan Gilbert, Kate Hoolahan, Angela Hopkins, Marilyn Howden, Ming Leang, Bill Macintosh, Heather Macrae, Rohan Miller, Akira Monaghan, Claudia Rosario, Dimitri Rtsiladze, Shannon Townley, Michael Tyler
Brochure Production: Loren Holmes

STUDENTS - THIRD YEAR
Basir Amir Sultan, Ivan Bannon, Daniela Casadio, India Collins, Parisse Constantine, Erika de Lima, Seth Gill, Jeremy Graham, Guoping Guan, Angela Hopkins, Georgia Mary, Julien Maurel, Alessandra Mercuri, Samantha Romano, Sajeeda Begum, Darren Spragg, Gabrielle Starling, Daniel Stiller, Chrystal Teh, Gary Williams.
Brochure Production: Patrick Hubble

THEMES

THEME: BOWLING ALLEY & CAFE & BOOKSHOP / GALLERY

THEME: ACADEMIC VILLAGE & INFRASTRUCTURE

Studio Master: Ursa Rosner
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The University of Western Australia
COMMENT
on the Metropolitan Region Scheme Amendment No. 1138/41 - April 2007

As a newly appointed Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts at the University of Western Australia, I chose the site of No. 1138/41 at Leighton as the site for the design studio I coordinated this semester - unaware, at the time, of the issues surrounding this site. I made this choice of site as a result of my expertise and professional experience in the field of ‘architecture and landscape’. Having been involved in a number of urban and rural redevelopments in my career as a registered architect with practice and teaching experience in Germany and Austria, and due to the fact that this particular site happens to comply with a number of standards of outstanding exemplary quality for generic ‘Perth criteria’ - such as the contrast between gentle, small scaled topography and wide angle magnificent views, or a typical kind of urban layering generated by the close coexistence of superb natural flora and fauna and highly efficient traffic networks - I made this site my number one choice. In a joint effort with around twenty students I am presently exploring the issue of ‘place making’ at the example of the Leighton site. In our project we are not only looking at the land of No. 1138/41 itself, but at its context in relation to the ocean, and to the adjacent situations to the north and to the south.

There are a few intermediary results which can be named and which I would like to share with you:

1. The leighton situation seems to be the most important beach site in Perth yet left to be developed. This has to be taken into account at a time when an urgent necessity to rethink the city’s future in terms of its cultural identity is being addressed publicly by professional groups and institutions. The Leighton site comes at a point where its key role within such a larger endeavour is to be recognised. It has the perfect potential of becoming one of several themed pilot projects within a larger city amendment scheme. Generic architectural operations such as the creating of place and of an atmosphere specific and unique to a location can be performed at its example. By applying such a strategy the city of Perth’s identity can be constituted at a comprehensive level whereby all of our contemporary complexities and needs will become fully reflected and catered for through the city’s physical reality.
The results of this studio might form the starting point for a professional project study by a team composed of selected professionals and students of the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts, and beyond. Depending on the setup and course of the project it might lead either to partial results such as the preparation of competitions, or to final results at a design level.

I would like to state that now that I have met a number of professionals from various fields and have attended several discussions plus a meeting organised by the Urban Design Centre with special guest Charles Landry I have developed a general understanding of the structure of Perth. I agree with others: as the world has become a smaller place Perth cannot continue to build on the splendour of its isolation as its only asset of magnificence: the time has come when it has to commit to globally valid criteria for quality of living. Perth as it is has much in common with places like Dubai where clearly the development of its cultural identity cannot keep up with the speed of its economic development. Without a doubt Perth is facing the question of development in terms of cultural sustainability - which in the medium to long run constitutes a pivotal point in its overall sustainability. How about starting at Leighton? I would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss this proposal with one of your boards in order that it may be developed in a mutually beneficial manner.

Ursa Rosner

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01 LANDSCAPE LIVING
Life within a sustainable, economic and topographical landscape

This approach involves finding a place to live within the context of the landscape. Intervention in the landscape is kept to a minimum, and living is very much a communal experience in a topographical and cultural setting.

A sense of the landscape is visible from all areas. The slope of the site is utilised to provide for everyone’s needs, both socially, and economically, with the provision of ‘stacks’ to accommodate a mixture and a combination of private/public space, low/high density, and natural/controlled environment.
A scalable architecture allows expansion of the social system within and without. The architecture in this scheme uses a modular linear expansion model that provides extensibility and customisation of all the varied volumes.
Strong decisive moves, and heavy intervention in the landscape, are sometimes unavoidable, and sometimes the most efficient. Here space is created with a clear distinction of inside, outside and public and private - and a protective layer is formed around a private courtyard.
08 THE AVENUE
Efficient planning, orientated to the north

Approach the internal street, allowing efficient planning to take place, with buildings orientated to the north for access to passive solar advantages, and for creating a familiar urban space for the interaction of those both inhabiting and passing through.
Standardised planning components allow the formation of a unique urban landscape, and can also give the most amount of flexibility while achieving the most amount of efficiency both structurally and sustainably.
Here there is communal space to the west, living to the north, and services to the south, forming an energy efficient network of courtyards, buildings and functions.
12 EXTENSION OF THE SITE
Harmonious relationship between site and architecture

Taking full advantage of the site, but also creating a sense of place amongst the landscape by framing and identifying qualities that already exist on the site.
**01 SPATIAL SEAMS**
Active thresholds, thickened passages

This approach involves a collection of simple, geometric forms, partially embedded into the land, sited in such a way to create a number of ‘spatial seams’. These seams become spaces of exchange; a rich zone of inside/outside, public/private interactions, creating an interactive relationship between architecture and landscape, public and private, work and recreation.

The user becomes both socially and spatially interwoven with the scheme as the quality of ‘threshold’ is directly related to the activity of passage. Cultural sustainability is therefore ensured.
This approach to the Leighton site embraces the idea that the definition of space should not be limited to simply the creation of interiorised pockets. Instead, this scheme prioritises spatial layering, where architectural and landscape interventions are made up of multiple elements to ‘open up’ the ‘buildings’ and ‘organise’ the ‘site’.

Exterior spaces are manipulated to feel sheltered and somewhat interiorised, while certain interior spaces open up into the landscape; scenarios which provide impetus for public interaction and enhanced engagement.
In this scenario, architecture and landscape are interwoven elements. The buildings and the outdoor spaces closely relate to the topography of the site, acting to dissolve the perimeter and interweave built intervention with context. The strategy is therefore less dependent on form, and more related to the specifics of site and programme.

The choreography of site, landscape and architecture works to minimise major interruption, and in doing so, encourage multiple modes of passive and active interactions between public, site and built programme.
Responding both to the industrial language of the immediate context, as well as to the topographical characteristics of the site, this scheme proposes a series of bundled simple forms, partially stacked, partially dispersed. The resulting configuration establishes a number of varied relationships between inside and outside, as well as between site and built intervention.
This project engages the larger scale of the road to ocean, but also ties into more intricate relationships with human activity. By bundling the mass of the built forms together and topographically embedding it into the site, views of the beach from the road are minimally interrupted, and a passive activity platform is created.

The users of the built programmes are thus encouraged to descend into the architecture, enabling a much more personal relationship with the site.
The spatial organisation of this approach prioritises the establishment of an exterior public platform which forms a social and cultural activity zone. The result is a tightly knitted conglomerate of built mass and structured ‘ground’, with architecture and landscape working in unison.

Interior and exterior spaces are experienced as a series of interlocking pockets, fields and events, providing varied opportunities for public and private use and interaction.
This approach to the spatial organisation of the Leighton site involves partially submerging the dispersed building masses, in-turn providing a series of raised ‘new ground’ conditions. This approach therefore facilitates a strong and interlocked connection between landscape and architecture. It works to diminish the physical and conceptual distinction between architecture and landscape; thwarting the usual hierarchical relationship that privileges one over the other.

The scheme thus works to site specifically merge landscape with architecture, the ‘natural’ with the human.