

NJIT FALL 25 GERNOT RIETHER

URBAN SPACE HYBRID

PUBLIC SPACE FOR A DIGITAL CULTURE

M.U.D. PROGRAM ARCH 601 URBAN DESIGN STUDIO I

Prerequisites: Acceptance M.U.D. Program or BS/MS + ARCH 396 or ARCH 364 and ARCH 304 or ARCH 329 and ARCH 314 or ARCH 327 and ARCH 324. Location: Weston, seventh floor deck. Meeting Times: MR 12:00pm - 5:50pm. Contact Instructor: Prof. Gernot Riether, griether@njit.edu. Office Hours: Open door policy or by appointment, in person or online.



Marco Brambilla's Heaven's Gate

Type of course:

This studio is an urban design research studio. Similar to a design office, ideas will emerge from analysis and discussion. As there are always many solutions to a problem different ideas and strategies will have to be tested quickly and developed over time by constantly revising presentations to effectively present a complex urban scale project.

Learning Outcomes:

In this course students will learn the fundamentals about urban design by analyzing existing conditions and developing urban design solutions and implementation strategies. Students will learn about presentation techniques by analyzing published urban design proposals and developing their own language to effectively communicate complex urban transformations that happen over time and at a large spectrum of scales.

Introduction - From Historical Spectacles to Digital Convergences:

In the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, public urban spaces, particularly parks, were designed and utilized as grand social venues where people from all walks of life could gather, relax, and enjoy various recreational activities.

As cities rapidly expanded due to industrialization, there was a pressing need for open spaces where urban populations could find respite from crowded, polluted streets. Parks became essential sites for socializing, entertainment, and leisure, offering a green escape within the urban landscape.

Urban design philosophy promoted the beautification of cities through grand, monumental public spaces, including parks. Notable examples include the transformation of public gardens and boulevards in Paris under Baron Haussmann.

Parks were viewed as vital for promoting public health, social cohesion, and moral upliftment. They provided democratized spaces where people of different social classes could mix, exercise, and enjoy nature, fostering a stronger sense of community.

Parks often hosted grand events, fairs, and exhibitions that attracted large crowds. These events, such as the World's Fairs or major public concerts, made parks focal points for cultural and social life.

The mid-1800s to the early 1900s marked a time when public space and parks were integral parts of urban social life, serving as stages for public gatherings, cultural events, and everyday leisure activities—making them true social spectacles.

THE SPECTACLE OF TODAY'S PUBLIC SPACE: A DIGITAL CONVERGENCE:

What is the spectacle of today's public space? The studio seeks to explore this question without turning cities into mere consumer or tourist spectacles. Instead, it will speculate on the future of public spaces, where physical and digital realms converge to create new forms of social infrastructure for a digital culture.

As cities continue to evolve, the integration of digital technologies—from XR (Extended Reality) to AI (Artificial Intelligence)—offers an opportunity to redefine communal living. The studio aims to challenge and reimagine the concept of public space within today's digital culture, envisioning environments where historic traditions and contemporary rituals coexist, and where new realities emerge by extending and hybridizing public spaces.

By leveraging these new technologies, urban designers can create public areas that are not only functional and accessible but also dynamic and engaging, reflecting the diversity and complexity of modern urban life.

PROJECT FOCUS AREA:

Within this framework, the studio will develop urban strategies for the area between the two historic city centers of Krems and Stein. These two medieval towns, dating back to the 13th century, are located at the gateway to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Wachau one hour west of Vienna.

This area, situated between the city walls of Krems and Stein, has been occupied by Industry, a high security prison, and more recently, by university buildings, alongside several art venues and a cruise ship terminal. Also the Wachau bike trail passes through much of the area is dominated by vehicular infrastructure, such as a gas station, parking lots, and two roundabouts.

Five years ago, a popular historic restaurant, also frequented artists, was demolished to make way for the state gallery, a massive twisted concrete block that now dominates the urban landscape of this area. Another contentious development is a nearby industrial building, recently purchased by a developer, which has further complicated the area's identity.

ANALYZING A "NO MAN'S LAND":

Given these contradictions, the studio will analyze the area as a "no man's land"—an ambiguous, anomalous, and contested space, an unregulated territory that evokes conflict and uncertainty. The studio's approach will involve creating new connections within this territory and developing a timeline for possible interventions.

The City of Krems and Stein:

Situated on the banks of the Danube River, about 43 miles (70 kilometers) west of Vienna, the towns of Krems and Stein serve as the gateway to the Wachau Valley, a renowned wine-growing region in Lower Austria. With a combined population of around 25,000, Krems and Stein lie south of the Waldviertel and east of the Wachau Valley, about an hour's drive from Vienna.

The area boasts a long history of human habitation, dating back approximately 30,000 years. Between 5,000 and 4,000 BCE, agricultural communities began to thrive here. During the Roman Empire, it formed part of the province of Noricum and lay along the empire's northern frontier, demarcated by the Danube River.

Krems and Stein were founded as strategically located fortified settlements in the 10th century, positioned along key trade routes that made them significant centers of commerce during the Middle Ages. The towns experienced cultural and architectural growth during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. In the 19th century, the region underwent industrialization and modernization while managing to preserve its historic character.



Gernot Riether, Google Earth

Today, Krems and Stein have merged into a single city, but architecturally still distinct though their well-preserved medieval buildings. The town's rich history and picturesque surroundings have contributed to its recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Krems is now a cultural and educational hub, home to Danube University and numerous cultural institutions, including the Kunstmeile.

Today, Krems and Stein have merged into a single city, yet each retains its architectural well-preserved historic distinctiveness.

Located on the banks of the Danube River, about 43 miles (70 kilometers) west of Vienna, the towns of Krems and Stein mark the gateway to the Wachau Valley, a renowned wine-growing region in Lower Austria. This small town, with a population of around 25,000, lies south of the Waldviertel and east of the Wachau Valley. Krems and Stein are approximately an hour's drive west of Vienna.

Studio Structure:

The first 6 weeks of the studio will be used to develop urban furniture that has the capacity to activate the current public space of the Museumsplatz, the public space in the center of the Kunstmeile. Each of the urban furniture needs to be developed from a good understanding of the context and a clear research question and complex narrative. Each project needs to fulfill minimum requirements such: Have a physical and digital component, be Interactive, have the capacity to create communities and identity and be sustainable. To achieve these goals the design process is broken down into a series of 6 assignments. To allow for assignments to inform each other in a non linear way assignments will overlap and run parallel to each other.

Assignments:

1) GRAPHIC STANDARDS

From case studies develop a sophisticated graphic language that can be used to present an urban design project at multiple scales.

Deliverables: Drawings and diagrams inspired by existing projects and their representation techniques.

2) BASE MAP

From existing vector drawings create a base map that has multiple layers of information about program and infrastructure of Krems

Deliverables: Edited city map with multiple layers

3) MAPPING

Analyze proximities of existing programs and circulation of the site. Present Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the site as text and diagrams.

Deliverables: Text, plan diagrams and axonometric diagrams.

4) HYBRID CONDITIONS

Use AI prompts that combine different aspects that you identified in your analysis to develop new surprising hybrid conditions that merge traditional and new cultural elements, physical and virtual or public and private into new types of urban spaces.

Deliverables: A matrix of images and prompts

5) RESEARCH QUESTION(S)

From your analysis and AI experiments develop very specific research questions that provoke new practices of using public space in the context of site, program, and technology.

Deliverables: Research question(s), short paragraph, diagrams

6) NARRATIVE(S)

Develop a narrative. Define programs and activities and hybrid conditions to curate and program the public space. Programs may be formal or informal, temporary or permanent, enclosed or open, adaptive or flexible. Describe who will benefit from your ideas.

Deliverables: Project titles, subtitles, clearly formulated research questions and narratives and supporting diagrams.

7) PROJECT

Use diagrams and text to address what new urban practices are you introducing, what are opportunities for public participation and authorship, how does your project create identity and what communities and possible stakeholders would benefit from it.

Deliverables:

Title and text and diagram that explain conceptual ideas of the project. Diagrams that explain how your project functions. Diagrams that address project questions and the project's narrative. Diagrams that explain the project at different scales. Explain your project and different aspects of your project through renderings, axonometric drawings plans, sections, and elevations.

8) IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Develop diagrams and renderings that show how your project will change the existing urban space over time.

Deliverables: Diagrams and renderings

Schedule:

Week 1

M 09/05 Introduction: GRAPHIC STANDARDS (1), BASE MAP (2)

Week 2

M 09/09 Review: GRAPHIC STANDARDS, BASE MAP

TR 09/12

Due: Assignment 1-2
Introduction: MAPPING (3)

Week 3

M 09/16 Review: MAPPING

TR 09/19

Review: MAPPING

Week 4

M 09/23 Due: Assignment 1-3
Introduction: HYBRID CONDITIONS (4)

TR 09/26

Review HYBRID CONDITIONS

Week 5

M 09/30 Due: Assignment 1-4
Introduction: RESERCH QUESTION AND NARRATIVE (5-6)

TR 10/03

Review: RESERCH QUESTION AND NARRATIVE

Week 6	
M 10/07	Due: Assignment 1-6 Introduction: PROJECT (7)
TR 10/10	Review: PROJECT
Week 7	
M 10/14	Review: PROJECT
TR 10/17	Review: PROJECT
Week 8	
M 10/21	MIDTERM REVIEW Due: ASSIGNMENT 1-7 Introduction: REVISIONS (8)
TR 10/24	Review: REVISIONS
Week 9	
M 10/28	Review: REVISIONS
TR 10/31	Review: REVISIONS
Week 10	
M 11/04	Due: ASSIGNMENT 1-8 Introduction: SCENARIOS (9)
TR 11/07	Review: SCENARIOS
Week 11	
M 11/11	Due: ASSIGNMENT 1-9
TR 11/14	Review: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY (10)
Week 12	
M 11/18	Due: ASSIGNMENT 1-10
TR 11/21	Final Revisions
Week 13	
M 11/25	PREFINAL
TR 11/26	Final Revisions
Week 14	
M 12/02	Final Revisions
TR 12/05	FINAL REVIEW
Week 15	
M 12/09	Exit Interviews

Means of Evaluation and Grading Standards:

All parts of the research and project will be evaluated; however, the purpose of the educational experience is to develop personal professional motivation and not to encourage the idea that work is created solely for the purpose of external reward. The benefit that will accrue from this approach is that it will reinforce a "risk free" environment, TAKE A CHANCE, creative thinking will be rewarded (and is required). Mid-semester reviews will occur to help us each understand both your strengths and weaknesses in time to assure a successful educational experience.

The student who exhibits evidence of intellectual curiosity and growth by expanding the limits of the problem; by utilizing creativity and innovation in the interpretation of the problem; by being willing to experiment; by trying to go where "no person has gone before" is above average or excellent and will be rewarded at a level commensurate with that effort. At this time in your professional career as a student, (we are all students all our lives) intensity, effort, intellectual inquiry, professionalism, open-mindedness, and a positive cooperative spirit are the most important virtues you can cultivate.

Grading Scale:

Each Assignment = 10%, to improve the grade of any assignment the assignment can be updated until the final presentation.

Absences:

After the 3rd unexcused absence every absence will reduce the final grade by half one grade. Arriving more than 15 minutes late or leaving earlier will be counted as ½ absence. By providing verifiable documentation through filing an If you have to miss a class because of special circumstances online Student Absence Excuse Request form related to the absences within 14 days, a student can ask for accommodation.

Your presence and being on time is essential. Your engagement in the project will be factored into every grade. Being absent, being late, leaving early or using studio time for things other than studio will be interpreted as not being engaged in the project.

NJSOA'S Culture of Learning and Teaching:

In addition to the overarching values and ethics of the university, the New Jersey School of Architecture is dedicated to optimism, diversity and solidarity, professional conduct, constructive evaluation and instruction, collaborative community, health and wellbeing, time management and school-life-work balance, respectful stewardship and space management, and well-rounded enrichment. The pedagogy of architecture and design is as complex as it is rewarding, and as dynamically evolving as the people who learn and teach it. This understanding resides at the core of the NJSOA Learning and Teaching Culture Policy.

Archiving:

Students must upload copies of their assignments to the new KEPLER 5 system found under the KEPLER tab in CANVAS "Modules". CANVAS assignments folders are automatically ported to KEPLER, although students will need to initiate a separate KEPLER upload. The new KEPLER has an improved interface for easier batch uploading. Any file, regardless of file size, or type can be uploaded, although .pdfs and .jpegs are recommended to ensure viewability. KEPLER no longer has individual student folders. Rather, student work is now available for review in either "List View" organized by student or "Gallery View" with thumbnails of all work in an assignment folder viewable at once.

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity and honesty are of paramount importance. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. The NJIT Honor Code will be upheld, and any violations will be brought to the immediate attention of the Dean of Students. All students are responsible for upholding the integrity of NJIT by reporting any violation of academic integrity to the Office of the Dean of Students. The identity of the student filing the report will remain anonymous. All students are expected to adhere to the University Code on Academic Integrity link and to the Code of Student Conduct link. HCAD librarian Maya Gervits has assembled excellent resources for a students use on using images, citing, and plagiarism link.

Students with Disabilities:

OARS will notify professors via email regarding students with approved accommodations enrolled in their classes. Student Accommodations will have to be signed and dated by each professor and returned to Chantonette Lyles (Chantonette.Lyles@njit.edu)