

ENCLOSURES: THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE PERIMETER

Course Information

4.154 Arch Design Option Studio

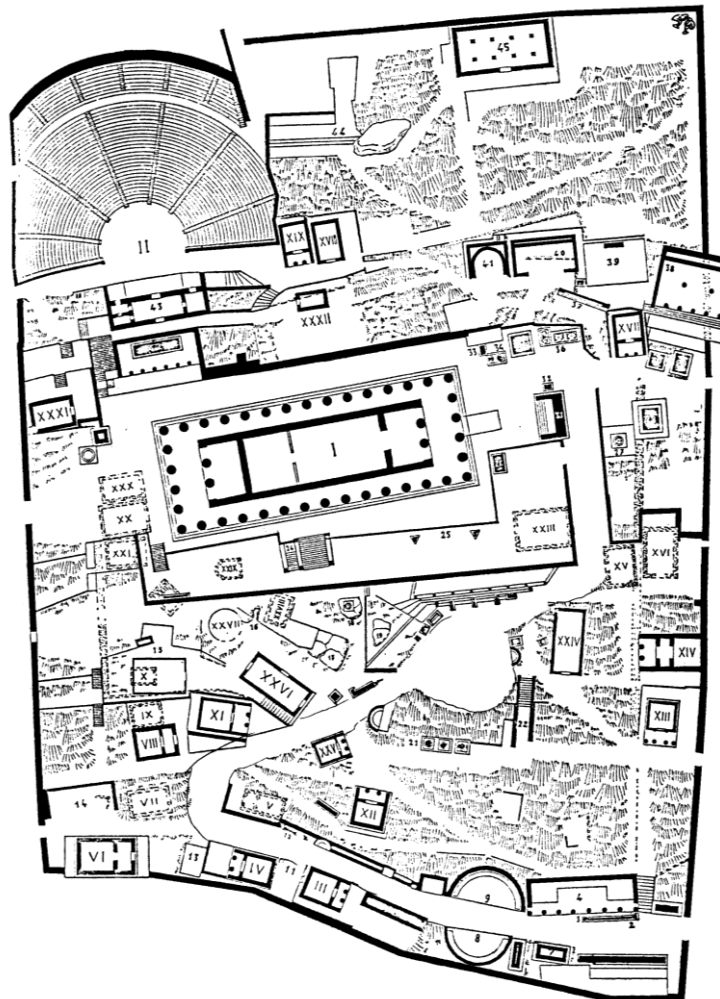
MIT Department of Architecture

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Teaching Fellow: Emily Jane Wisseman

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Schedule: Tuesdays and Fridays, 1:00-5:00 pm EST



Studio Description

Fencing is both the act of collective recognition and appropriation of a portion of land or physical space: it is the act of its delimitation and separation from the rest of the world-nature. It establishes the two topological, imaginary, geometric, technical regions of outside and inside. It formulates the problem of the mental or physical constitution of the limit, of the boundary and its violation. An act of architecture par excellence, the enclosure is what establishes a specific relationship with a specific place and at the same time the principle of settlement by which a human group proposes its relationship with nature-cosmos. But the enclosure is also the form of the thing, the way it presents itself to the outside world, through which it reveals itself.

In the opening editorial of *Rassegna*, published in 1979, Vittorio Gregotti proposes a theme that can be considered the manifesto of both a way of understanding the discipline and of questioning its boundaries. Architecture is primarily understood as the effort of a multitude. While evoking a primordial act of territorial conquer, the emphasis is on the collective and ritual nature of the gesture. Both act and form, the enclosure doesn't produce a solitary figure nor an abstract, generic principle. Its presence is always in relation to a particular place. It establishes a new order and generates a new equilibrium within a given territory. Further on, the editorial argues for the need to redefine the notion of enclosure *at the highest possible level of abstraction*, recognizing how its definition in terms of *pure function* (that of preventing the crossing of a body, a gaze, a law...) is what allows apparently disparate objects to be brought together under a single notion. The catalogue of examples that follows is actually rather heterogeneous and incomplete. Its limitation is also its generosity: we feel entitled to expand it and pick up Gregotti's discourse where he left off.

Enclosures is a studio focused on the architecture of the perimeter. It intends to stimulate an in-depth research into the possibilities generated by the fundamental act of delimitation. The project will be explored as a selective device, producing certain conditions of inclusion and exclusion, creating and erasing connections, sustaining acts of separation and suspension, enabling detachment and otherness. Opposing the dominant conception of architecture as production of singular - self centered - objects, the studio will stress the dialectic nature of the enclosure in relation to an underlying notion of context. The activity of the studio - ideally conceived as an appendix to Rassegna 1 - will be organized around three main tasks: a collective work of iconographic collection, the construction and manipulation of an organized taxonomy of case studies, and the development of site-specific proposals.

Studio Culture

The intellectual environment of the studio will be strongly influenced by experiences connected to critical, curatorial and editorial practices. Architecture will be treated as a collective knowledge produced through different forms of collaboration: synchronic ones, connecting authors operating in the same moment, and diachronic ones, emerging as relationships connecting distinct objects, with genealogies slowly and unpredictably developing across time and space. Our common ground will be the shared body of knowledge represented by all architecture that has been built or just designed through time. On this body we will operate through selection and appropriation, employing multiple forms of representation as critical tools. Our activity will require precision, intellectual engagement, and a certain degree of organization.

Studio structure and assignments

The Studio program will unfold in three main phases:

1. Enclosures: iconographic collection and taxonomy

The first four weeks will be dedicated to the construction and manipulation of our archive. Every week will culminate with an assignment, conceived as a visual essay on a specific topic. Our investigation will proceed from the elementary to the complex, questioning scale and taking the responsibility of form.

2. Interlude: *A Real Living Contact with the Things Themselves* (Irénée Scalbert)

Between October 6 and 10 we will travel to visit architectures. The road trip will be designed in collaboration with the students and in connection with their interests of research.

3. A Public Room

The third phase will be dedicated to the development of site-specific proposals. The context chosen for the interventions is the Boston Harbor. Possible sites will be selected along its perimeter and on the Harbor Islands. The program is loosely defined as *A Public Room*, organizing a cluster of collective facilities, and it will be individually made more precise.

Key dates:

Wk 01 We Sept 06: Studio Previews

Fri Sept 08: Studio Introduction: Phase I (Iconographies)

Wk 02 Tue Sept 12: Desk Crits (Hybrid)

Fri Sept 15: Desk Crits / Pinup (Hybrid)

Wk 03 Tue Sept 19: Desk Crits (In-Person)

Fri Sept 22: Student Holiday (No Class)

Wk 04 Tue Sept 26: Desk Crits (In-Person)

Fri Sept 29: Desk Crits / Pinup (In-Person)

Wk 05 Tue Oct 03: Desk Crits (In-Person)

Fri Oct 06: Intermediate Review

Site Visit Window (Oct 6-10)

Wk 06 Tue Oct 10: Indigenous People's Day (No Class)

Fri Oct 13: Desk Crits / Pinup (Hybrid)

Wk 07 Tue Oct. 17: Desk Crits (Hybrid)

Fri Oct 20: Desk Crits / Pinup (Hybrid)

Wk 08 Tue Oct 24: Desk Crits (Hybrid)

Fri Oct 27: Desk Crits / Pinup (Hybrid)

Wk 09 Tue Oct 31: Desk Crits (Hybrid)

Fri Nov 03: Desk Crits (Hybrid)

Wk 10 Tue Nov 08: Desk Crits (Hybrid)

Fri Nov 10: Veteran's Day Holiday (No Class)

Wk 11 Tue Nov 15: Desk Crits (In-Person)

Fri Nov 17: Mid-Review (In Person)

Wk 12 Tue Nov 22: Desk Crits (In-Person)

Fri Nov 24: Thanksgiving Holiday (No Class)

Wk 13 Tu Nov 28: Desk Crits (In-Person)

Fri Dec 01: Desk Crits (In-Person)

Wk 14 Tue Dec 06: Desk Crits (In-Person)

Fri Dec 08: Desk Crits (In-Person)

Wk 15 Tue Dec 12: Final Review