The book profiles postgraduate Master of Architecture Programme, organised by the Department of History and Theory of Architecture, Architecture Faculty at the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Sofia.

The Programme contains 15 Discipline Modules covering the wide range of multidisciplinary tasks of contemporary architectural theory and criticism, outlining the current horizon of the architectural culture. The programme courses, constructed and held in English language, are covered by leading architecture and art critics and historians, practising architects, curators, sociologists, linguists, etc., from Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, The Netherlands, and United Kingdom. The book contains full description of the 15 Modules lecture annotations, as well as principle publications by the lecturers on subjects of their disciplines. The publication also includes a chapter with selected results of the Student Workshops, Exhibitions, and Diploma works.

The Programme has been led by Milena Metalkova, and was constructed and written by Georgi Stanishev.
Georgi STANISHEV  Programme Director
Milena METALKOVA-MARKOVA  Project Leader

ARCHITECTURE

THEORY AND CRITICISM

With the participation as guest professors of:
Kinda AL-SAYED, United Kingdom; Iara BOUBNOVA, Bulgaria; Luchezar BOYADZHEV, Bulgaria; Maria DIAMANDIEVA, Bulgaria; Nadezhda DZHAKOVA, Bulgaria; Georges HEINTZ, France; Hans IBELEINGS, The Netherlands/Canada; Helle JUUL, Denmark; Boyko KADINOV, Bulgaria; Alexander KIOSSEV, Bulgaria; Milena METALKOVA, Bulgaria; Juhani PALASMAA, Finland; Vesselina PENEVSKA, Bulgaria; Vladimir PHILIPOV, Bulgaria; Rudy RICCIOTTI, France; Antony ROBERTS, United Kingdom; Nedko SOLAKOV, Bulgaria; Georgi STANISHEV jr., Bulgaria/France; Georgi STANISHEV sr., Bulgaria; Nina TOLEVA, Bulgaria; Paul de VROOM, The Netherlands; Andrew YEOMAN, Croatia/United Kingdom

UNIVERSITY OF ARCHITECTURE, CIVIL ENGINEERING AND GEODESY, SOFIA
Architecture Theory and Criticism

POSTGRADUATE MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE PROGRAMME

Georgi Stanishev

Programme Director of Architecture Theory and Criticism
Chairman Department of History and Theory of Architecture
ARCHITECTURE THEORY AND CRITICISM POSTGRADUATE MASTER PROGRAMME

Programme Modules and Lecture Annotations
Principal Publications Profiling the Disciplines
Student Workshops and Exhibitions

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Art and architecture have some shared roles with politics. Boris Groys explains this with the common intentions of both to project, redefine, and reconstruct reality, bringing it to a new format. Like politics, art and architecture are engaged in the production of alternative worlds, which seems to be more desirable than the existing one. This makes both activities related to the formation of a critical position towards the conditions of current reality, and very close to the production of utopias. Architecture, when considered in its artistic and existentialist dimension, is a critical profession, and the project as its instrument is a critical plan that changes the environmental conditions by their re-design. The re-design of conditions is often considered an alternative to re-design of society by revolution as it was stated in Le Corbusier’s article “Architecture or Revolution?”. Even in standard non-revolutionary periods of history architecture is charged with existentialist criticism in a similar way as the project is charged with the future, which disagrees with the present.

Unlike the political dissident, whose role is to form disagreement with the social conditions imposed by the power, the artist or the architect projects his rebellion against many more restrictive conditions of reality, including its finiteness, its physical, temporal, gravitational, etc., margins. Art and architecture poetically express the intention to imagine and design a reality, where these restrictions are not any more valid, and where conditions such as immortality, endlessness and weightlessness are imaginable. This discloses the hidden potential of architecture as a critical instrument, used both by culture and society, to construct imaginable new realities, after critically deconstructing the existing one.

In present day conditions of growing fragmentation and entropy, lack of vision and horizon, the development of critical thinking becomes an actual and urgent educational task. The Architecture Theory and Criticism (ATC) programme is born out of this vacuum in the contemporary state of the profession texture.

The ATC programme, is oriented at graduates willing to develop their capacities in the pluralistic contemporary theory and criticism of current design production. Being an innovative educational format, it is meant to distinguish itself by stressing the importance of the relationship between architectural creativity and the complex context of the wider humanitarian knowledge. Present day architecture culture is a dynamic landscape of thought with its polarities, its hidden valleys and peaks visible from everywhere. The cultivation of critical thought
in these conditions demands from the students both good knowledge of its current “geography” and flexibility in changing resources and value systems. The critical assessment today should be considered a form of radical relativism since the multivalent and multi-polar world of architecture does not have a dominant axis of development by which architecture phenomena can be measured. In these conditions the Architecture Theory and Criticism programme seeks to develop analytical skills and critical understanding of contemporary architecture processes and practices, while maintaining intense exposure to a complex spectrum of philosophical and cultural attitudes. It defines an educational matrix of academic subjects, building upon the standard syllabus of architectural education, and thus aims to provoke students to experience architecture as a complex and pluralistic cultural endeavour. It targets architects or graduate students, already familiar with the basic frameworks of the profession, and interested in considering the design process as apt to theoretical rethinking, elicited by the dynamics and conventions of contemporaneity.

The execution of the above requirements and conditions requests from the programmer an understanding of the multidisciplinary texture of present day critical and theoretical discourse. In fact, the courses of different architectural, para-architectural, and neighbouring disciplines, such as art history, sociology, philosophy, culture sciences, semiotics, system theory, phenomenology etc. are establishing a periphery ring, the surrounding contemporary architecture discourse, and in this way are mapping their interrelated geographies. Disciplinary aspects adverted by the curriculum provide a comprehensive educational platform, generally composed on the assumptions of the structuralist and post-structuralist paradigm.

The post graduate program grants an opportunity of enhancing professional abilities such as:
- examining the forces that define the architectural object and mastering them with the available architectural means, hence developing the capacity of professional self-reflection;
- developing basics of theoretical and critical thinking, reflecting the multi-directional vectors of development, expressive systems and languages;
- interpreting and realizing the manifestations of contemporary architecture as space events in line with the logic of the multilayer organism of cultural reality.

This program is an acknowledgement of critical theory as an instrument for construction of new political and artistic formats.

In conditions of fragmented reality, the only survival strategy for architecture is to behave as the universe itself, i.e. to permanently expand its boundaries, leaving no corner which cannot be considered architecture. Thus its universal humanity can become the new cement aimed at bringing back the lost integrity of the world, without losing its subtle frailness.

Sofia 12. 01.2016
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The Architecture Theory and Criticism post-graduate master’s programme encourages critical understanding of contemporary architecture and urban culture grounded in the knowledge of histories and terms of practice. It defines a sector of disciplines and capacities, which is super-structured on top of the standard architectural education, and is flying over the architecture practice process, allowing to format points of view disposed on a meta-level of architectural culture. The program is aimed to extend the horizon of architecture knowledge of architects by teaching them to consider the design process through its theoretical re-thinking and putting it in different contexts:

- of specific local and universal culture of space;
- of the general field of contemporary arts;
- of the public mass media and the information flood;
- of the social and the political vision;
- of the philosophical picture of the existing;

The post-graduate programme presents architects with the opportunity to adopt specific understanding and skills:

- to self-reflect one’s own design capacities and design attitudes and to convert the spontaneous design process into a systematic and self-conscious method and strategy;
- to interpret and format a critical judgement of current architecture history, and to articulate the field of current architecture design practices.

The educational process is divided in three sectors (semesters): two as lectures and seminars, workshop exercises, and the third as a thesis unit. The following disciplines (MODULES) have been set up to achieve the above principal goals and develop the capacity and art of critical thinking in the field of contemporary architecture, environmental, political and social processes. Finally, the programme aims at widening the limits of understanding the architectural profession by developing its critical interdisciplinary margins and by distilling the architecture essence from the reality of contemporary culture.
**FIRST SEMESTER**

**MODULE 01: Theory of Architecture I**
**15 lecture classes/30 seminar classes**

The discipline articulates the principal themes in the theoretical debate on architecture as a cultural phenomenon. Space in field conditions, boundaries in architecture space, functions and semantics in architecture language, orders in space, methods of architecture design, and poetics of architecture as expressive system, are some of the principal subjects of analytical discourse, critical articulation and assessment in the course. The program formats the abilities of the students to critically judge the architecture phenomena in their different contexts and put their own work in relation to the universalities of architecture culture.

**MODULE 02: Architecture and Philosophy**
**15 lecture classes/60 seminar classes**

The interdependence between the philosophy and the development of a scientific paradigm, on one hand, and the architecture conversions and revolutions in history on the other, are the topics of the discourse in the discipline. The course also covers the reflections of concrete philosophical and scientific models on the individual architecture languages of sensitive to this type of discourse architects. The philosophy of understanding space in the context of changing visions of the universe is the principle preoccupation of the debate.

**MODULE 03: Cultural Studies of Socialized Space**
**15 lecture classes**

The course defines a critical vision towards the interactions between the cultural models of urban life and their spatial correlations. The analysis is given through the structural oppositions of public-private, sacred-profane, ours-theirs, and their application to space-use by the different social strata and cultures. Recent history of city life in relation to urban space habitation in Europe and the US is exposed in its diachronic transition from industrial to post-industrial city.

**MODULE 04: Architecture and the Arts**
**15 lecture classes/45 seminar classes**

The discipline profiles the interdependence between the worlds of artistic expression and the trends emerging in architecture. Specific accents are laid on visual and acting art such as: photography, cinema, the theatre and performance arts, but also parallels and correlations are configured and disclosed ranging from architecture to music and to dance resonances. The exposed and analyzed artistic relations of architecture to

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1 Each class is of 45 minute duration.
the arts are given in a historical perspective.

**MODULE 05: Contemporary Architectural Phenomena I**

*30 lecture classes/30 seminar classes*

The course gives a revision of major trends and names which actively form the field of contemporary architecture landscape. The material is articulated by principal figures in the architecture practice of today, and profiles the historical background, the conceptual and visionary specificity of each presented architecture person and/or trend. The material researched and presented is on the basis of historical and architectural traditions, and the contemporary architecture of Japan.

**MODULE 06: Academic Writing and Editing in English**

*30 lecture classes/30 seminar classes*

The course is aimed to form the postgraduate students’ capacity to professionally self-express in the English language in writing and in speech. The different types of academic genres such as: study, article, essay, critical analysis etc. are formatted and given as invariant structures, and are exemplified by contemporary critical and theoretical texts.

**MODULE 07: Architecture as Public Media**

*15 lecture classes*

The discipline outlines the dependence of architecture on its media presentation and the phenomena of formation of media-images of architecture works and personalities. The mechanisms of interactions are shown through numerous examples. Constant rules and principles are shown in terms of development in different phases of media image formation. The culture of star-architects is analyzed as specific appearances in the media field of the 21st century. Practical use of media mechanics for the benefit of architecture work is extracted from the course in its conclusion.

**SECONDE SEMESTER**

**MODULE 08: Theory of Architecture II**

*15 lecture classes/30 seminar classes*

The discipline considers the development of architectural profession through the formation of expressive systems. The principle space-form-structure invariants that constitute the basis of the individual architecture languages as well as their evolution and metamorphoses through personal history are analyzed through the works of Rem Koolhaas, Frank Gehry, Alvaro Siza, Louis Kahn, Kazuo Sejima, and other architects. The profiles
of the architects’ evolutionary phases are presented in synchronic and diachronic formats.

**MODULE 09: Sociology and Architecture**

*15 lecture classes*

The course correlates the constitution of society and its stratification to the spatial structures it creates and inhabits. It analyses the correlation between the social and political power and the use of space, and provides a critical survey of contemporary sociological theories which define the current public debate.

**MODULE 10: Critical Discourse in Contemporary Visual Arts**

*15 lecture classes*

Contemporary arts are reflected in the course as a field of existential and expressive forms. The artistic world is presented as a field of concepts. The balances in this field are coordinated by the competitive artistic gestures directed towards extension of the boundaries of understanding what art actually is. Major contemporary art trends of the 20th and 21st centuries such as conceptual art, minimalism, fluxus, etc, in the visual arts, are formatted in a concise survey with reflections on their influence on architecture.

**MODULE 11: Contemporary Architectural Phenomena II**

*30 lecture classes/30 seminar classes*

The course gives a revision of the major trends which actively form the field of contemporary architecture landscape. These trends will be elucidated by analyzing some seminal writings by contemporary architects such as Rem Koolhaas, Peter Eisenman, Fumihiko Maki, Daniel Liebeskind, Toyo Ito, Bernard Tschumi, Arata Isozaki, and others. The goal is to underline the role of text and writing in the development of contemporary architectural practice.

**MODULE 12: History of Modern Architecture in Europe**

*15 lecture classes/30 seminar classes*

The discipline profiles the development of the European architecture tradition in different regional contexts, considering the interactions between Western and Eastern as well as Southern and Northern zones of the continent. The accent falls on the development of specificity of the modernist doctrine in its two layers – the universalist and the localist giving birth to different types of regional mixtures and hybrids of both. The model of centre and periphery is analysed in its historic modernistic context.

**MODULE 13: Critical Analysis in Architecture**

*15 lecture classes/30 seminar classes*

The course considers critical analysis as the form of “practice of the architectural theory”. The different methodologies of architectural analysis are classified in accordance with the dominant system of thought that has catalysed their appearance and evolution such as analytical systems of thought and critical surveys of Woelflin, Zeddlemayer, Pan-
ofski, Wittkower, Rowe, and others. Samples of critical studies are given during the course to illustrate the attitudes and the analytical tools.

**MODULE 14: Space Syntax: Theory and Practice**

*15 lecture classes/45 seminar classes*

The discipline is focused on the methodology of investigation of urban space through mapping and measuring the communication capacities of the urban space networks, elaborated in the UCL, Bartlett School of Architecture. The research method -- widely used as an instrument for assessment of project design solutions -- is taught as a major theory of city formation dependent not only on people's perception of space directions and vectors, but also on specific software to be applied onto urban fabric.

**MODULE 15: Design Methods in Architecture**

*15 lecture classes/30 seminar classes*

The course gives a critical survey of contemporary design methods and personal design strategies. Lectured by representatives of both categories of architects, practically using their own design methods as working instruments, on one hand, and architecture critics and theoreticians, on the other, the course presents the design methods as specific professional and cultural instruments. The spectrum of design attitudes considered range from subjective, intuitive and random to more self-conscious and scientifically rigid.

**THIRD SEMESTER**

Besides the practical skills which are developed and elaborated by the students at various seminars, exercises and presentations during the above courses and disciplines, the main check of the obtained qualification and capacities acquired by the students is expected to be presented in their final thesis. The format is a research thesis on a critical theory subject profiling an actual topic selected by the student together with the tutor among the ATC Programme lecturers.

The 100 day semester gives space and time for investigation of the selected topic, research of its historical context, experimentation on its various readings and its presentation in an album, a text of 20 000 words, physical models and free-style show formats.

Working in conditions of regular meetings with the tutors and consultants from the programme as well as periodic discussions in class, the students acquire confidence and capacity to address the complex problems of current architecture processes. During the first two semesters each module and lecture course discipline is equipped with and complemented by several workshops, seminars and independent students’ exercises, that are configured to coach the
students in the critical approach to architecture and environmental tasks.

The final semester thesis is considered to be a research, which has to show the ability of the student to model complex theoretical and critical reconstructions of reality with analytical instrumentarium.

INVITED (PARTICIPATING) TEACHERS

The following internationally renowned teachers, professors, architects, artists, art critics, curators, art historians, sociologists, linguists, culturologists, urbanists, and scholars from over 10 countries were participating in the programme format, as follows:

Kinda AL-SAYED, United Kingdom; Iara BOUBNOVA, Bulgaria; Luchezar BOYADZHIEV, Bulgaria; Maria DIAMANDIEVA, Bulgaria; Nadezhda DZHAKOVA, Bulgaria; Georges HEINTZ, France; Hans IBELINGS, The Netherlands/Canada; Helle JUUL, Denmark; Boyko KADINOV, Bulgaria; Alexander KIOSSEV, Bulgaria; Milena METALKOVA, Bulgaria; Juhani PALLASMAA, Finland; Vesselina PENEVSKA, Bulgaria; Vladimir PHILLIPOV, Bulgaria; Rudy RICCIOTTI, France; Anthony ROBERTS, United Kingdom; Nedko SOLAKOV, Bulgaria; Georgi STANISHEV jr., Bulgaria/France; Georgi STANISHEV sr., Bulgaria; Nina TOLEVA, Bulgaria; Paul de VROOM, The Netherlands; Andrew YEOMAN, Croatia/United Kingdom.

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