

# Inside Out - Outside In

## The Interior Urbanism Of The Library

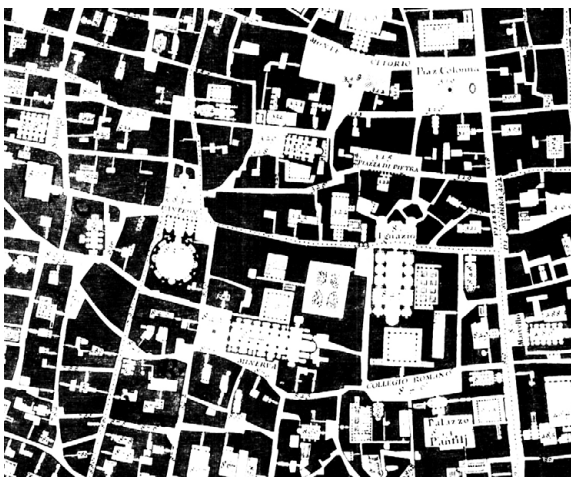
As libraries challenge what they are and how they're used, how must their architecture adapt and evolve? What kind of public life should they harbor and promote?

### AN INTERIOR PUBLIC SPACE

As the only truly non-commercial public space left in cities where people still can freely gather, libraries offer an opportunity to reconsider and restore the central role of public space indoors.

Given we spend over 90% of our time inside, should we not conceive of indoor public space as equal, if not more important, to what we so preciously advocate for the outdoors (parks, plazas, sidewalks, streets)? Providing shelter, safety, and comfort, the interior offers the natural environment where the wider spectrum of human interaction can unfold. We can shape these spaces, not as closed cocoons in isolation, but as porous platforms able to instigate new opportunities to interact, learn, and generate meaningful connections in the public realm.

In the midst of an institutional and infrastructural transformation, the library becomes the ideal conduit to create an urban venue for a new kind of collective condition - an architecture that reshapes our experience of the city from the inside out.



Nolli Plan of Rome - Indoors and outdoor form part of the public realm



Junya Ishigami, Kanagawa Institute of Technology, 2010

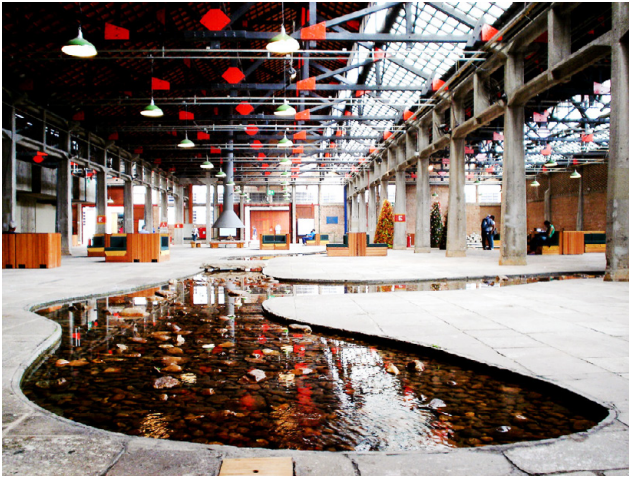
### IN, OUT, AND AROUND

Our contemporary understanding of indoors space can borrow from how we think about and design for outdoor public spaces, landscapes, and cities - an *interior urbanism* that, at its core, is the natural purview of architecture. In, out and around, our studio will examine how the library can become the vehicle to generate spaces that are an active part of the public realm and catalytic for civic engagement.

Indoor public space has been relegated to the realm of transit and transaction (the mall, the station, the atrium, the store) yet in its diminished form, it remains stubbornly vibrant. New York is no stranger to propositions of interior public rooms (Rockefeller Center, Grand Central, the subway, the Ford Foundation) that define and punctuate the character of the city. We crave more.

In an age where we resign ourselves to extol Starbucks and the Apple Store as stalwart advocates of public life indoors, can we conceive of a new, perhaps better, inner public life - less banal, commercial, and controlled; more intimate, surprising, and diverse?

In this context, the studio will explore the potential of libraries as a *third space* and the capacity of their architecture to shape environments (in and out) that provide a layered relationship from the room, onto the street and to the city. We will question and explore the library's form, structure, and program at various scales and against the measure of our different senses to propose new experiences and atmospheres. To do this,



Lina Bo-Bardi, SESC Popei, Sao-Paulo 1982

the studio will observe and analyze spatial and structural conditions (natural, urban, architectural) that shape our behavior, and conversely, social conditions that emerge in the built environment that can help us understand how we inhabit and use public space.

## A COLLECTIVE CONTEXT

The library has become more than its stacks and readings rooms - it is now a place for meetings, events, concerts, lectures, art, classes, technology, and more. As libraries evolve to encompass this ever wider range of circumstances, they must develop strategies that allow a programmatic mix not only to work but to thrive.

To this end, the studio will explore form and structure as a means to deliver and support this multiplicity of knowledge formats and effectively recast the library's role as a place of community and exchange.

In a city that increasingly lacks them, we crave spaces able to foster community; spaces that aspire not only to collect but to connect; spaces that comfortably hybridized program; and more importantly, spaces that address a new landscape of contemporary life where boundaries between work, life, and leisure are blurred. It's this collective context libraries must embrace and embody.

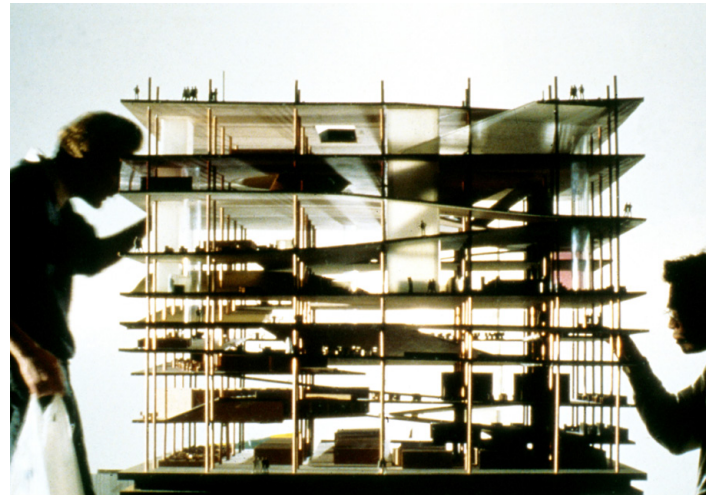
If we acknowledge the public nature of interior spaces, can libraries readily embrace spaces that are less programmed, more ambiguous - like the park or the street, perhaps a place indoors where we can simply hang out?

The studio will explore inherent conflicts and contradiction that immediately arise, negotiating issues between the what is public and what is private, between silence and noise,

between security and control, between the communal and the intimate, between movement and repose. In this spirit, you will seek to devise structures that deliver a wide range of spatial qualities and scales, from the very open to fully enclosed, from light to dark, from loud to quiet, from small to large. You will construct a new spatial ecology for the library.

The question remains: what should the contemporary library be? Do we face a typological revolution or its natural evolution?

Freed from any institutional legacy or inherited social mission, the studio will seek to project provocative alternatives for the library in the 21st century by designing a new vessel for civic gathering, of hybridized identity, of immoderate inclusion and fully aware of its vibrant inner life.



OMA, Jussieu - Two Libraries, Paris 1992

## OUTPUT

The parallel use of multiple modes of representation will be encouraged. Working through models, photographs, collages and drawings, we will mix, test, and explore architectural propositions and spatial effects. With an emphasis on iterating, documenting, capturing tangible results, we will seek to generate more individual and specific modes of visual expression.