

"Building images: Architectural photography vs Photography of Architecture"

Course Description

Since its infancy, photography has proven to be not only an unparalleled means of –seemingly– objective documentation, but also a fertile field of aesthetic experimentation. Urban photography pioneers such as Alfred Steiglitz and his peers were key in the development of a technical and aesthetic photographic language that influenced their followers, the design community and the general public. By defying mere representation, photographers such as Berenice Abbot –i.e. in her Changing NY series– embraced the technical imperfections of the medium to produce images of striking aesthetic and cultural impact. The pioneers used architectural and ambient city lighting to change our perception of the modern urban cityscape, by producing highly subjective readings of the urban experience.

This course will give participants the opportunity to engage in a similar quest and will discuss photography as a medium to interpret aesthetic intent, express

subjective understanding of urban space and reveal the circadian rhythms of the city; to this end, they will be exposed to works of seminal photographers such as Ernst Haas, William Klein and Olivo Barbieri. Students will explore the expressive limits of the photographic medium through the production of a series of transitional sequences that cover a range of architectural binary themes: urban/natural, formal/material, reflection/transparency, dusk/artificial light etc.

Technical, historical and aesthetic aspects of photography will also be covered in order to enrich the creative process and provide with an early basis for discussion. Finally, students will learn how to employ the medium of architectural photography as a critical tool for analyzing and representing buildings. Having completed the course, they will recognize photography not only as a documentary device, but also as a stimulant for the critical mind: photography facilitates the understanding of the intent behind design processes, by contextualizing and framing the relationship between an architect and his/her work.

Overview of Learning Activities

Students will be required to investigate and observe subject related urban locations, explore spatial and temporal transitions, capture the circadian rhythm of the city and understand the varying behavior of both light and material (reflective and refractive qualities of transparent materials). They will be required to identify and propose appropriate visual narratives that will examine and interpret design elements of chosen sites, as well as capture images that demonstrate technical control of digital workflows and lighting control with an emphasis on creativity and interpretation. This is a critique-based class, tailored to individual strengths and interests:

- A particular area of research will be identified and explored for each student.
- Individual instruction will be provided and personalized to each student's area of interest, often in the context of a group discussion where commentary is encouraged.
- The research will be accompanied by a short written contribution that explains the choice of project(s) and discusses the co-relation between building and the student's visual interpretation of it.
- Participants are expected to produce work for every class
- Field trips will serve as an essential part of the learning process, in order to examine and interpret work outside of the classroom environment.

- Finally, by the end of the course, students will be asked to compile a cohesive body of work culminating in a small exhibition and web publication.

Overview of Learning Resources

Students need to provide their own photographic equipment, but they are free in their choice of technology and format: pinhole/digital/manual, large/medium/small. The use of a digital camera is by no means required, but recommended, as everyone will be expected to present a body of work during each session. Using a tripod is highly encouraged.