ARCH5131B
The Wicked and the Worthy Drawing: Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s Architectural Poësis and its Relevance for Contemporary Design Research

2016-17 Term I

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Giovanni Battista Piranesi, The Giant Wheel, 1761. From Prisons (1745-50 – 1761)

DESCRIPTION
The seminar focuses on the role of drawing in architectural research by investigating the Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s approach. Commonly cited for his visionary approach to architecture, the specific characteristics of Piranesi’s research are frequently ignored and leading to a superficial understanding of his work or as a metaphor. The 12 sessions of this course (see attached schedule) will challenge this conventional reading of Piranesi by engaging an in-depth analysis of his drawing in order to reveal the
main components of his research and its systematic character. More specifically the course will highlight and analyze the inherent double character of Piranesi’s systematic approach, consisting of a continuous and irreducible interplay between the tendency towards architecture’s rational aspects and, at the same time, the revelation of its impossibility, between the constructive and, and at the same time, destructive character of the representation, the coexistence of a rigorous survey of monuments and their visionary projections.

Assignment
The assignment aims to simulate Piranesi’s approach to a typical/characteristic Hong Kong building or urban situation. To some extent, Hong Kong can be regarded as the sublime manifestation of vision that Piranesi developed for Rome. Yet, the relationship between Piranesi’s Rome and Hong Kong may be of a more complex nature than the association with the dramatic ‘piranesian’ character of Hong Kong urban space and its evaluation should instead include the architectural principles revealed by the ruins of ancient Rome in Piranesi’s approach. Which architectural principles should Honk Kong’s architecture reveal? How can they be discovered since the notion of ‘ruin’, which is fundamental in Piranesi’s research certainly doesn’t apply to Hong Kong - at least in its conventional meaning?

In order to answer to these questions, hence, in order to apply analytically Piranesi approach to Hong Kong, each student will select, analyze and formulate a graphic interpretation of a canonical building type/urban situation or one of its constructive aspects. Central in this elaboration will be the drawing. In this course the drawing is not seen only as an architectural instrument to illustrate an idea, but also as a specific form of architectural knowledge through which it is possible to formulate an analysis of an architectural aspects, to formulate an architectural hypothesis, and, lastly as a moment in which architectural hypotheses can be verified, therefore instigating further and more complex analyses, hypotheses, verifications.

Deliverables
3 drawings (A2 format – vertically oriented): the first, a frontispiece, should introduce the case study though and image and/or text, the second should include the analysis of a constructive aspect of the building/building fragment/urban situation, a final A2 representation capable to express the essence of the building/building fragment/urban situation.
There are no specific drawing techniques for the assignment. Furthermore, it is not necessary to be a keen historian and/or a virtuoso on drawing to successfully complete this course.

OBJECTIVES
The course aims to:
- Characterize the architectural themes, the compositional techniques and the theoretical relevance of Piranesi’s drawing.
- Identify specific fields of applicability of Piranesi’s approach in contemporary architectural research.
- Analyze the content of a comprehensive architectural research through drawing.

LEARNING OUTCOME
- LO1 - Students will be able to apply Piranesi’s architectural approach to a case study in Hong Kong;
- LO2 - Students will be able to formulate a rigorous enquiry of an architecture or architectural aspect through drawing
- LO3 - Students will be able to express a personal architectural position vis a vis a given task through drawings

ASSESSMENT SCHEME
- Assignment (60 %)
- Weekly development assignment/development (10 %)
- Report (5 %)
- Mid-term (Clarity of presentation) (5 %)
- Final Exam (Clarity of presentation) (10 %)
- Participation (attendance, initiative, in-class discussion) (10 %)
COURSE FORMAT
The course will be developed through weekly lectures, in-class discussion finalized to the development of the assignment. The seminar session will be structured as follow:

09.30 – 10.00 Lecture (see schedule for the lecture titles)
10.00 – 10.45 Collective discussion
10.45 – 12.15 Individual presentation assignment – Feedback session (At the end of each session each student will receive a clear task for the development of the assignment)

Location: AIT G04

REQUIRED READINGS
(Note: The complete documentation of Piranesi’s works is available on line at archive.org)

RECOMMENDED READINGS

IMPORTANT NOTE TO STUDENTS
ATTENDANCE:
Class attendance is required in all courses. For an excused absence, the instructor must be notified and presented with documentation of illness or personal matter. Please note: Three (3) or more unexcused absences may result in a failing grade for the course.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:
Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at: [http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/](http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/). With each assignment, students may be required to submit a statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

SCHEDULE
05-09 The ‘wicked’ and the ‘worthy’ drawing: Course and assignment introduction
12-09 A general introduction on Piranesi’s work and the concept of the ‘drawing’s triangle’
19-09 Rome: the subject and the scene of Piranesi’s architectural research – The Roman Antiquities (1756)
26-09 The main characteristics of Piranesi’s compositions (*)
03-10  ‘The Wicked Architect’: Manfredo Tafuri’s reading of Piranesi

17-10  Midterm Presentation. Students will present the case study and the draft version of the 3 drawings. (Note: Pin Up session, No PPT presentation)

24-10  The systematic critique of the concept of space: Analysis of the Prisons (1745-50, 1762)

31-10  The systematic critique of the concept of urban form: the Campo Marzio (1761)

07-11  The disappearance of any regulating principle in the conception of the architectural form: The Different Ways of Embellishing Fireplaces (1769)

14-11  The concept of drawing and the systematic approach to architectural research: the case of Franco Purini.


28-11  Conclusion

05-12  Final Presentation (Exam/Exhibition) (Note: Pin Up session, No PPT presentation. Student may include in their presentation a separate log-book of the assignment development) (**)

(*)  The seminar session planned on 26 – 09 will be anticipated/postponed since it coincided with the planned (under development) study trip in Rome (26-09 – 30-09) for the

(**)  The final presentation will be attended by (at least) two external respondents.

In the midterm and in the final presentation each student will have 5 minutes for presentation followed by 10 minutes for clarifications, questions, and feedbacks (midterm).