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News

KANSAS CITY DESIGN CENTER EXHIBIT

Projects and design studies by 16 Kansas State University and University of Kansas students enrolled in the Kansas City Design Center (KCDC) during the 2009-2010 academic year are on display in the Chang Gallery of Seaton Hall.

Uncovering Potential: An Investigation into Dimensions of the City Kansas City Design Center Urban Studio 2010

is open to the public without charge through September 10. Hours of the Chang Gallery are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekdays.

The studio addressed complex physical planning and design issues which were relevant to change in metropolitan Kansas City. The mission of KCDC is to facilitate research, initiate informed discussion and provide topical public programs to build greater understanding of the potential of architecture, planning and urban design to improve the quality of life and development in the Kansas City metropolitan region. Located at 1018 Baltimore in downtown Kansas City, Missouri, the 2009-2010 studio was comprised of eight graduate students majoring in architecture, landscape architecture, and interior architecture and product design from the K-State College of Architecture, Planning and Design and eight architecture students from the School of Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Kansas.

The exhibition is an attempt to generate an abbreviated summary perspective of two semesters of study and work in the urban design studio at the KCDC. The pedagogical premise of the studio was to use Kansas City as a “live-in” urban laboratory for focusing and engaging critical urban design issues, thereby illuminating contextual understanding of the purpose and the meaning of the subject of design. The studio brief issued to students was titled “Urban Chess: Stratagems for Critical Maneuvers.” It opposed the nostalgia of optimum density and built-up grid desires that subside on the official master plans to the city “as is” of vacant building-turned-parking-lots and laissez faire urban morphology, asking them to find in that intersection a seed of a true city and within it discover more viable possibilities for design interventions that can make a difference. The students first developed methods for “peering” into the obvious and dissecting it so that they could see that what was hiding in the plain view – the city “as is” – but this time as an artifact, a physical object “par excellence” as Rossi termed it. Whatever was pulled apart and disassembled we have tried to [re]arrange back together seeking redeeming possibilities while walking the DMZ grounds of urban design theory looking for critical insights into the epitome of the Midwestern city, or for that matter the contemporary city. Many guest critics from the ranks of Kansas City practitioners, communal stakeholders and fellow academics helped the students in their quest. In the end, the studies and ideas presented in the exhibit, beyond their own individual design merit, constitute a wealth of possibilities which are yet to be fully explored. In that is their true merit, resonance and the obligation of continuity they pass on to those who taught them.

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Vladimir Krstic, professor of architecture at Kansas State University, was the 2009-2010 studio instructor.

K-State student participants in the 2009-2010 studio were: Erica Besler and Shannon Williams, regional and community planning; Rachel Duncan, Paul Folger and Amy Kinderknecht, architecture; Allison Gould and Janelle Heideman, interior architecture and product design; and Steven Holt, landscape architecture. All are May 2010 master’s degree recipients in their respective disciplines.

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