urban design
now

What is Urban Design? 3 Questions, 50 Answers
Renewing, Rebuilding, Remembering
Time to Consider: The Arts Respond to 9/11
Letters from Bangkok and Berlin
Van Alen Institute is committed to improving the design of the public realm.

Our program of Projects in Public Architecture promotes education and action through design competitions, workshops, studies, forums, web sites, and publications including the Van Alen Report.

While the Institute grounded its work in New York City, we structured our projects to engage an interdisciplinary and international array of practitioners, policymakers, students, educators, and community leaders.

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Executive Director

Kira L. Gould
VAI Exhibition: Renewing Rebuilding Remembering
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New York New Visions Now

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Urban Design:
Practices, Pedagogies, Premises

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 VAN ALEN REPORT 12
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Cover: Sign in Brookline Center of the Museum of Science in Boston, designed by Ennead Architects, 2001. Photo: Peter Vanderwarker

This issue is sponsored by VAI and the urban design programs of Columbia University and Harvard University, with major support from the National Endowment for the Arts, as at the crux of this program—a vital opportunity to define what urban design can and cannot do, and what it must try to do, not just for Lower Manhattan, but in the bright glare of that one site, to better define its promise for North America and the world. This issue, guest-edited by conference organizers Margaret Crawford and Andrea Kahn, is dedicated to expanding the range and impact of this discussion.

BETHANY W. GATZEL
Nine days after the towers fell, Van Aken Institute staff member the board of trustees, talked about how the Institute could contribute to the desire to learn from other places. The subsequent exhibition, Renewing Rebuilding Remembering (on view through April 25), is not a show about memorials, although a part of it deals with memorials. It is not an architecture show, although there is architecture in it. Ultimately, the exhibition explores the particularities and complexities of process employed by seven cities around the world that have revived following disaster in the past 15 years. "The show looks at how different cities have come back and made the urban environment vital again," says Zed Ryan, who co-curated the exhibit.

Columbus University's Temple Hayes Bland Center for the Study of American Architecture, is currently running a lecture series focusing on eight cities and how they were revived after disasters. "The first lecture in our series has made it clear that there is a great deal to be learned from this kind of comparative and cross-cultural perspective," says center director Jean Oudman. "She has to be reminded of the complexities of a problem like this." Since their first lecture in February, the series has been moved to a larger auditorium. "The tremendous response..." we've gotten shows that there's a real hunger for this kind of thinking."

TELLING THE STORIES

The Van Aken show examines the recovery process in Kobe (after the 1995 earthquake), Manchester (after a 1996 bombing), Oklahoma City (after the 1995 bombing), Beirut (after the civil war and in 1992), Berlin (after the reunification in 1990), Sanjyo (after the siege ended in 1996), and San Francisco (after the 1989 earthquake permitted the removal of a freeway).

The exhibit, designed by Thomas de Monchaux and Donald Shillingburg, tells the story of each city through chronological narrative, photographs, and drawings mounted on kiosks. Ryan believes that the timeline was just right for this subject matter. "It is fascinating to see how long things take, who is involved, if or when the community gets a voice, and how much of a voice they get," she says. Raymond W. Gati believes that the content of time is important. "We wanted people to compare how fast things happened in one place or another," he says. "Berlin took five years to start a master plan, Manchester's was under way in one week, and many aspects of Kobe's emergency response effort were virtually complete in just a few weeks."

WHAT CAN NEW YORK LEARN?

In Kobe after the earthquake, temporary housing, a move to save damaged housing, several master plans, and a powerful volunteer movement defined the comeback. By 2000, all temporary housing residents had moved into permanent dwellings: the memorial. Cosmic Elements by Shingo Kusada, was unveiled, and the designers for a proposed institute and museum about earthquake renovation, shown. Solleki Architects Planners and Engineers, were selected. The institute will be finished this year. In Kobe, after dealing with temporary housing, the city bank posts to memorialize the event in several ways. "They left a broken section of the pier in the water as a remembrance," with new building all around," Ryan says. "This relates to the idea of keeping a piece of the destroyed Trade Center." New York architect Yoshiko Sato of Morris Safdie Studio has studied Kobe and consulted with the Van Aken team. "I think we can learn from Kobe," she says. "There, a volunteer committee jumped into the middle of the process, and proposed something different. They involved the community, conducting exhaustive workshops before permanent housing was built." An additional project, the Hyuna Fault Museum, built on the fault line, was a controversial idea in Kobe, but on completion, support for the "living memorability" is strong. Volunteerism played a big role in Kobe, and the architectural community had a remarkably cohesive voice.

In Potomac Plaza in Berlin, amid a frenzy of building and reconversion, the city hosted a competition for a small but significant project that worked up providing a kind of psychedelic glue for the city's revitalization, an info-books/kiosk space and viewing platform. Schneider & Schlaich Architekten's winning design, a 50 by 200-foot red box, opened in late 1995, more than two million people visited each year during its five year existence. "The info-box as a central forum relates directly to the discussions in New York about a viewing platform and other centers for information and instruction," Ryan says.
In Beirut, a war-torn landscape remained bleak for many years while a master plan took shape, but temporary art helped to bridge the gap between destruction and reconstruction. From the summer of 1975 through 1992, Beirut suffered a civil war between the Muslim coalition (or Palestinian guerrilla) and the Christian-dominated militias. Destruction, rebuilding, and segregation lines drastically altered the geography and social structure of the city. According to Vassilitsi, "The five years between the end of the war and the Master Plan was a long stretch to wait without visible signs of hope. Temporary public art installations by Nadine Kanaan helped to break up the war-torn landscape and also keep aspirations for rebuilding alive.

This feature of the Beirut situation seemed to resonate with many visitors. "The scale of these sculptures was appropriately kept," said Neill, "These were powerful gestures.

Baltin notes that cities with multiple 'visions,' including contemporary ones, are probably the best models for New York. "Here, there will not be a single entity or single commission," she says. "The hoor and best results will be achieved through multiple paths, with a chance for multiple voices. Temporary memorials can gain a chance for multiple expression, and allow for healing along the way. As the necessary time is taken to establish agreement about the larger elements that will result. These temporary expressions could be visual, music, or other means. I think this is a more modern response, by including time in the remembering process."

Neill, who is actively involved in the New York 'New Visions' process, a plan of action developed by 21 professional and civic associations (including Van Alen), finds a common feature of the seven cities' processes. 'In each, it was taken for granted that the public would, in one way or another, control the process and outcome and that the private property owners who may have been affected were not calling the shots in these extraordinarily situations,' she says.

The solution, it was acknowledged, would need to represent the common good and the collective aspiration for a new society.

Also universal to several of the redevelopment schemes: an acknowledgement that public space was a key requirement to demonstrate sustainable design principles. In New York, Hailan notes, "We have an opportunity here to demonstrate such a commitment in a very artful way." Randy Cohn, of Hudson Collaborative, helped draft the Design Excellence and Sustainability chapter of the New York New Visions report. September 11 and its aftermath, he believes, should push New York to abandon the monocentric approach to buildings and energy. "We can think about buildings and infrastructure as more resilient, flexible, and adaptable," he says.

Meanwhile, downtown, activity is brewing. Larry Silverstein, who holds the lease on the 16-acre site, has announced plans to begin designing six buildings, including a new World Trade Center. (A new design by SOM's New York Office) on the World Trade Center Site. This summer, will he be able to proceed? City officials seem to want the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation to be in charge; the group of 14 (companies, Wall Street executives, former Giuliani administration officials, and the chair of Community Board 11) was appointed in November (and expanded by three by Bloomberg in March) by Governor George Pataki and outgoing Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. But that group is still getting organized and staffed (not a single architect or planner were appointed to the board), though planner and architect Alexander Garvin was hired in February.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's Vice Chairman Charles Gargano, also the state's development executive, has said his organization is amenable (though other Port Authority officials sound more cautious). The support of Gargano is seen by some observers as a strong indication that New York is ready to see construction underway — "visible progress" — during his re-election campaign this summer and fall. John Whitehead, chair of the LDC, has noted that Silverstein would need his group's approval, but whether it has the teeth to prevent construction is unclear. The LDC is seen as a quasi-independent body, though it is technically a subsidiary of the Empire State Development Corporation.

Some say job creation is the most important driver of Lower Manhattan's revival (more than 100,000 jobs were lost in that area and it is expected that half will not come back, according to The Downtown Alliance). This issue is being addressed by people as an argument supporting a faster-track process.

As the process begins to take shape, Van Alen and other organizations, as well as the host of alliances formed in response to the September 11 disaster (New York New Visions, The Civic Alliance, The Rebuilt Downtown Our Own Coalition, and more) continue their work. Looking outside of the political complexities of New York can be enlightening. "For me, the most inspirational thing is that people want to rebuild," Ryan says. "Cities do come back. Even when the reconstruction is limited, as in Sampeo where to date only the national library and post office have been erected, the resurgence is a powerful symbol for the people who live there."

NEW YORK NEW VISIONS NOW

The New York New Visions coalition of 21 civic, professional, and cultural organizations, after an intense dialogue with community members, public agency representatives, and other stakeholders, issued Principles for the Rebuilding of Lower Manhattan in February. Seven interdisciplinary teams, with more than 400 participants, drafted the report, which called for an open memorial process, a flexible mixed-use future for Lower Manhattan, a more connected downtown, a renewed relationship of Lower Manhattan and the region, design excellence and sustainability for New York City, an effective and inclusive planning process, and a series of immediate actions. Van Alen Institute members, board, and staff took part in this unprecedented collaboration, from researching alter native memorial strategies to distributing the group's Around Ground Zero and Downtown Now maps.

The principles are supported by research and art — now, the coalition is messaging from education to advice and recommendations. The greatest challenge is how to birth grapple with the formidable technical and political challenges, and at the same time call for the most imaginative urban design solutions possible. While papers and proposals have already appeared on the newsgroups' web sites, which serves as a sounding board and schedule for the coalition's ongoing efforts.

TIME TO CONSIDER: THE ARTS RESPOND TO 9/11

In an effort to garner creative responses to the events of September 11, a multi-disciplinary collaborative including MIX, Creative Time, Poets & Writers and Watseka Studio Foundation came together in December 2001 to sponsor a portfolio competition — "From the Canadian: The Arts Respond to 9/11." Judging artists, designers and writers to contribute designs, the group received over 4000 submissions. Four posters, each very different, were chosen — one by Eric Lillis, a New York-based architect, another by Croatian artist Nenad Simic, the third with text written by poet Lee M. Alexander and the last the work of a student group, the Anti-Bias Squad — and during the week of February 11 were flown across the five boroughs. Eric Lillis explains the experience of this project, "In an urban context the connection between the street, experience and memory is critical. People are exposed to the limits of experience in public space, but bound by the communal environment of the city. My poster design is an attempt to explore a complex, traumatic event through life on the street and people's experiences. It entitled 'Contribute a Memory,' Lillis's design incorporates video stills taken of 9/11 and 9/12 with speech bubbles superimposed over them but left blank so "people by who encounter the poster may re-orient their experience with their experiences of September 11 and spontaneously write recollections in the bubbles," he explains.

Alexander's poem, "How the Lirking," contemplates human fragility in times of crisis; the Anti-Bias Squad's message-driven design reads — "On Fire, the Mindfield of Anger," and Simic's "Remote Control, 2000," is a bold graphic statement criticizing the powerful influence of the media by reducing complex subjects such as war, religion and humanism to commands on a remote control. Anchoring the project, an exhibition of a selection of all the submissions was view at the Deutsche Bank Lobby Gallery, 31 W 52 Street, between Fifth and Sixth Streets through March 22, 2002. To check out all the submissions and download your favorites go to www.timeconsiderator.com, which also has links to downtown cultural organizations and their calendar listings, at Home.
urban design, practices, pedagogies, premises...
Examining the Multiple Realities of Urban Design Today

What is urban design? Architects operating at the scale of the city? Planners coordinating urban development projects? An alternative form of architectural education? The process of producing cities? A public domain in which debates over the physical form of the city take place? All of the above?

Not an official licensed profession (like architecture or planning), is urban design a "sub-profession," a discipline, or a way of thinking? Situated somewhere in the amorphous territory in between large-scale architectural design, physical planning, policy making and landscape design, the contours of urban design must be continually reshaped to fit the ongoing changes in municipal finances and private sponsorship, in the city's economy and its policies, and in the public's habits and expectations. This mutability, while undoubtedly an asset, also produces uncertainty in defining urban design as an endeavor.

In spite of, or perhaps precisely because of this uncertainty, urban design itself is flourishing. Across the country, university urban design programs are proliferating, courses on Urbanism are oversubscribed. An increasing number of architecture, planning, and landscape practitioners are adding urban design to their list of skills. Competitions, cities, and developers are continually producing new design projects. Whether they appear in the media or on the city council's agenda, these projects inevitably provoke intense public response, both positive and negative.

Over the last ten years, a lively and often contentious debate about the shape of American cities has emerged, widely covered by both the professional and popular press. The ongoing deliberations over the future of Lower Manhattan, following the events of September 11, have brought a new level of urgency to these developments. Almost daily, the newspapers report struggles over the representation and organization of urban space in downtown Manhattan.

Questions about issues ranging from scale and symbolism, to transportation connections and 24-hour programming, to power and decision-making are currently being argued over. All of these concerns fall squarely within the traditional domain of urban design — but almost no one has identified them as such.

Everywhere there is evidence of a growing interest in urban design, and a renewed concern for cities, yet urban designers are still struggling to define their role in the city-making process. More often than not, practitioners, educators, policymakers, planners, not to mention the public, proceed with significantly different understandings of how urban design works (a wide selection of possible definitions of urban design can be found in the PLATFORM section of this issue). Operating without a professionally institutionalized domain, urban designers (and there are many types, as PLATFORM also reveals) are frequently characterized as consultants or marginal, late-entry players, following up on "real" decisions made by architects and developers. Observers often misread their contributions as superficial, literally and urbanistically. They dismiss their work as beautification efforts — street lights, street furniture, banners, planters and the like.

Does this accurately describe urban design? We don't think so, but these misperceptions reveal that urban design today sorely lacks a public identity that accurately reflects its concerns and potentials. In the wake of September 11th, clarifying urban design's role in the process of city making has become even more pressing.

How can we understand such a complex and ambiguous field? The Urban Design: Practices, Pedagogies, Premises conference will do this by examining what urban design has been, what it is now, and what it could become.
Although, as one of our respondents observes, urban design is an ancient activity, as a concept it is a recent invention, first defined in 1956. That year Josep Lluís Sert, Dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Design, convened an international conference at the school, inviting an illustrious group of participants including Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, Victor Gruen, Edmund Bacon, Garrett Eckbo, and Hideo Sasaki. Sert proposed a new field, urban design, which he defined as "the art of planning concerned with the physical form of the city." He added that the urban designer must first of all believe in cities, their importance and their value to human progress and culture. Thus, as Alex Krieger notes, urban design began with two competing definitions, one professionally focused and the other broadly inclusive.

Urban design was Sert's answer to a uniquely American problem, the decisive separation between architecture and urban planning. Beginning a decade earlier, urban planning, increasingly less focused on the physical organization of the city, had established its own independent academic and professional territory, based on the methods of social science. This dual structure replaced the more comprehensive practice of "urbanism" still dominant in Europe and Asia. Hoping to heal this breach, Sert ambitiously envisioned urban design as an alternative arena where the work of the architect, the city planner, and the landscape architect might be reunified. One of the conference's most important outcomes was the founding of the Harvard Urban Design program, followed by others at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Washington University in St. Louis, and Columbia University. As Arne Vernez-Moujon points out, this is an unusual beginning. Unlike other design fields, urban design originated in academia rather than professional practice. Perhaps for this reason, the academic setting has played a particularly important role in delineating its shifting contours.

This was certainly the case twenty-five years later, when a new generation of urban designers felt the need to rethink the field. In September of 1980, Harvard hosted the Second International Urban Design Conference. Three years later two smaller conferences occurred, sponsored by the Urban Design Institute and the University of Washington. Both used education as a lens through which to examine developments in the field. Participants such as Kevin Lynch, Jonathan Barnett, Denise Scott Brown, Allan Jacobs and Donald Appleyard, recognizing a crisis in urban design practice, looked to the schools for solutions. Although Sert's modernist model had been replaced by postmodern contextualism, many of the same issues persisted: the difficulties of depending on large-scale government support; the need to reconnect with urban planning; and the necessity of defining an identity separate from that of architecture. Again, the result of these discussions produced conclusions at divergent scales: urban design must be specifically focused on design yet broadly accountable to society at large.

Now, twenty years later, the panels and public discussions that make up the Urban Design Practices, Pedagogies, Premises conference will offer a similar reconsideration, asking what urban design means now — as a concept, a discipline, a practice, and a public enterprise.

We believe there are noteworthy reasons to revisit these issues today. On one hand, much has changed since 1983. Rather than facing a crisis, urban design is now ascendant. Yet many of its new opportunities are ambiguous, forcing those involved with urban design to continually evaluate their work's positive and negative social, political, and cultural implications.

One notable change has been the proliferation of new projects developed by public-private partnerships. This type of urban development process, a response to the withdrawal of public sponsorship, has restructured the relationship between private and public in cities, challenging...
traditional notions of civic responsibility and public access. Similarly, the increasing importance of aesthetics in cities can be seen as a mixed blessing. Many have welcomed the appearance of a newly aestheticized cityscape as an appropriately symbolic urban economy, while others have interpreted it as a dangerous concealment of social realities. In addition, by focusing primarily on “urban” concerns when the nation as a whole has become increasingly suburban, urban designers may be lessening their relevance. In both urban and suburban areas, community organizations, neighborhood associations, and other groups have become powerful new constituencies. Demanding a guiding role in urban development, they represent both an engaged citizenry and a challenge to professional authority and expert knowledge. At the largest scale, societally important issues such as environmentalism and sustainability seem to have bypassed urban design altogether.

On the other hand, some things have not changed. Today, the academy continues to play a central role in defining the premises of urban design — its underlying assumptions as well as its ‘place’ in the city. In the past three years alone, five of the eight master-degree granting urban design programs in North America have been started or substantially restructured to reflect recent urban transformations. The new curricula, courses, and studio topics demanded by these programs have generated an enormous amount of focus on and reflection about the nature of urban design. As a result, these curricula offer (implicitly if not explicitly) the most easily accessible “working definition” of urban design currently available. We have structured this conference around these representations of the discipline because, as basic texts, each is also necessarily shaped by assumptions (rarely stated outright) about what makes a good city. And behind these assumptions lies a further set of social, political, and cultural values.

While we use academic curricula to spark the panel discussions, the conference’s title attests to the fact that we are concerned with issues beyond the purely pedagogical. This gathering provides a (much needed) forum for dialogue, bringing together groups who rarely have the opportunity for shared reflection and discussion — public sector representatives, urban design practitioners and academics from related urban and design fields — in an exchange of ideas with urban design educators (who, unlike their colleagues in urban planning or architecture departments, don’t have the benefit of annual academic conferences dedicated to their discipline). Over the course of two days, four panels and two moderated public discussions will explore the multiple realities of urban design.

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

URBAN DESIGN: PRACTICES, PEDAGOGIES, PREMISES begins Friday evening, April 5th at the Lighthouse International, considering urban design’s role in the process of city-making. The first panel, “Shaping Civic and Public Realms: What is the Role of Urban Design” brings the perspective of public policy makers to the table. Amanda Burden (Chair, NYC City Planning Commission), Maxine Griffith (Executive Director, Philadelphia City Planning Commission), Tim Carey (President, Battery Park City Authority) and Rosalind Greenstein (Senior Fellow, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy) will engage in discussion with Alex Krieger, Richard Plunz and Michael Sorkin, directors of the Harvard, Columbia and CCNY urban design programs, respectively.

On Saturday, April 6th, at Columbia’s Avery Hall, the conference continues with a morning session exploring the relationship between urban design education and professional practice.
Five representatives from public sector, community, development and corporate urban design practices (John Chase, City of West Hollywood; Karen Phillips, Abyssinian Development Corporation; Charles Reiss, Trump Organization; Denise Scott Brown, Venturi; Scott Brown; and Marilyn Jordan Taylor, Skidmore Owings & Merrill) will share the "Urban Design Practices" panel with three urban design educators (Sandro Marpillero, Jacqueline Tatom, and Anne Vernez-Moudon). Their conversation will be followed by a moderated public discussion with the audience and panel centered on the question: "How can urban design improve cities?"

The first afternoon session focuses on how urban design is defined, taking the curricula of the participating schools as a point of departure. The interdisciplinary "Urban Design Pedagogies" panel, with Rodolphe el-Khoury, Roy Strickland and J. Michael Schwarting (urban design), Robert Beauregard (urban planning/policy), Carol Burns (architecture), Robert Fishman (urban history), Walter Hood (landscape architecture) and Jerold Kayden (urban law), will examine how each school's program constructs the discipline. The accompanying moderated public discussion, "What is Urban Design?" will include the audience in a follow up session exploring the implications of these "working definitions" for the world of urban design practice and policy making. We welcome anyone with an interest in design and cities to join us in exploring these questions.

Following this public discussion, the "Urban Design Premises" panel will unite the Directors of the eight participating Master of Urban Design programs in the event’s final session.

By revealing and reexamining all of the dimensions of urban design, we hope to evaluate its current successes and failures, as well as assess its potential to play a more significant role in urban discourse and development.

The following is a representative selection of answers to the first three questions, and the illustrations throughout this issue are the best projects identified by the respondents. But, since we appreciate the time and thought that everyone involved put into their answers, we have posted all of the respondent’s complete answers on www.vanalen.org.

As you can see from these responses, urban design is not so much an activity as a complex, dynamic, and contested arena. We invite you to join this public conversation about the making of cities and make your voice heard. We welcome participation by professionals, educators, citizens and anyone else interested in making good cities. The questions are still open.
1. What is Urban Design?

2. What does it contribute to urban life?

3. Who practices Urban Design?
WHAT IS URBAN DESIGN?

What is urban design? It is a question that I think is asked in many different ways. It is a field that has evolved over time and has different interpretations depending on the context.

Urban design is a way of thinking about how we shape the built environment. It involves the design of urban spaces, buildings, and infrastructure to create places that are functional, aesthetically pleasing, and enjoyable for people to use. Urban design is about creating vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive communities.

Urban design is not just about designing buildings and streets, but also about creating public spaces, parks, and other places that encourage social interaction and physical activity. It is about creating places that are safe, accessible, and welcoming to all people.

Urban design is a collaborative process that involves architects, planners, engineers, landscape architects, and other professionals. It is a multidisciplinary field that draws on expertise from a variety of disciplines to create effective solutions to complex urban problems.

Urban design is an important tool for shaping the future of our cities and towns. It helps us to create more sustainable, resilient, and livable communities. By understanding the principles of urban design, we can create places that are not only beautiful, but also functional and meaningful for the people who live in them.
WHAT DOES URBAN DESIGN CONTRIBUTE TO URBAN LIFE?

Urban design, toward the end of the 20th century, has helped to make the city easy again (in North America anyway).  

At its best, urban design can contribute and enhance — nurturing the human spirit and providing for a sustainable environmental, social, economic, and physical order.  

Urban design contributes to the quality of the public realm — (it) promotes social interaction, which is the very basis of urban living. ... We need only look back a few months to witness the tremendous value of urban open space as an outlet for individual expression and as a gathering place where individuals could find solace and comfort with others during a time of severe distress...  

... Urban design enables city dwellers to use the city in new ways.  

Urban design creates meaningful and recreative public space for the present and the future. Its emphasis is on the'sight to see the public domain, the purposeful design of the city's streets, squares, parks and boulevards, as distinct places, inhabited public rooms... Urban design thoughtfully coordinates interventions at various scales... This requires thinking strategically... and acting tactically... concentrating on the specific site under consideration.  

It depends on the principles of the urban designer — it can help contribute density, linked urban, presence of nature, positively oriented and useful spaces, maneuverable traffic systems...  

It contributes a wide range of effects...  

Visual pleasure in the physical expression of social complexity, concern for economic development for working people, affordable housing, support for physical mobility for all citizens, including women, children, and the elderly.  

Urban design has become a vital need for reclaiming the city... an effective means to control public space... a servant of the hegemonic power structure.  

Urban design shouldn't and doesn't have to be like this. It is interesting we all are temporarily... and sometimes our individual activities bound to a collective activity, to city-building processes in the best sense of the word...  

If urban design is done properly, always a subjective term, it contributes to a better urban and civic environment and street life...
This depends on how urban design is defined: as an artistic process, it is practiced by designers... (urban designers, architects, landscape architects and physical planners). As a technical process, it is (by default) practiced by civil and traffic engineers.

As an economic process, urban design is driven by property owners and developers, occasionally by donors and/or government grants. As a political process, all the above plus city and community planners, public servants, elected public officials, appointed commissions, government agencies, community and civic groups...

Two kinds of people... the professional — trained to deploy professional knowledge of how to design space, and a more loosely defined urban design practioner... the urban inhabitant who plants their garden, the graffiti artist who imprint his or her point of view on the concrete walls of today’s cities, the hot dog vendor who transforms urban space for a limited time... Ideally, engage in city-building processes.

Anyone who calls themselves an urban designer...

An urban designer coordinates the designs and ideas of several professionals into the design of the city.

To some degree, architects and landscape architects practice a form of urban design when they step beyond the defined limits of their specific projects and seek to integrate their work into a broader context. Urban design requires the exact opposite thinking process used in the creation of individual objects or movements.

Architects and developers teams. Unfortunately architects often confine urban design with big buildings and/or lots of buildings.

Everyone performs Urban design. Those who practice urban design actively seek to assess and/or alter the physical environment and intellectual understanding of human settlement patterns. Architects, Landscape Architects, Planners, Engineers, Politicians, Economists, Real Estate Developers, Social Activists, Philosophers, Academics and Artists... (Urban and design are not necessarily equivalent to the practice of urban design). AX

Urban design is practiced by professionals who are both designers and mediators, typically working between the public and private sectors as civic mediators who co-ordinate and orchestrate the work of other design professionals, urban planners, and landscape architects.

All parties to the construction of the city practice urban design. The unriveting efforts often having greater effect than the intentional ones. Legislators, bankers, contractors, labor unions, developers often have a greater role in defining the playing field than the self-designated players — planners, architects, landscape architects and urban designers...

Sometimes I think nobody in this country or what amounts to the same thing, everybody...

To practice urban design in an innovative, effective way requires a compelling idea (or several) about what the contemporary city is... also a cross-disciplinary sensibility. Along with the skills of an architect, other talents may be brought to bear, those of the cartographer, ethnologist, game-theorist, ecologist, community activist, traffic engineer, script writer, morphologist, real-estate developer and archaeologist... While many claim the mantle of urban designer, rare is the urban designer willing and able to engage the broad network of spaces and programs that constitute the 21st century American City.

Urban design without implementation is meaningless. The accomplished urban designer is also a master of political skills — visionary and an activist. Urban designers come from all walks of life...

Architects, planners, urban designers, and plenty of people who don’t have experience in any design field.

Urban planners who engage with urban preservation and public history, architects who care about the context of both old and new buildings, landscape architects who make public places, and urban planners who deal with careful land use, affordable housing, public transportation, and community advocacy. All practice urban design in the public interest.

Urban design is practiced by design professionals and civic actors; citizen stake holders, architects, planners...

The true practitioner of urban design is a self-selecting soul who is striving to shape a consensus out of a wide variety of voices and visions that ultimately will amount to more than the sum of its parts.
grant much latitude to students' exploration of facts beyond their texts. Under this is the strong conviction that the architectural profession is undergoing a profound change and that there is no longer a need for great numbers of architectural graduates.

The Program for Urban Processes, which we are currently developing, reflects this period of transition and is in many ways new. Avoiding the term urban design in favor of urban processes was decided upon after much discussion: we felt the former placed too much emphasis on the architectural tradition of a singular, controlling voice rather than an integrative one. Within the trajectory of urban history, the corollaries of design one day too close to a concern for form alone, thus dislocating the political, economic and social forces shaping urban environments. Without the German context, it is also alligned with the planning instrument of the Landes- und Attendorn methods of representation such as typology and the Swanston figure-ground plan, the latter expressing an ideology stressing that urbanism's primary objective is the operation of the parameter block. In Berlin this has led to a polaronic implementation that is viewed as the European city and what is desired as the American. We also had one other option in naming the new program. In Germany, urban design is termed Städtebau (literally, city building) and many departments are so designated. However, foregrounding the construct is bound to planting concerns and therefore this was also rejected.

Thus urban processes describe a program with a strong design component contextualized in a cultural rather than simply physical framework. Culture is understood as having an empirical component: economic, social and political facts as well as a more subjective and ephemeral one. The latter is more aptly described as the urban imaginary: patterns of literature, film, advertisements and, increasingly, city marketing. To these aspects are art as instruments in constructing both an image of the urban and a sense of the sustainable and the built environment.

Using Berlin as both an empirical case study and a conceptual starting point we have, in varying contents, also pursued exchanges with universities and cities in an international context. In the contemporary hotbed of local and global as well as global, understanding the urban is predicated on comparative research and we have traveled with students to cities such as Venice, Paris, Hong Kong, Cairo. Most recently, within the framework of a project entitled Memory and Identity: Los Angeles—Berlin, we have examined Southern California. Refocusing on Berlin, this spring we will cooperate with a new World Heritage Studies program developed at Brandenburg University—a program in which these sites are understood not only in terms of their historical and national origins, but also in terms of their role as destinations for global tourism. This will culminate with a workshop involving universities from America and the UK. Taken together, it is our intention to facilitate our students' ability to engage the rapidly changing matrix of opportunities in the field of urbanism.
FROM BANGKOK

Mobilizing the Geographical Frame
Globalization, Sustainability and Social Equity

Ten floors above the intersection of the Sathon-Sukhumvit Road, thePTT Building is a beacon for Bangkok’s commercial and cultural life. The building, designed by the renowned architect Cesar Pelli, stands as a testament to the city’s dynamic transformation.

The PTT Building is not just a physical landmark; it is a symbol of the city’s aspirations. The architect’s vision was to create a space that would reflect the city’s energy and dynamism. The building’s design, with its glass and steel façade, allows natural light to flood the interior, enhancing the feeling of openness and space.

The PTT Building is also a reflection of the city’s commitment to sustainability. The building is designed to be energy-efficient, with features such as solar panels and a rainwater harvesting system. This is part of a broader trend in Bangkok, where there is a growing awareness of the need to balance economic development with environmental responsibility.

The PTT Building is more than just an architectural achievement; it is a symbol of the city’s progress. The building stands as a reminder that Bangkok is not just a city of the past; it is a city of the future, one that is constantly evolving and adapting to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

There is no Outside:
Informalization, Accessibility and Opportunity in the Open Global City

The recent emergence of graduate urban design programs around the world marks a pivotal moment in the history of urban design. This new paradigm is characterized by a shift towards a more open and participatory approach to urban design.

In Thailand, the Bachelor of Urban Design and Development program at Chulalongkorn University is a prime example of this new approach. The program is designed to be accessible to a wide range of students, and it emphasizes the importance of collaboration between different stakeholders.

The program is structured to encourage students to think critically about the challenges facing urban areas in Thailand and to develop the skills necessary to address these challenges. The curriculum includes courses on urban theory, urban design, and urban policy, as well as practical coursework in urban planning and design.

The program also places a strong emphasis on the role of technology in urban design. Students are encouraged to use digital tools and software to explore different design possibilities and to simulate the impact of their work.

The Bachelor of Urban Design and Development program at Chulalongkorn University is one of many examples of the growing trend towards informalization and accessibility in urban design. This trend is driven by a recognition of the importance of inclusivity and participation in the design process.

As urban areas continue to grow and change, it is more important than ever to ensure that everyone has a voice in the design of their city. The Bachelor of Urban Design and Development program at Chulalongkorn University is a step towards achieving this goal.
EXCERPTS FROM A TALE OF TWO CONFERENCES: URBAN DESIGN AND URBAN DISCOURSE IN THE MID-20TH CENTURY

The emergence of an American urban design discourse can be read in the proceedings of two conferences held in the mid-1950s. In 1955 Architectural Forum and the National Retail Dry Goods Association (NRDA) sponsored How to Rebuild Cities Downtown, attended by an elite group of merchandising, banking, real estate, entertainment, transportation, highway planning, government, construction, and public education leaders. The next year the Graduate School of Design at Harvard hosted another group of architects, planners, landscape architects, government planning officials and one developer. A special urban design issue of Progressive Architecture featured their discussions. This pair of conferences can be understood in several ways: as oppositional, as similar, and as eclectic. Each of these frames offers important historical lessons about urban conceptions, interventions, and audiences.

The first framework opposes the two conferences: the NRDA conference pragmatically focusing on the amelioration of the city while the GSD conference examined the social and cultural dimensions of the design of the city. The former aimed to repair the city as an economic engine first and a social realm second while the latter argued that improving the physical shape of the city was necessary for its social, economic and, most importantly, civic life.

A second reading reveals their conferences’ many shared assumptions and values about how the city should function, what was wrong with the city and who should make the decisions to solve its problems. Both operated inside the apolitical, consensus-based organizational thinking of the 1950s, participating in a discourse based on a positivistic view of social change, a reluctance to use the politics of master planning or urban design and a paternalistic view of the public.

A third reading of the two conferences finds a less unified or coherent set of assumptions about urban intervention. Several figures implicitly or explicitly challenged the ideas about city making that dominated both conferences. Georg Kepes, Jane Jacobs, Garrett Eckbo, Charles Abrams and Edmund Bacon framed urban intervention in ways that brought, albeit unevenly, the discursive picture to include other conceptions, audiences and processes. These three interpretations raise important questions about urban design and urban design pedagogy. What kinds of audiences do urban designers assume or solicit? How do the precepts of urban design practice and teaching reinforce or challenge the institutional structures in which they operate? How is urban design effectuated, and how does it participate in the political and social apparatus of its time? DAVID SMILEY, Columbia University