

NATIONAL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS



SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

DEPARTMENT III ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE-COMMUNICATION AND DESIGN
AREA: ARCHITECTURAL SPACE AND COMMUNICATION

7th SEMESTER – Elective Course

Special Topics in Architectural Space and Communication
Conceptual Approach of Design Problems

THE CONCEPT OF THE VOID IN ARCHITECTURE

November 2013

UN HOMME DANS L'ESPACE !



(Photo Shunk-Kerder)

Le peintre de l'espace se jette dans le vide !

Teaching Team:

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The Concept of the Void in Architecture

INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the wider development of the courses of the Area “**Architectural Space and Communication**”, an attempt is made towards the specific definition of the content and the concrete formulation of the methodologies used for the conduct of the elective courses.

This analysis has become necessary for the following reasons:

1. The elective courses are particularly important with respect to the overall education of the students, have a complementary role, and function in parallel to the compulsory courses.
2. In terms of their content, but also as a process, the elective courses offer the opportunity both to teachers and students for the development and evolution of the particular educational topics given by the cognitive areas and the various aesthetic and theoretical fields of the School of Architecture.
3. The elective courses are courses in Theory as well as Studio Exercises. They are therefore appropriate for the study of particular theoretical, structural or aesthetic problems, and their investigation through design exercises.
4. This proposed direction is founded on the history of the Area of “**Architectural Space and Communication**” and constitutes part of its specific character and physiognomy.

In the past, the elective courses of the Area of “**Architectural Space and Communication**” operated as design subjects of specific character, of a relatively small scale, supported by a theoretical approach. In the 7th Semester for instance, subjects like the design of a record shop, a bookshop, a small cinema centre, were studied, whereas in the 9th Semester the emphasis was given to the specific characteristics of public open spaces, like for instance a metro station, an open-air theatre, a river bed.

In other Semesters, the emphasis is given on more specific issues like Gender and Space (cooperation of Departments II and III), on issues having to do with the problems of synthesis, message and communication, for example the design of a poster, or on the investigation of concepts and theories as tools for the organization of contemporary architectural space (8th Semester).

The direction which is undertaken in this Academic Year is characterised by the formulation and definition of a specific conceptual problem with reference to Architecture, and the effort for its simultaneous study through small exercises.

In this context, for the elective course of the 7th Semester the concept of the “void” is proposed as a subject of study, whereas for the elective course of the 9th Semester the concept of “time” is proposed as a field of research.

The titles of the Courses are defined as:

7th Semester: The Concept of the Void in Architecture.

9th Semester: The Concept of Time in Architecture.

In both cases we are interested in the means and methods by which spaces are structured, organized and given meaning, in their wider sense, and not in the design of buildings.

Content of the 7th Semester.

“The Concept of the Void in Architecture”.

The concept of the “void” is defined as the “non visible” material which exists between the visible mass of structures. The problem which will be studied in the elective course of the 7th Semester is whether, and to what extent, this “non visible” material can be revealed, studied and constitute an autonomous object of design.

In Architecture, maybe this “void” is nothing different from what can be defined as “space”. It is very rare, however, that this ‘material’, “space”, has been studied in itself. On the contrary, and in most cases, all studies focus on the visible constituents of a structure and not on what exists between them. Thus, the “form and structure of space” have not been studied sufficiently.

In the elective course of the 7th Semester, the possibility of approaching the concept of “the void” as one of the main constituents in the practice of Architecture and Art will be examined, both at a theoretical and at a design level.

The actual references of the course will be not only with regard to Architecture, but also with regard to the ways through which “the void” appears in Literature, in Film, in Theatre, in Music, Painting, Sculpture, Industrial Design and Landscape Design. Wherever possible, reference will be made to other scientific disciplines or forms of art, by invited guests.

The Course will be structured as an open workshop as follows:

In the beginning of every lesson, there will be a presentation of a specific aspect and problem of the concept of the ‘Void’, which will be followed by an open discussion. This will be followed by short presentations of the student’s ideas, proposals and conceptual, exploratory exercises connected with the problem under consideration, and open discussions on these. The students are expected to design and construct an ‘object’ or a ‘structure’ which will visualize an aspect of the problem, based on the most dense and most well-aimed elaboration of the above conceptual exploration, both theoretically and expressively.

The means of the final work for presentation are free, and can include texts, drawings, sketches, three dimensional models, abstract structures, photographs, cd, video, collage, or a combination of the above. The chosen scale of presentation is also free and should be responsive to each student project, trying to convey its basic ideas and demands in a persuasive way.

The students can work either independently, or in teams of a maximum of three persons.

All tuition will not take place only in relation to the particular projects of each team, but also in the form of open, collective discussions between students and teachers, in front of the whole class.

In the end of the Semester, students and teams hand over their final work, which concentrates and reflects the conceptual and design demands, as they were constituted by each student or team. Those demands are developed and expounded, alternatively, in the various fields and expressive means mentioned above.

The Teaching Team