The City and The Theatre

Yale School of Architecture
Advanced Design Studio

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Marianne McKenna,
*Norman R. Foster Visiting Professor*
Kyle Dugdale, Critic in Architecture
CANADIAN STAGE PRODUCTIONS

KISS & CRY, MICHÈLE ANNE DE MEY & JACO VAN DORMAEL

DESH, AKRAM KHAN

HELEN LAWRENCE, STAN DOUGLAS
Overview

"Interpreting our times – that is what we do daily at Canadian Stage. We continue to push each boundary we encounter, and to engage our country with the world through the eyes of today’s most innovative artists.” - Matthew Jocelyn, Artistic & General Director, Canadian Stage

The disciplines of architecture and theatre are inexorably linked. Both employ creativity to present the complexity of human relationships, to explore and socialize ideas in a shared forum, to deliver immersive experiences, to translate the issues of the day, and to stimulate, heal, and restore through intimate sensorial contact.

Our buildings are successful when they tell stories, when they are literate and legible, and when those who use or visit them understand how spaces support collaboration, inspire creative thought, stimulate conversation, and amplify common experience. Successful cultural and community buildings work from the inside-out and from the outside-in, with transparency, inclusiveness, adaptability, and connectivity both internally and to the public realm.

Project

This studio proposes a real-world challenge: to design a new performance, rehearsal, and social space for Canadian Stage, Toronto’s premier experimental theatre company. Canadian Stage has established itself as a dynamic interpreter of the social condition, empathetic, innovative, inventive, disruptive, and committed to enquiry. This is an urban assignment that includes transposing the creative energy of two new “Theatre Rooms”, and one “City Room” onto a constrained urban site, projecting the program dynamically into the public realm of the city. The studio emphasizes the relationship between the pragmatics of back of house production areas, the technical aspects of the theatre room, and the front of house experience of the visitor, investigating design solutions from the scale of the city to that of the object.
City
The context is Toronto, the economic engine of Canada. Over the last thirty years Toronto has grown from a city of 2.8 million largely white Anglo-Saxons with Judeo-Christian values to a city of 6 million multi-cultural multi-faith inhabitants. It is ranked highly on Richard Florida’s ‘Creativity Index’, as it possesses the essential criteria of “technology, tolerance, and talent” to attract and retain a significant global-minded creative class – linking Toronto to creativity, competitiveness, and prosperity.

Field Work and Travel Week
Travel Week will be two parts, beginning with a one day field trip to NYC for a performance of Taylor Mac’s A 24 Decade History of Popular Music 1776 - 2016, at St. Ann’s Warehouse hosted by theatre consultants Charcoal Blue. Later in the semester is a five day trip to Toronto that continues to Montreal. Visits will include performances, site tours, client and consultant meetings, briefing with local authorities, and visits to relevant buildings in Toronto, Montreal, and New York City.
TORONTO
4th largest city in North America
51% of residents are immigrants
GTA grows by 100-125,000 annually
Sites

Students will choose between two sites. In each case they will be required to evaluate and make decisions regarding the demolition, retention, or adaptation of the existing architecture.

ST. LAWRENCE CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

The first site is occupied by the Brutalist city-owned St. Lawrence Centre building complex, housing two theatres, and located on Front Street, a major east-west artery of the city. Front Street, once the shoreline of Lake Ontario, is now far removed. Similar to most cities as they industrialized, Toronto landfilled a significant parcel of land disconnecting Front Street from its watery basis. The street does retain many of its large 19th century institutional buildings, including the central Post Office, the Union Station transit hub, and the vibrant St. Lawrence Market, as well as small green spaces, and 20th century public and cultural buildings.

BERKELEY STREET THEATRE

The second site is currently home to Canadian Stage’s administrative offices, rehearsal spaces, and two small theatres. Built in 1887 by The Consumer’s Gas Company, and adjacent to the site of Canada’s first parliament building, the Berkeley St. Theatre is a complex of heritage buildings rich with the history of Toronto. The surrounding neighbourhood has been the topic of many recent urban planning studies, as city officials look at reclaiming the heritage of Toronto’s oldest neighbourhood, and redefining its future.