

ON ASSEMBLAGE

the craft of devising and assembling a lighthouse

PROGRAM FS 2009

exercise type:

diploma students: arch. design + construction (Oi)

bachelor students: arch. design + integrated discipline construction (e+i)

master students: arch. design + focal work construction (e+s)

number of students: 28

introduction: tuesday, 17. february 2009, 14.00 h

meeting point: will be mailed after the enrolment

seminarwoche: the trip will lead to the site. there will be some

additional places for the students of the design studio.

the project will be focused on the precise assemblage - conceptual engineering and liveable detailing - of a structure able to cope in all kinds of weather conditions with a lighthouse with minimal fully autonomous units to accommodate several and precise sorts of needs for daily life routines of the in keepers as well as the frequent users of the ocean, the island and the fortress (sailors, anglers, underwater fisherman expert in apnea, surfers, poets, passers by etc) - Le Corbusier's or Buckminster Fuller's self contained units should serve as a motto -

the complementary vicinity of a fortress of contained scale and simple exuberant character will add complexity to the daunting task to be crafted with the proper sensing of the materials

the island at the Estuary of the River Minho - on the border of two countries and two regions - Galicia and Minho - on the West Atlantic - houses the Insua Fortress known to having housed many uses along the ages.

the river estuary has a quiet but rather eventful character - rocky and sandy: unpredictable sea and river tides

lighthouses - despite today's satellite communications facilities and all - are as necessary on the coast line and life today as craftsman are needed in our daily lives. They are both marks of difference and hidden durable wisdom to be passed on as only trained eyes hands and minds are able to guide and give light to those reaching for shelter.

like Klee's angelic figure thrusting itself unto the future and always overlooking above its shoulder.

after all 'architecture is a combination of nostalgia and extreme anticipation'

like many a craftstman

today the lighthouse may seem as odd an utility as it is still useful in treasured territory, not unlike the 'craftsman and the menacing factory that appears down the road'. the keeper of the lighthouse has to cope with similar paradigms and abilities of the craftsman and its shelter should express all of this richness.

'three abilities are the foundation of craftsmanship: to localise, to question and to open up. the first involves making a matter concrete; the second, reflecting on its qualities; the third, expanding its sense. the carpenter establishes the peculiar grain of a single piece of wood, looking for detail; turns the wood over and over, pondering how the pattern on the surface might reflect the structure hidden underneath; decides that the grain can be brought out if he or she uses a metal solvent rather than standard wood varnish. to deploy these capabilities the brain needs to process visual, aural, tactile and language-symbol information simultaneously. ...the self-respect that people can earn by being good craftsmen does not come easily. to develop skill requires a good measure of experiment and questioning; mechanical practice seldom enables people to improve their skills. too often we imagine good work itself as success built, economically and efficiently, upon success. developing skill is more arduous and erratic than this. but most people have it in them to become good craftsmen. they have the capacities to become better at, and more involved in, what they do - the abilities to localise, question and open up problems that can result, eventually, in good work. even if society does not reward people who have made this effort as much as it should, in the end, they can achieve a sense of self-worth - which is reward enough...'

assistants Regula Steinmann and Rui Neto

VISITING PROFESSOR JOSE PAULO DOS SANTOS
ETH ZURICH

