ICONTEXT

This year Diploma Unit 9 shifts its attention away from the single iconic object and towards the context of and conversation between architectural objects.

So, what is context? Since the 1970’s, architecture theory has defined context in banal and inadequate ways, as that which neighbours or surrounds a building. By contrast, we will approach the topic as an opportunity for something radical, in the true dogma of Dip 9 - to (re)unite and design an architectural project within a larger cultural world of your own making. We will develop a contextualism defined by the connections between constructed realities and architectural fantasies - somewhere between fact and fiction. In the manner of Duschamp’s Box in a Valise or Schwitters’ Merzbau, you will invent a new self-contained world - a wunderkammer of sorts – within which you set the stage for your proposal. You will pursue your project as one intimately connected to and constructed from its physical and cultural relationships.

Conversation and Context will be our ruling forces. With these we will question, debate and collaboratively construct a new form of reading, designing, and communicating an alternate and more vital form of architectural project – as one intricately woven with its (historical, material, geographical) materials. You will each develop your proposal and conversation with a small group of project consultants, including one specialist in a field related to your agenda. In this way you will situate your own proposition within a larger cultural discourse.

The students of Diploma 9 each begin their year with the making of a personal manifesto, whose expression frames the year ahead. This year your manifesto will also set up the context you will weave around your personality, project, site, and historical context as you shape your proposal.

In terms 1 & 2 we will continue our collaboration with the graduate History and Critical Thinking programme through a series of seminars on Context. The unit will also be supported by workshops and tutorials with AA Dip 9 graduates Adam Furman, Marco Ginex and Amandine Kastler in addition to other consultants (including editors, graphic designers, and technical consultants) who will join us throughout the year.
BRIEF 1 WEEK 1 – 6

RE-CON: RE-ENGINEERING A CONTEXT

1 OCT – 2 NOV

Architecture involves the writing of briefs, not just the doing of projects. In this first project of the year you will experiment with 3 things: 1. How to write a brief, 2. How to build into that brief a set of relationships that you define as instrumental in the making of this project, and 3. How much of the brief (and those relationships) are real and how much you deliberately invent to recreate a new contextual framework for your project.

As a precursor to the writing of your own thesis you are asked to reconstruct a brief and context for one of the projects listed below. The main focus of this project is to reconstruct a context for a building below with accompanying highly articulated imagery describing the ambitions of its client and designer, its social, cultural or symbolic significance, programmatic intent, and the possible material or fabrication developments provoked by the project. In previous years, students have ‘re-briefed’ their projects in different sites, manipulated timelines, created split/alternate realities in which they existed, created faux competition entries, and/or redesigned pieces of the buildings to uncover their hidden potentials and missed opportunities.

This re-contextualization may take the form of a series of separate contexts to address the interests of client, city and ultimately the architect(s) who designed the project. Your final document should consist of a written text + 5 plates describing the drawings and concept images that are a part of this new context.

The projects we refer to as precedents and references all pushed the level of architectural thinking at their time – whether in terms of spatial organization, material experimentation and construction, programmatic repositioning, urban impact, or pure formal experimentation. Some of the projects below have provoked a re-reading of how buildings are shaped by and can reshape cities. Your Re-Con will need to recapture the mood, cultural need and ambition that led to these projects.

Staatbibliothek by Hans Scharoun  
Bilbao Guggenheim by Frank Gehry  
IIT by Mies van der Rohe (with Student Centre by OMA)  
Lake Shore Drive by Mies van der Rohe  
Palazzo Medici by Michelozzo di Bartolomeo  
Wiliis Faber & Dumas Headquarters by Foster & Partners  
Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture by Rem Koolhaas / OMA  
The City as a Significant Environment Competition, Exodus  
National Gallery by Robert Venturi  
Eames House by Charles and Ray Eames  
Palace of Soviets by Iofan Schuko Gelfreikh  
Glass House by Philip Johnson  
Rockefeller Center by Raymond Hood  
Salvation Army by Le Corbusier  
Centre Pompidou by Rogers & Piano  
Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève by Henri Labrouste  
Casa de Musica by OMA  
Ryugyong Hotel  
Campo Marzio by Piranesi

Berlin  
Bilbao  
Chicago  
Chicago  
Florence  
Ipswich  
London  
London  
London  
Los Angeles  
Moscow  
New Canaan  
New York  
Paris  
Paris  
Paris  
Porto  
Pyongyang  
Rome
Seattle Public Library by OMA
Biblioteca Marciana by Jacopo Sansovino
Rooftop Conversion by Coop Himmelblau
Looshaus in Michaelerplatz by Adolf Loos
The Continuous monument by Superstudio

SCHEDULE WEEKS 1.1-1.6

TUTORIALS, SEMINARS & REVIEWS
Tutorials will be held twice weekly on Tuesday and Friday and we will have an internal group pinup every second week with active participation, dialogue and criticism from everyone in the unit.

Alongside the unit schedule of tutorials, pinups and reviews, we will also be participating in a series of seminars, debates, workshops and tutorials exploring our topic of Contextualism with the graduate students of the History & Critical Thinking programme.

WEEK 1
Tues 28 Sept After interviews Brief 1 is distributed and research on Re-Brief Projects begins.
Fri 1 Oct 14:00 Unit meeting and presentation of past Dip9 student portfolios.
Present work of: Marie DeMonseignat, Adam Furman, Marco Ginex, Tarek Shamma, Amandine Kastler, Flavie Audi
17:00 Unit Meeting moves to AA Bar

WEEK 2
Tues 5 Oct Introduction to Brief 1: Re-Con – Re-engineering A Context
Each pair will choose two projects from the list. Gather relevant information, texts, drawings and images to be formatted in White Book. All data must be redrawn – no photocopies allowed except for images.

Fri 8 Oct Group Tutorial – Re-Con
Groups to present research and drawings to the unit.

WEEK 3
Tues 12 Oct PinUp - Re-Con
Pairs to present research and drawings to the unit. It will be an open day with discussion and questions. At then end of day student will need to select ONE project to continue working with and developing for the following Friday.

Fri 15 Oct Seminar 1 THE MANIFESTO
Readings:

Fri 15 Oct Group presentations.
Each group will choose 1 text or author to present and defend in a debate-style discussion. In addition, each team will prepare 3 questions for each of the 2 opposing teams. From the 3 manifestoes, students should also analyze the original publication: layout of the manifestoes, images, format, and text. Each
student to confirm the chosen project as it will become the starting point for the year’s work.

Examples of previous years Re-Briefs will be shown.

**WEEK 4**

**Tues 19 Oct**  
PinUp - Re-Con  
Prepare a draft of your RE-CON and present it with your collected project documentation. The text should state the ambition, scale and potential impact of the project.  
Prepare preliminary versions of the RE-CON five (5) plates.

**Fri 22 Oct**  
Seminar 2 **CONTEXT v CONTEXTUALISM**

Readings:  

Group presentations. Each group will choose 1 text to present and defend in a debate-style discussion. In addition, each team will prepare 3 questions for each of the 2 opposing teams.  
Tutorials in the afternoon.

**WEEK 5**

**Tues 26 Oct**  
PinUp - Re-Con  
Present a preliminary version of the RE-CON five (5) plates and text.

**Fri 29 Oct**  
PinUp – Re-Con

1. Finalize the RE-CON text and the 5 plates. Print all plates at 420*420mm and mount on card or other material NO thicker than 2mm.  
2. Outline your thesis proposal and prepare a draft A4 to present to the group. This text should declare your manifesto and articulate YOUR context.

**WEEK 6**

**Tues 2 Nov**  
**Brief 1 JURY – THE RE-CON**

This will be concluded with a final written text accompanied by a slideshow presenting the drawings, diagrams and images you collected and re-created along with 5 plates re-imagining your Re-Con. To be presented as a slideshow – alongside the formatting and printing of your White Book. The jury will review your initial thesis proposal which should be prepared as part of the presentation.  
1. Complete the RE-CON text and finalize the 5 plates. Print all plates at 420*420mm on chosen material or mount on card or other material no thicker than 2mm. **NO FOAMBOARD!**  
2. Conclude presentation with an introduction into your Thesis Proposal accompanied by A4 written abstract supported by images. This text should declare how you will approach context both as a conceptual foundation as well as design attitude.  
3. White Book 1 Re-Brief to be submitted printed and perfect-bound
BRIEF 2
THE ICONTEXTUAL PROJECT

Setting out to design an ‘iconic’ project immediately presupposes its failure.

Setting out to design a ‘contextual’ project often leads to the same limited and ineffective results. If the populist means of reading and designing a contextual project is visual, than there is nothing to peel back, to delve into once we’ve unlocked the compositional relationships. We will challenge the tired reduction of context to banal composition and pursue it at every level of a project. This is where we will develop our new world of relationships.

We will invent a much more contemporary and culturally significant way of engaging with context – by situating a project within its real and faux cultural, institutional, historical framework.

Imagine the wholly unexpected connections, memories, and potential new relationships one might uncover and create in a Wunderkammer or Studiolo. These spaces were ones in which their occupant and ultimate designer collected elements of the city – in essence creating microcosms of larger realities, yet able to reconfigure those realities (and create new ones) every time elements in the room are rearranged. Imagine a world in which a project and its context are able to fold on themselves in unusual ways -always constructing alternate identities dependent on the reader and/or its temporary configuration.

Following on from Brief 1, this project will take the process of brief and manifesto writing to a more personal level. Where the unit differs from last year’s agenda, is in the deliberate manufacturing of a context (past, present and future) for each of your proposals. This context can be entirely fabricated, or stitched together from a collection of actual events, spaces, etc, reorganized within your own project continuum. While you are asked to choose real sites within real cities, the context (social, cultural, political, geological, geographical, and timeological) can be manipulated.

You will create a proposal that takes your Re-Con project as a point of departure for your own proposition. The unit demands unconventional proposals for briefs that shape agendas for new kinds of relational projects.

If the first project required to you to formulate a critical and propositional argument for/against context, the second asks that you think generatively and provocatively – to construct an argument for a project, its contextual framework and work through its realization. You should be able to enter Brief 2 with a set of formal, programmatic, and cultural criteria that you define as instrumental to your strategy for shaping the project. As the unit actively tries to build individual personalities, Brief 2 enables the setting up of individual, and eccentric briefs and projects that explore the various takes on the unit agenda.

By the end of Term 1 you should expect to have between 2-4 physical models as well as a set of 5 plates.

YEAR STRUCTURE
As with last year, this brief and the sub-briefs are loosely organized into 3 categories of investigation: Context and Programme (Term 1), Relational Forms (Term 2), and Image (Term 3).
SITE
The unit will be working on sites that offer a range of differing historical and cultural perspectives. Although the unit is not site-driven, students will still need to pursue a site survey examining its various conditions and affiliations (cultural, material, historical, infrastructural) to best position your project within it. You will each work in sites that either continue from or replace that from your Re-Con. Should you choose to relocate or re-situate your project, you must be able to clearly relate this new site to that from the Re-Con.

SCHEDULE WEEKS 1.6 – 1.12

TUESDAYS – GROUP TUTORIALS
FRIDAYS – INDIVIDUAL TUTORIALS

WEEK 6
Fri 5 Nov  Introduction to Brief 2 – The Icontextual Project
1. Introduction to Brief 2
2. Define the initial scope of your thesis and determine a project/building type to work on this year.
3. All students (4th and 5th year) should have an idea as to which site and program they will be working with.

Seminar 3 CONTEXT AND THE CITY
Readings:
Congestion Without Matter p. 894-937 and Bigness p. 494-516
The Roman Forum and Monuments; Summary of the Critique of the Concept of Context p. 119-130
Introduction p. 2-8 and After the Millennium p.32-49
Ungers, O.M., Architecture Culture 1943-68, Columbia/Rizzoli, New York, 1993
The City as a Work of Art p. 362-4

Group presentations. Each group will choose one Project to present and defend in a debate-style discussion. In addition, each team will prepare 3 questions for each of the 2 opposing teams.

WEEK 7
Tues 9 Nov  Group Tutorial
Develop initial formal criteria and response (in drawing or model) for Context.

WEEK 8
Tues 16 Nov  Group tutorial
Fri 19 Nov  Seminar 4 THE ICONTEXTUAL PROJECT
Students will present their transition from the Re-Con to the contextual project to the Students from the Master in Histories and Theory course.

WEEK 9
Tues 23 Nov  PIN-UP
Fri 26 Nov AM  Individual Tutorial
PM 5th year students will present the TS5 proposal

WEEK 10
Tues 30 Dec  Group Tutorial
Fri 3 Dec  TS5 meeting
5th year Students will submit 2-page image-supported TS5 proposal.

Seminar 4 TWINS, PAIRS & PARTNERS (Brett Steele Lecture)

WEEK 11
Tues 7 Dec  Individual Tutorials
Fri 10 Dec  Individual Tutorials and SUBMISSIONS HAND-IN!

WEEK 12
Tues 14 Dec  FINAL JURY - THE ICONTEXTUAL PROJECT
Students will present series of 2-4 physical models as well as a set of 420 x
420mm plates.

Fri 18 Dec  Group Tutorial to review White Books & TS

WINTER BREAK
During the break, students should revise their work of Term 1, ensuring that all
work is photographed and documented, and compiled / formatted in the White
Book. The book is to be printed for week 1 of Term 2.

TERM 2  10 JANUARY – 1 APRIL 2011
SCHEDULE WEEKS 2.1 – 2.12 & 5th Year TECHNICAL STUDIES

BRIEF 3
A DETAILED CONVERSATION
28 – 4 Mar  TS5 interim Jury Week
14 - 18 Mar  TS5 Final Submissions

As with last year, much of Term 2 will be devoted to the production and making of a detail
investigation that examines small pieces of the project in extreme depth and detail as you
continue to pursue your agenda at an intimate scale. The detail is not just a piece of the larger
project. Rather, it is the essential statement of the project’s argument.

We will focus on developing a language of CONTEXTUAL DETAILS, with a particular
investigation into the connection between things – surfaces, materials, joints, ground, neighbours etc. We will continue to work within the realm of reality and fiction as you explore the potential of
the same detail to be resolved in different contexts. Central to this part of the project will be a
material reworking of the thesis to explore its manifestation at a small scale through this set of
details.

Students are encouraged to explore inventive solutions to material, organizational and structural
problems. Particular attention will be paid to understanding the various assembly and material
options available to each site students are working in. Within this fabrication context, the unit’s
interest is clearly not low-tech low-design, but rather high-design, any-tech.

Group Meetings every 2nd week for TS5 beginning in Term 1 Week 9
For 5th years this brief will form your Technical Studies. You are also strongly encouraged to
seek consultants from outside the AA to meet with a specialist in your chosen topic of exploration.
5th years will still be required to hold regular meetings with your TS tutors. At the end of Term 1
5th years will submit a 2-page TS5 proposal, which will outline your chosen area of exploration.
During the latter part of Term 1 and throughout Term 2 one of your weekly tutorials will be devoted to both the design and technical development of your project. Trips during Term 2 include will include visits to Ron Arad’s showroom/office, and Ross Lovegrove’s studio.

EVERY TUESDAY – GROUP TUTORIALS
EVERY FRIDAY – INDIVIDUAL TUTORIALS

WEEK 1
Tues 11 Jan Group Tutorial
Fri 14 Jan Individual Tutorials & TS Proposal Submission

WEEK 2
Tues 18 Jan PinUP of all the revised work completed during the break.
Fri 21 Jan Individual Tutorial

WEEK 3
Tues 25 Jan JURY – The ICONTEXTUAL Project
Wed 26 Jan TS5 meeting
Fri 28 Jan Individual Tutorials

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT DATES
Fri 18 Feb Winter Open Jury Presentations
28 – 4 Mar TS5 INTERIM JURY WEEK
14 - 18 Mar TS5 FINAL SUBMISSIONS
Fri 25 Mar Complimentary Studies Submissions Due
MON 28 – TUES 29 MAR 4TH YEAR PREVIEWS
THUR 31 MAR – FRI 1 APRIL 5TH YEAR PREVIEWS

SPRING BREAK
UNIT TRIP – DATES TO BE CONFIRMED
During the break, students should revise their work of Term 2, ensuring that all work is photographed and documented, and compiled / formatted in the White Book. The book is to be printed for week 1 of Term 3.

TERM 3 26 APRIL – 17 JUNE  SCHEDULE WEEKS 3.1 – 3.8

BRIEF 4
THE IMAGE IN CONTEXT
The images you produce are crucial to the telling of your story and play an essential role in communicating your thesis as an image, space and form. As with last year, the summer term is entirely dedicated to the production of the image alongside the narrative it helps to shape. We will begin the term with a series of seminars and workshops on the Image with consultants.

In the third term students will evolve the interior world of the project and develop an approach towards generating a space and experience informed and shaped by the relationships you create with your context. Emphasis during this term will be placed on developing a critical understanding of how space, form and the city are perceived through the image. We will continue to explore
how the various media (drawing, photograph, rendering) can be deliberately manipulated and controlled as part of the design process of creating an image that communicates an essential idea about your project. The focus of this term will be the construction of a set of images that describe the spatiality of your project, articulate an understanding of the physical and experiential attributes of the space, and most importantly communicate your unique and distinctive visual approach of imagining your project.

Amandine Kastler, Adam Furman and Marco Ginex will join us throughout the year running a series of workshops and tutorials to develop the images and models, alongside our regular unit meetings. The primary investigation of these workshops will be focused around the question of layering (literal layering in 2D and conceptual or spatial layering as in the Studiolo in 3D) as a technique to add extreme depth (visual and content) to the plates and models.

EVERY TUESDAY – GROUP TUTORIALS
EVERY FRIDAY – INDIVIDUAL TUTORIALS

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT DATES

WEEK 1
Tues – Fri 26-29 April Undergraduate Unit Jury Week
Fri 29 April DIPLOMA 9 JURY ON TUESDAY
   5th Year Technical Studies High Pass Jury
   Group Tutorials
   White Book to be submitted printed and perfect-bound

WEEK 2
Thur 5 May Layering Workshop – Modeling, Rendering, Photoshop, Printing

WEEK 3
Thur 13 May Layering Workshop – Modeling, Rendering, Photoshop, Printing

WEEK 6
Tue 31 May 4TH YEAR REVIEWS
Weds 1 June 4TH YEAR REVIEWS

WEEK 7
Wed 8 June 5TH YEAR DIPLOMA COMMITTEE
Thur 9 June 5TH YEAR DIPLOMA COMMITTEE
Fri 10 June Diploma Honours Presentations & Committee Meeting

WEEK 8
Wed 15 June RIBA Part 2
Fri 17 June Graduation Ceremony & AA Projects Review Exhibition
OUTPUT
THE MANIFESTO
 +/- 400 word text that acts as your personal thesis within the framework of the unit. It should outline not only your intellectual ambition, but also your working tools in terms of your project development, and more specifically your model fabrication, drawings and techniques. Your manifesto will outline your programmatic, organizational, and formal criteria with which we evaluate your project.

THE MODELS
You will develop your project through intense physical modeling. The production of models will evolve as a formal investigation of your manifesto and thesis.
In Term 1 the models will be used to address issues of massing density, scale, land-use, site, solidity, etc (2 x 1:500 models)
In Term 2 you will use the models to explore issues of materiality, scalar differentiation, structure, issues of symmetry, interior, and spatial organization. (1:200 model, 1:50 model and 2 x detail models)
In Term 3 you will develop a 1:5 and a final 1:500 model to be used as base-material for your images.

THE FOLIO
The folio consists of a 425mm x 425mm box containing your 420mm x 420mm plates. The series of plates is comprised of the essential drawings and images you will produce. All plates will have a crucial role in the development and communication of your architecture. Each piece may operate entirely uniquely and discretely, while others may operate as a series. All drawings and models must have their own story to tell within the larger narrative of the project. The list below is to be used as a guide as you will need to adjust the plates according to your project.

5 REBRIEF PLATES
PLAN 1:200
SECTION 1:200
CONCEPT IMAGE
TOP VIEW / SITE PLAN
EXTERIOR VIEW
EXTERIOR VIEW
DETAIL 1:1
DETAIL IMAGE
CEILING PLAN
INTERIOR VIEW
INTERIOR VIEW
VIEW – YOUR CHOICE
MODEL PHOTOGRAPHS

THE WHITE BOOK
The white book will document the ongoing development of your project and thesis. All aspects of your work should be formatted for the book. It is intentionally too small to be used as a standard presentation portfolio and is rather a working document and addendum to your Folio.

THE BLOG
We believe in the potential for expanded unit collaboration and will continue to develop and maintain a unit blog at www.aadip9.net as a forum for students, tutors, consultants and visitors to comment on student work as it happens. Each student will maintain an individual page and upload work as it is developed to encourage cross-unit dialogue, openness, and a willingness to expose both our strengths and weaknesses.
DIPLOMA 9 READING LIST & BIBLIOGRAPHY


Cohen, Jean-Louis, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Birkhauser, Basel, 2007 p. 27-33


Cousins, Mark, “Neighbours” AA Friday Evening Lecture Series

Dean, Penelope, Ed., HUNCH 11, Rethinking Representation, The Berlage Institute, Winter 2006/7

Eisenman, Peter, Moving Arrows, Eros and Other Errors, AA FOLIO (box of plates)


Goodyear & McManus, Inventing Marcel Duchamp, Smithsonian Institution, 2009 p. 186-7

Huysmans, Joris-Karl, Against Nature, Penguin Classics, 1959

Kahn, Andrea, The Invisible Mask taken from Drawing Building Text, Princeton Architectural Press, New York,


Mauries, Patrick, Cabinets of Curiosities, Thames & Hudson, 2002


   *The Roman Forum and Monuments; Summary of the Critique of the Concept of Context*
p. 119-130

   *Robert Venturi and the Yale Mathematics Building* p. 135-152

   *Introduction* p. 2-8 and *After the Millennium* p.32-49

   *Contextualism: Urban Ideals and Deformations*

Somol, Robert, “Shape vs Form”, *Content*, Taschen, 2004

   p. 7-17

   *The City as a Work of Art* p. 362-4


   *Contradiction Adapted and Contradiction Juxtaposed* p. 45-69

Wall, Jeff, *Jeff Wall: Selected Essays and Interviews*, MOMA, 2007

Witte, Ron, “Go Figure”, *Log 5*, Anyone Corporation, New York, 2005 (p77-81)

**Digital & Fabrication References:**
Carruthers, James, *Form vs. Shape 2 and 3. Advanced 3D Modeling with Rhinoceros*, DVD from www.hydraulicdesign.net
UNIT EXPECTATIONS
By writing a manifesto at the start of the year you enable, early on, a critical means with which to design and assess your project. You will be in a position to outline your thesis and ultimately your specific criteria for developing and evaluating your project. While the unit does not promote an explicit formal typology, it does require that you relate your project to the larger cultural debate on contextualism in the contemporary and historic field of architecture. As such, during the year you should be able to answer these questions:

How does your project sit within the overall unit agenda?
What is a contextual architecture?
What are your historical precedents?
What are your contemporary precedents?
How do you define context?
How do you define your context in a sentence? (This demands a brutally clear thesis)
How does your context redefine your project/building and vice-versa?
What is the relevance of your project to our larger cultural context?
How do you articulate the distinction between your project, its models, drawings and images? Do they each have a role to play within your body of work?
What are your technical precedents, and what is your material and manufacturing context?
Who will you collaborate with?
Still beats night recon in Fallujah.