

Archi Infra Punctures

Martin Despang
University of Nebraska

In times of economic and ecological turmoil, the motivation to move people around as effectively and efficiently as possible becomes a foremost societal goal.

But what does this have to do with architecture, since the physical manifestations of this human activity is typologically settled in the realm of infrastructure as an engineering domain. If, however, one defines architecture as a comprehensive cultural act which materializes human event, this typology becomes a very interesting vehicle for exploration and archi-cultural investigation. This then leads to the observation of a schizophrenic societal phenomenon. Public transportation, as the most well intended typology, is a humanitarian gesture to equally take care all members of society. In contrast, its physical embodiment of utilitarian structures is generally being mistreated, beaten up, and defaced unlike any other target in the public realm. The tram stations for the D-Line in Hannover, Germany, became a case study with aims to make the environmentally friendly typology of infrastructure also just as equally architecturally friendly. This can be realized through means of methodical architectural processing in achieving consistency throughout analysis, concept, development and execution. As opposed to the common tectonic solution of a fill, in collaboration with ARUP, sequential extruded foundations, as lowest possible carbon footprints, were developed to serve as stepping stones for a bridging steel platform. In the sense a synthesis between the architectural poetic and pragmatic, the flow of the street profile is maintained and rhythmically accentuated with a self cleaning effect achieved by allowing natural breezes to "pick up" loose litter, such as newspapers. The porosity of the hovering basalt lava stone platform joints and street pavers allows natural storm water runoff.



the common, attached glass sheds on the fill



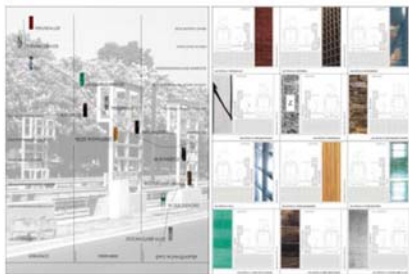
effortless bridging



architectural archetypical sheltering



multi-personality gathering



choreography of materiality



slim tailored sides



strong customized backs

Critical analysis as well led to a fundamental reconsideration of the typical "glass house like" shelter structures. Since the system had to be squeezed into the existing street profile sections, heavy traffic was about to make sitting with the back to it a rather uncomfortable experience. The waiting areas therefore were created as solid masses, which give physical and emotional protection to the waiting passenger through a strong and solid back. From the point of view of the passenger flow on the platform, the form of the working titled "waiting blocks" were contrastingly slim-tailored to allow maximum visibility, orientation and social security. The blocks are all as well executed differently in response to the variety of human event interaction with them, as informing sitting and standing in different configurations. The competition outline presented another schizophrenia in regard to that the client implied a repetitive solution due to efficiency and cost effectiveness. On the other hand, designs for each stop in response to the specific existing

character of the adjacent neighborhood, just like executed before with the "bus stop" project and designs of among others Oscar Tusquets Blanca, Jasper Morrison and Frank Gehry. Other than the "either-or" peer competition solutions, the submission explored a hybrid approach of thresholds for the modular, serialized steel skeleton structures of the blocks with a signature materialization differing from station to station.



infrastructural lifestyling

THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW



EMERGING ARCHITECTURE

Billie Tsien was originally worried about the reduction of materials to cosmetic skins, but she was persuaded that they will give a sense of place to each station and a notion of progression to journeys.

critical



materiality





'What the engineer sees as structure, the architect sees as a sculpture. Actually, of course, it is both.'



inter-disciplinary



inter-typological



microscopical

This strategy of variety within uniformity gears toward two perceptual phenomena. For the non-moving individual, it gives identification of the specific of place, as far as the characteristics of the different sites are concerned. From the point of view of the moving user, materiality has a chorographical function in telling a sequential story that addresses and utilizes the core value of architecture as moving through space in time. With that, as opposed to a postmodern approach of literal contextually, the materialities are developed in an abstract, interpretative notion of both their urban poetic

relevance and interplay as their pragmatic response to specific location requirements. In a contemporary interpretation of Gottfried Semper's virtues of "earthwork, framework and enclosure," special care was dedicated to the micro tectonic aspects of the specific material that forms the threshold of the waiting blocks. This was characterized by strict monomaterialistic principles, in working just with the pure material itself in strategically avoiding any other distracting secondary, subordinate material.

From a research point of view, very interesting was the assessment controlling resonance to the project in its very diverse way, reflecting the projects aim of complex simplicity, which is engaging people differently depending on their different levels of perceptual preoccupations. Hugh Collis in "Transport, Engineering and Architecture," elaborated on the interdisciplinary hybridism of both sculptural and structural integrity as a collaborative effort of architect and engineer.



fine grain (as seen in "C3 Korea")



materiality as recognized and received

Others like the people from Singapore's PageOne and the Korean C3 publishers talked about the aspect of place taking and making, and typologically characterized and categorized the project as "furniture" for urban living.

The most controversial attention was drawn to the materiality aspect with the DETAIL magazine's "technology article" attributing to the conceptual part of the project. Victoria Phyllis Richardson in her Thames & Hudson "XS" book was investigative about the matter of scale, fine grain, and the question of spiritual rather than physical monumentality. Ballard Bell and Patrick Rand in their Princeton Architectural Press "Materials for Design" reaching the most holistic analysis, insisted on the consequent following of rigor in the fields of concept, development and execution. Very rewarding were the architectural jurors like Billie Tsien in the ar+d award, expressing her worries about surface related qualities only, what the author had always carried around with him. The "German Stone Award" and "Award for Metal Roofs and Facades" for the basalt lava and the pre-patined copper stations were extremely helpful to motivate the furthering of collaboratively including the craftsman and manufacturer in the creative design process as early as possible. Most educational for us was typologically fitting the pop cultural feedback, as the Wallpaper Magazine saw it as a lifestyle plug in and the grandma enthusiastically telling her grandson to get off the "ice cube" station.

