

The urban perimeter block defines and gives shape to the European city. Consistent edges clarify the threshold between the public and the private domain. The perimeter structure gives definition to the street with facades that conform to some consistent rules and it contains an inner space or courtyard that provides air, sun and recreational space to the inhabitants. The simplicity and directness of this urban figure gives it great versatility in organization and economy of space. Territory is clearly demarcated - everyone understands it – both the passer-by who might judge their journey through the city by the number of blocks they pace past or by the inhabitant who knows that once they cross the threshold of the gate or the porch-door know that they are home.

The length and scale of blocks make them unique and often contributes to giving individual cities their identity over others, think of the 113.3m chamfered blocks of Barcelona or the long 185m blocks in Munich's Maxvorstadt district for example. The facades conforming to a consistent scale and texture can be diverse in their definition, as a group of houses bunched up together on the one hand or as an immense physical mass employing a repetition of sameness on the other. Variations like internal streets, sequences of courtyards, courts towards the street and lower internal buildings, developed over time, give the block a further complexity but the overriding sense of wholeness, of figure and ground, give the block an enduring and familiar quality.

We are interested in how Theodor Fischer, while Head of the office of urban expansion in Munich in the late 1890's, author of the *Staffelbauplan* of Munich (graduated building plan) of 1904 and later as joint founder of the *Deutscher Werkbund* 1907 and member of the German Garden City Movement reinterpreted the character of the urban block with a more open character defined by large urban villas. These villas of collective occupation conform to the guidelines of the disciplined block but gaps are allowed to form between them, describing the buildings as figures, giving greater opportunities in internal planning and allowing air and views into the heart of the block. Fischer's ideas gave the block a greater potential for a coherent diversity and allowed the informality of the inner block to become part of the urban encounter.

Fischer demonstrated that the block can accommodate different ideas and typologies, not as an excuse for generating cosmetic differences to make similar buildings look as different as possible but as a way of tuning the urban figure to its place in the city, its outlook to view or response to orientation and climate. Buildings remain integral parts of a greater whole but they display a character of their own which contributes to a continuing narrative of city life and day to day experience. This semester we shall explore the potential in the architecture of the block by carrying out test planning and scenario studies in the neighbourhood of Milbertshofen, in northern Munich - to consider the principles of a tolerant and picturesque urbanism that epitomizes the best aspects of the European city.

## Studio Krucker Bates The Architecture of the Block Test planning in Milbertshofen



## Week 1

21<sup>st</sup> April

Introduction to the Semester by Studio Krucker Bates

Introduction to exercises one and two

## Week 2

27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> April

Assistant tutorials (exercises one and two)

Introduction to exercise three

## Week 3

4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> May

Assistant tutorials (exercises one, two and three)

## Week 4

11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> May

Lecture by Bruno Krucker, 11.30 am

Assistant tutorials (exercises one, two and three)

## Week 5

18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> May

Lecture by Stephen Bates, 11.30 am

Pin Up 1 with SB and BK (exercises one, two and three)

Introduction to exercises four and five

## Week 6

25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> May

Assistant tutorials (exercises three, four and five)

## Week 7

2<sup>nd</sup> June

Pentecost - Voluntary Assistant tutorials

Tuesday:

Pin Up 2 with SB and BK (exercises three, four and five)

Introduction to exercise six

## Week 8

8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> June

Assistant tutorials (exercises five and six)

## Week 9

15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> June

Lecture by Bruno Krucker, 11.30 am

Pin Up 3 with SB and BK (exercises five and six)

Introduction to exercise seven

## Week 10

22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> June

Assistant tutorials (exercises seven)

## Week 11

29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> June

Lecture by Stephen Bates, 11.30 am

Pin Up 4 with SB and BK (exercises six and seven)

## Week 12

6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> July

Assistant tutorials (all exercises)

## Week 13

13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> July

Assistant tutorials (all exercises)

## Week 14

20<sup>th</sup> July

Final presentation with SB and BK

## Production list

Exercise one: From the City to the Room/  
Fragments of the block

The first exercise we wish you to undertake is a speculation about the possible atmospheric character of the architecture of a perimeter block. We ask you to consider what kind of block this could be: what sets of spaces make it work? There are likely to be multiple thresholds from the street to the private domain. The atmosphere within the block and within the private areas is likely to be quite different from that on the street edge. How does a resident or visitor find their way into and through the block? What potential spatial moments could be incorporated in your design? How does it feel to live 'inside the block'? Your work should be developed through two images of a fictional block: the first image should seek to illustrate your investigation of a threshold between the street and the inside of the block, the second image should show the space between the private room and the exterior semi-public space. Both images could be a careful hand-made sketch, a collage (hand-made or photoshop), a drawing, a model photo, a 3D computer rendering or any other type which you can control and manipulate in order to express a certain narrative and atmosphere. This will be a group work. An introduction to this exercise will be given in the first week of the semester.

Exercise three: Urban strategy

This exercise requires you to make a 1:500 block concept model of your site and of the wider surrounding area. The model will be produced as a group work and requires both accuracy and careful coordination. The model can then be used as a tool to help develop a concept for your project. These study models should explore the scale and form of the building and its relationship with the immediate context. Having established the formal character of the urban massing, you should make a model of the project at 1:200 scale to be placed precisely within the surrounding walls. While priority will be given to an extensive exploration of different massing options, you will be expected to produce drawings in the form of sketches and schematic plans, sections/elevations, just as you have done in exercise two. An introduction to this exercise will be given in the second week of the semester.

Exercise five: Façade

With the knowledge you now have, you will investigate the design of the facades of your project in greater detail. Studies should be made of the relief and proportion of the facade through drawings and sketch models. You will then construct a model or 3D drawing of the complete building, with a focus on the detail of the facades at 1:50. One area of detail of the building should be made at a scale of 1:25, so that a more detailed understanding of material and proportion can be gained. The manner in which this model is made and the techniques employed to give detail and texture should be considered very carefully. An introduction to this exercise will be given in week five of the semester.

Exercise seven: Image

With the knowledge acquired and the intention you have established for your project, you are now asked to produce one image of the project within its context. The drawing should be constructed from carefully made photographs and/or models, or set up using 3D modelling and light rendering. The view should be taken at eye level and all vertical lines should be precisely vertical – wide angles or distorted views are not acceptable! A high standard of composition and technique is expected and the image should convey the atmosphere and character of the project within the city fabric. An introduction to this exercise will be given in week nine of the semester.

Exercise two: Case study

The second exercise we wish you to undertake is intended to bring some intelligence and research to your work by looking at precedent, for we are not only engaging with architectural design, but also exploring the European urban perimeter block as a type. A selection of projects have been pre-selected as case studies, which are relevant to the theme in question. Each group will be allocated one of these projects to make a thorough study in plan and section and to present the work within a given format and template. By observing these city structures carefully, aspects of their volumetric organisation as a whole, density and dimensions will become apparent and should be useful in your on-going work. An introduction to this exercise will be given in the first week of the semester.

Exercise four: Building organisation

At this stage in the development of your project we ask you to study the internal organisation of your building at a larger scale. Study models or study drawings should be produced to investigate the internal spatial organisation of your project and the interconnection of different rooms and spaces. The models and drawings you explore are not intended to be 'complete', but as tools for studying the relationship between floors and across space. An 'open' approach to the rooms and their intended use should direct your thinking in terms of internal planning. The position of doors and windows, the spatial possibilities for linking spaces and moving through them, large and small spaces with varying ceiling heights should be carefully considered. An introduction to this exercise will be given in week five of the semester.

Exercise six: Small moments

This exercise is intended to allow you to present some of the special situations that you have developed in your design: 'small moments' which reveal the special qualities of your project as might encounter them moving through the spaces. These should be described by a series of 1:25 or digital models in 1 or 2 positions, depending on the size of the project and group, made from card and paper. You will then photograph each 'small moment' model. Great care should be given to the making of the model in order to express the atmosphere that you are seeking to achieve. An introduction to this exercise will be given in week seven of the semester.

Final review

The final review in July will consider all the work produced during the semester. In addition, you will be asked to prepare a PDF presentation of your project. It is important that you are able to describe the development of your work accurately and precisely and include all models and drawings of your final project, the case study, 'small moments' and exterior image. In addition to the material you have already produced you are required to make a 1:200 site plan and plans and sections at 1:200 /1:50.

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