

UNADAPTED

Social Infrastructure in Brooklyn Armories

WONNE ICKX - PRODUCTORA



Thirteenth Regiment Armory Brooklyn, R.L. Daus, 1892-94

GSAPP Advanced Studio V - Fall 2021
Entanglements and Intersections

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK

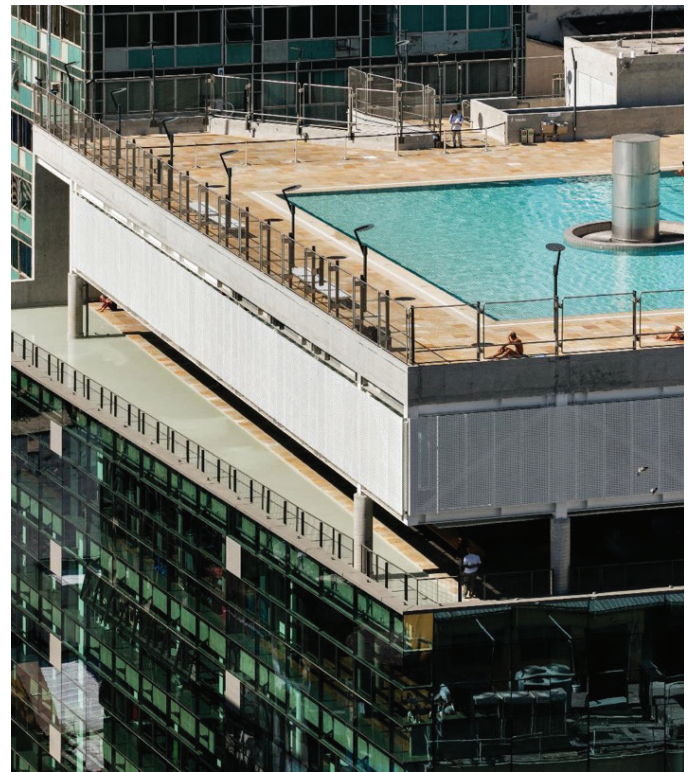
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Social Infrastructure in Brooklyn's Armories

Brooklyn's armories were mostly built in the late 19th and early 20th Century as a place to house the National Guard and their weapons during the years following the Civil War. Erected during the height of popularization of Romanesque Revival, they all appear within the city landscape as massive, daunting castles: extravagant architectural fantasies inspired by medieval architecture. Since the militia left the structures they have been sold, converted to shelters, and left abandoned. As the urban environment around them changes rapidly, they remain as erratic boulders in the landscape; 'unadapted' large masses that find themselves at the center of fierce urban-political debates.

Of the 19 Armories once built in Brooklyn, we will focus on 3 specific ones: the 13th Regiment Armory (Marcus Garvey Boulevard / "Pamoja House"), the 23rd Regiment Armory (Bedford – Atlantic / "Atlantic Armory Shelter") and the former Bedford Unions Armory. The drill squares of the 13th and 23rd Regiment Armories will be our site for architectural intervention. The ongoing debate and political struggle related to the Bedford Unions Armory, currently being converted into the 'Major Owens Health & Wellness Community Center' will help us understand different perspectives and interests at stake in such a large scale urban operation. We will invite local politicians, community organizations, architects and developers to the studio to explain their concerns, ambitions and points of view.

The program to be used by the students for the adaptive reuse of those large historic structures, is inspired by the Brazilian S.E.S.C. (Serviço Social do Comércio): socio-cultural infrastructure that successfully combines sport, leisure, healthcare and



Sesc 24 de Maio (Paulo Mendes da Rocha + MMBB)

cultural activities. The SESC 24 de Mayo (MMBB Arquitetos & Paulo Mendes da Rocha, 2017) which will serve as a reference and starting point for our studio work: it combines sports courts, dance rooms, swimming pools, a restaurant, gyms, exhibition halls, a dental clinic, a library, a café and a theatre into one single building. Marta Moreira, one of the partners of MMBB-Arquitetos in São Paulo will give a short talk on the project in one of the studio sessions. Sol Camacho, Cultural Director of the Instituto Bardi/Casa de Vidro Institution in São Paulo, will also give an introduction to the iconic SESC Pompeia designed by Lina Bo Bardi in 1982.

Both reference projects are – just like the proposed interventions at the armories – adaptive re-use projects in which large urban structures are successfully re-appropriate for new uses. How can we envision a new role as social condenser for those hard-edged historic fortresses? How can we create meaningful architecture (an 'open' and 'inviting community' space) in structures that are designed to do the opposite (be defensive, impenetrable urban artifacts)? How can we make architecture, when the architectural language is already defined by an awkward outer shell of Romanesque Revival?





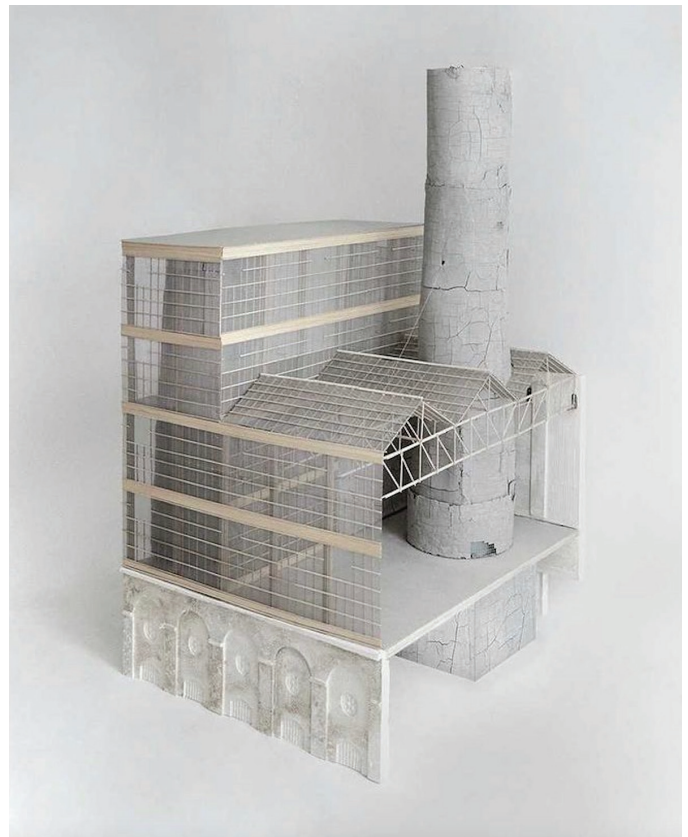
Above: SESC 24 de Maio, Paulo Mendes da Rocha + MMBB, 2017 / within a former office building.
 Below: SESC Pompeia, Lina Bo Bardo, 1982 / within a former steel drum factory.



A key notion to be developed during the studio is the idea of 'unadaptedness' or the friction that exists between architecture and program, building and context, programmatic elements, architectural language and content, etc... As a starting point we can take a look at the concept of the 'social condenser' formulated in the late 1920's during Soviet Constructivism: Moisei Ginzburg stated that the combination of different architectural programs could be used as a catalyst to facilitate social interactions and break down perceived social hierarchies in order to create more socially equitable spaces. Almost a century later OMA describes a social condenser in the book *Content* (2004) as "Programmatic layering (...) to encourage dynamic coexistence of activities and to generate through their interference, unprecedented events." Both theories are rooted in architectural programming, and suggest that contradictory programmatic functions should be combined to create new architectural ideas.

In this studio, the idea of 'unadaptedness' goes beyond the programmatic aspect, and includes the spatial, formal and architectural layering of our buildings and cities. The Belgian architect Luc Deleu, describes in his speculative work 'the unadapted city' how the built environment can never be perfectly adapted, fitted, and adjusted to one another, and finds place for creation in the continuous adjustments and corrections of cities, layer over layer. Deleu is convinced that while cities can be shaped as desired on a large scale, they must offer the greatest possible amount of freedom for individual initiatives on the small scale.

"Deleu's 'unadaptedness' is a highly ambivalent notion; it can lead in many directions. Unadaptedness is not necessarily a defect nor is it a quality per se. Rather, it is an observation of difference - would Derrida prefer différance? - that can turn out positively or negatively. For Deleu, for example, a city is never adapted. After all, adaptedness would mean that there are sufficient schools or care institutions or workshops in the city. In fact, all necessary facilities can perfectly be planned on the basis of the available knowledge about demographic growth, and yet there are harrowing shortages. Unadaptedness as a shortcoming, therefore. But Deleu prefers to view unadaptedness as a quality. Take housing: to him, the realm of dwelling remains a completely different reality from the urban space of infrastructures and facilities. Dwelling stands for individual freedom and



Adaptive Re-use Sports Facility at the Old Truman Brewery, Spitalfields Unit 8, London, UK, 2021 / Oli Brenner

should not adapt seamlessly to the city. A perfect adaptation from one to the other would be unliveable."
(*)

Loosely based on the quote above on Luc Deleu's 'Unadapted City', we read the unadapted architecture of the Brooklyn armories as a starting point to re-think the possibility of their re-use. While DELEU uses the idea of the unadapted at urban level, we will look for possibilities in the realm of architecture.

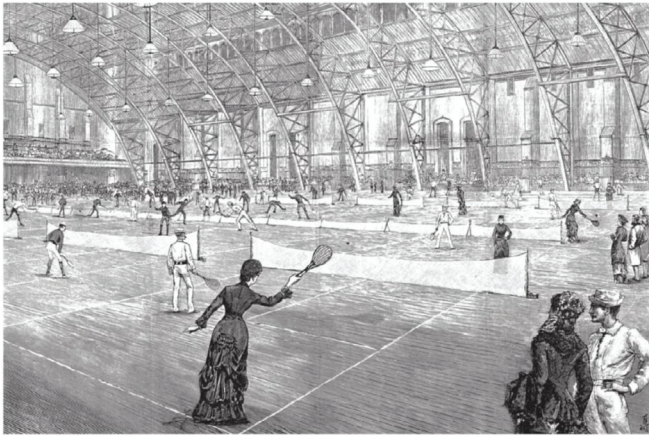
(*) From: "Envoi_Chandigarh" by Andre Loeckx, in "Luc Deleu and T.O.P. Office – Future Plans 1970-2020", Peter Swinnen and Anne Judong, Flanders Architecture Institute, 2020, p.270

SITE(S):

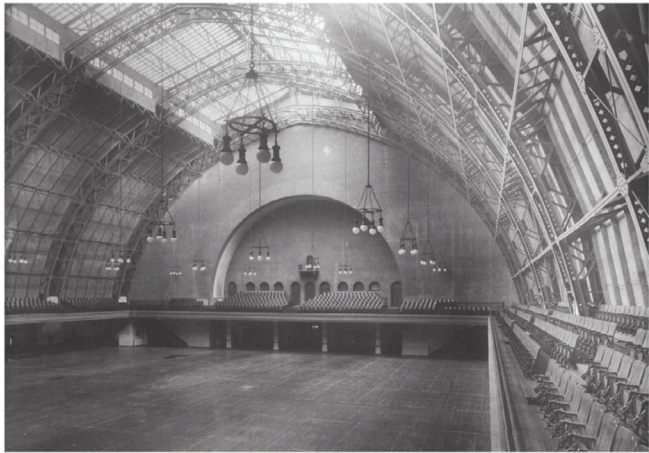
Students will choose one of both sites:

(1) 13th REGIMENT ARMORY DRILL COURT

The 13th Regiment Armory is a historic armory designed by architects Rudolph L. Daus and Fay Kellogg and built in 1892–1894. It is located at 357 Marcus Garvey Boulevard (also known as Sumner Avenue) between Putnam and Jefferson Avenues in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, New York City. The armory building is currently used as the Pamoja House (also known as Sumner House Shelter Care Center for Men), a homeless shelter for men managed by Black Veterans for Social Justice, Inc. and supervised by New York City Department of Homeless Services. (Wikipedia)



From an article entitled "Lawn Tennis in the Seventh Regiment Armory," in Harper's Weekly, 10 December 1881, 823–24.



Sixty-ninth Regiment Armory, 1904–06. Interior view of the drill shed. Photograph (ca. 1910s) courtesy of the New York State Military Museum.

(2) 23rd REGIMENT ARMORY DRILL COURT:

The structure was originally built for the 23rd Regiment of the New York State Militia. Since the 1980s, it has been in use as a men's homeless shelter, though in the 2010s, there were plans to redevelop the armory. The 23rd Regiment Armory was proposed for redevelopment in 2012 at a cost of \$14 million. Several developers submitted suggestions for alternate uses of the drill hall, including as a climbing facility, concert auditorium, or ice-skating rink. However, plans for the renovation of the 23rd Regiment Armory stalled in 2015. (Wikipedia)

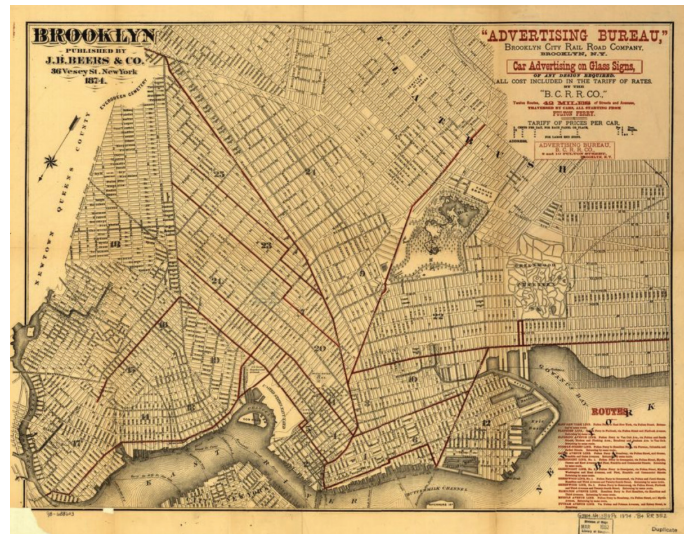
In both cases the 'front' house is left out of the task of intervention, in order to ensure that the homeless shelters that are currently operating can keep functioning.

EXERCISE 01 - Research

Research, history, analysis, references, site, model. Students will work individually or in groups of two to gather the required information (history, site, plans, etc.) and architectural references (architectural reference frame work). The information gathered will be shared by all students of the studio. Duration: one or two weeks.

Topics / groups:

1. Brooklyn: Crown Heights / Bedford Stuyvesant (urban analysis / history / demographics / social and cultural environment)
2. History and key examples of SESC's in Brazil (includes coordination guest speakers)
3. 13th Regiment Armory (historic and formal analysis / includes production of 3d-model)
4. 23rd Regiment Armory (historic and formal analysis / includes production of 3d-model)
5. Bedford - Union Redevelopment (actual political debate / includes coordination guest speakers)



Vintage postcard of the 23rd Regiment Armory built in 1891–95 / designed in the Romanesque Revival style by Fowler & Hough (local Brooklyn architects) and Isaac Perry (the New York state government's architect).

OPINION: The Bedford Union Armory Project Is A Disgrace. We Can't Let It Happen Again.



Crystal Hudson

Nov 30, 2020 • 3 min read



Bedford Armory. Ben Foldy / Bklynr

Crown Heights Armory Project Towers Over Brooklyn Council Race Roiled By Development Backlash

BY GABRIEL SANDOVAL | @GLUISSANDOVAL | GSANDOVAL@THECITY.NYC | MAY 31, 2021, 7:01PM EDT

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The Bedford Union Armory | Ben Fractenberg/THE CITY

'The Jig is Up'

Grassroots support quickly jelled around Hollingsworth, he said.

Now, Hollingsworth, who's raised the second most in the race with \$228,496, including \$68,052 in private donations, has a broad progressive coalition of support, garnering endorsements that include the New York City Democratic Socialists of America and state Sens. Jabari Brisport and Julia Salazar, both Brooklyn Democrats.

Hollingsworth said he's tired of developers getting direct access to elected officials thanks to their donations and lobbyists.

If elected, he said he wants to roll out a comprehensive plan on development citywide to address the glaring disparities that exist in underserved communities of color.

"The jig is up," he said. "We know that these developments are never beneficial

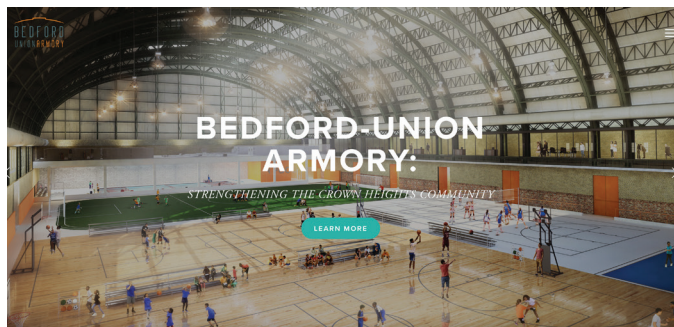
'We know that these developments are never beneficial to our communities.'

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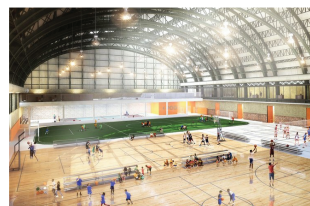
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An Armory for the Community

REVITALIZING THE BEDFORD-UNION ARMORY WILL RESTORE THIS LONG-VACANT BUILDING TO ITS RIGHTFUL ROLE AS A COMMUNITY RESOURCE FOR ALL CROWN HEIGHTS FAMILIES.



RECREATION

A new state-of-the-art rec center will include hardwood basketball courts, a competitive-length swimming pool and a large multi-sport court that will accommodate everything from indoor soccer to tennis to volleyball. Armory partners will offer high-quality, free and low-cost athletic and fitness programming,

including clinics, camps and afterschool programs. The new rec center will also provide much-needed space for local public schools and youth sports leagues that have struggled for years with inadequate athletic facilities.



Michael Hollingsworth

@mike4brooklyn



I'm just saying a whole lot of folks remember the 2016-2017 Bedford Union Armory fight. More importantly they remember which sides folks were on. [@local79nyc](#) [@nychange](#) [@CHTenantUnion](#)



12:22 PM • May 15, 2021



92



1



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Press clippings on the redevelopment of the Bedford Union Armory in Crown Heights / The ongoing debate and political struggle related to the Bedford Unions Armory, currently being converted into the 'Major Owens Health & Wellness Community Center' will help us understand different perspectives and interests at stake in such a large scale urban operation.

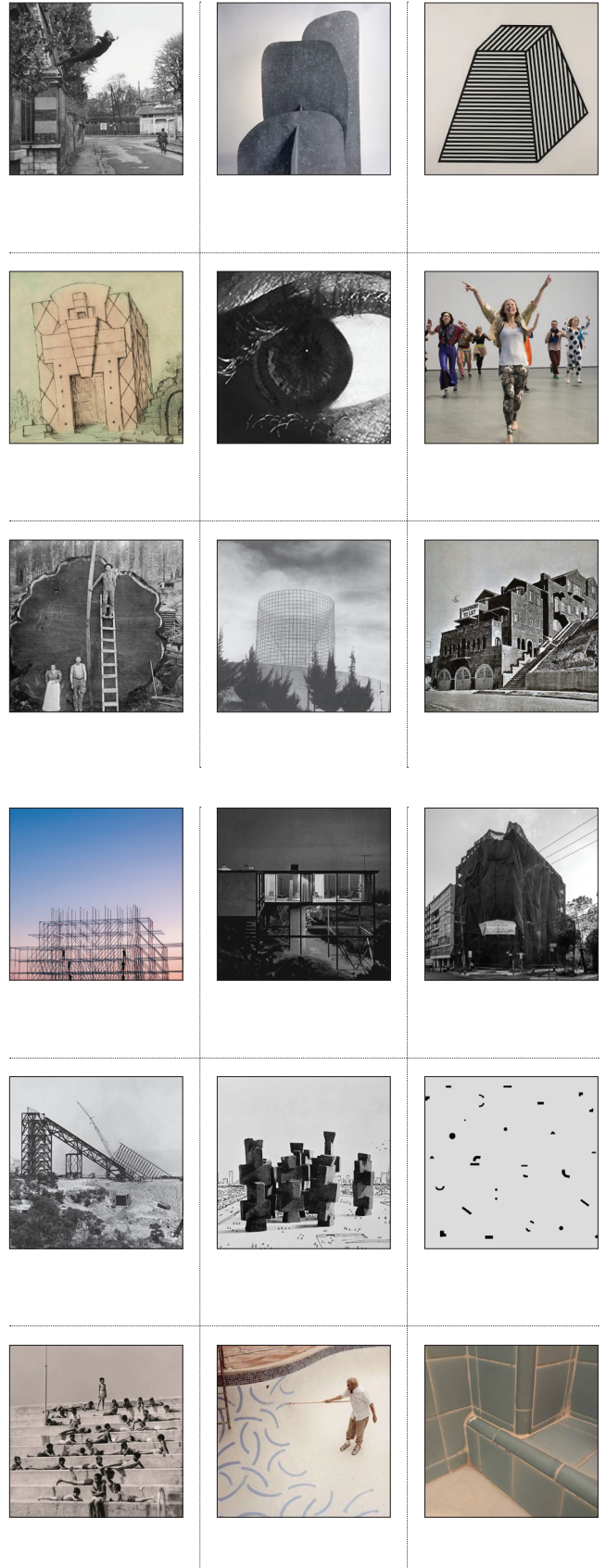
EXERCISE 02:

Detour – play cards.

Students will work individually.

Aleatory, the students are handed out ‘play cards’ (*) with certain images (references) that can help to look at the site(s) through a detour, with a different lens. Students will be asked to produce a physical model that offers a reading of the Brooklyn armories, based on the given play card: a spatial and volumetric proposals implemented on the site. Scale to be defined. Although this exercise has a strong formal and compositional component, it is a first approximation to the final architectural problem stated in the final. A first notion of program and mass (cubic square footage) will be incorporated. As in all different parts of this studio, the material investigation and material quality is crucial. The material choices for the models (plaster, concrete, wood, stone, cardboard, paint, paper ...) will be imperative to indicate the proposed architectural quality of the existing buildings and its intervention. / Deliverables: all students will produce a well-defined physical study models, that will be photographed to include in presentation documents.

The exercise is loosely based on set of cards ‘Oblique Strategies’, a card-based method for promoting creativity jointly created by musician Brian Eno and multimedia artist Peter Schmidt, first published in 1975. Physically, it takes the form of a deck of 7-by-9-centimetre printed cards in a black box. Each card offers a challenging constraint intended to help artists (particularly musicians) break creative blocks by encouraging lateral thinking.)



‘Detour play cards’ for studio assignments.

EXERCISE 03:

Design task: a SESC in Brooklyn

Students work individually on their project.
Deliverables: TBD

PROGRAM:

SWIMMING BLOCK:

Swimming pool (pool + deck): 1500 m²
Locker rooms + showers: 500 m²

SPORTS BLOCK:

Dancing: 1000 m²
Sports: 1000 m²

HEALTH CARE: 1000 m²

Waiting room + medical cubicles

CULTURAL BLOCK:

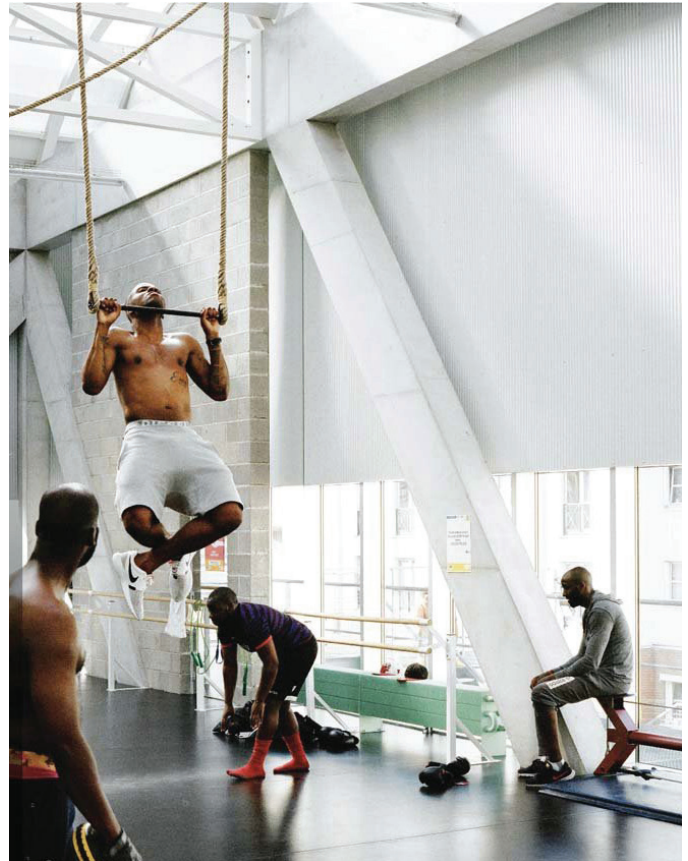
Art studios: 1000 m²
Exhibition: 1000 m²
Library: 1000 m²
Theatre: 1000 m²

COLLECTIVE:

Café / living (including reception) : 1000 m²
Gallery: 1000 m²
Offices: 500 m²
Restaurant: 500 m²

TOTAL: 12,000 m²

This includes 25% of circulation, services, auxiliary (technical & mechanical) spaces.



Saint-Blaise Cultural and Sports Center, Bruther, Paris, 2014



Entrance to SESC Pompeia, Lina Bo Bardo, 1982

Wonne Ickx

PRODUCTORA - LIGA

Wonne Ickx (Antwerp, 1974) studied civil engineering and architecture at the University of Ghent, Belgium and the ETSAM in Madrid, Spain. He continued his studies with a Master's degree in Urban Studies from the Centre for Metropolitan Studies (CEMET) at the University of Guadalajara, Mexico. In 2006, he founded PRODUCTORA in Mexico City, together with Abel Perles, Carlos Bedoya, and Victor Jaime. PRODUCTORA has received many awards for their work, including the Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize for Emerging Architects and the Oscar Niemeyer Prize for Latin American Architecture. Amongst the many publications of the office, their first monograph by Arquine (2010) and the 2G monograph (2014) stand out. They recently published *Being The Mountain*, a book on the relation between modern architecture and topography with ACTAR and IIT.

Wonne Ickx has taught architecture and urbanism at several universities in Mexico, as well as Harvard-GSD, IIT, UCLA, Rice and Princeton. He is founding director of LIGA, Space for Architecture, an independent platform that, since 2011, stimulates an interchange of ideas and investigation on contemporary Latin American architecture in Mexico City. He has been part of Arquine's editorial board since 2010, is an AIA International Associate, and serves on the Board of Directors at the Architectural League of NY.

www.productora-df.com.mx
ww.liga-df.com



From above to below: PRODUCTORA, Rooftop Prim , 2020 (intervention on the rooftop of an early twentieth-century palace in Downtown Mexico City) / PRODUCTORA + Isaac Broid< Teopanzolco Cultural Center, Cuernavaca , 2017 / PRODUCTORA, La laguna, ongoing & under construction (adaptive re-use of a former textile factory, Mexico City) / PRODUCTORA + PALMA, Pílares, under construction, social infrastructure for Mexico City

Initial references / readings

BRAZILIAN SESC (Serviço Social do Comércio)

(There is extensive publications on Lina Bo Bardi and her work.)

<https://www.as-coa.org/articles/presentation-sesc>

“Social climber: SESC 24 de Maio cultural centre in São Paulo, Brazil by Paulo Mendes da Rocha and MMBB Arquitetos”, 14 October 2019, by Eleanor Beaumont Buildings on Architectural Review (“A modern-day social condenser, Paulo Mendes da Rocha and MMBB’s SESC 24 de Maio is a utopian vision in an increasingly dystopian political climate...”)

<https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/social-climber-sesc-24-de-maio-cultural-centre-in-sao-paulo-brazil-by-paulo-mendes-da-rocha-and-mmmbb-arquitetos?tkn=1>

(featured in the AR October issue on Brazil)

(VIDEO) The Future of Cultural Centers: Gabriel Kogan on SESC Pompéia”, 04.27.2021, by Center for Architecture, New York.

<https://www.centerforarchitecture.org/video/the-future-of-cultural-centers-gabriel-kogan-on-sesc-pompeia/>

The Making of SESC Pompéia by Marcelo Ferraz

<https://linabobarditogether.com/2012/08/03/the-making-of-sesc-pompeia-by-marcelo-ferraz/>

Citadels of Freedom: Lina Bo Bardi’s SESC Pompéia Factory Leisure Centre and Teatro Oficina, São Paulo, by Rachel Sara, 2013

Lina Bo Bardi : The Theory of Architectural Practice by Veikos, Cathrine, London, Routledge, 2014

OTHER :

Klinenberg, E. (2018). Palaces for the people: How social infrastructure can help fight inequality, polarization, and the decline of civic life. New York, NY, Crown.

BROOKLYN ARMORIES:

As these armories and their current use (homeless shelters) and possible conversations are a hot political topic, there are tons of articles on the web to find. There is also quite some historic background available ... here below some links I came across.

<https://brooklyn.com/brooklyn-castle-armories-origin-story/>

<https://museum.dmna.ny.gov/armories-arsenals>

<https://www.bklynlibrary.org/blog/2020/02/12/castle-keeps-community>

13th REGIMENT ARMORY

Gray, Christopher (January 24, 1988). “Streetscapes: 13th Regiment Armory; A Brooklyn Fortress Yields to the Changing Times”. The New York Times. ISSN 0362-4331. Retrieved October 24, 2019.

New York’s Historic Armories, An Illustrated History, p.128-131

23rd REGIMENT ARMORY

<https://bedfordandbowery.com/2018/12/a-castle-that-protected-soldiers-struggles-to-do-the-same-for-the-homeless/>

New York’s Historic Armories, An Illustrated History, p.131-132

BEDFORD UNION ARMORY

<https://majorowenscenter.com/> (official website of the project by developer BFC Partners)

https://therealdeal.com/issues_articles/the-closing-don-capoccia/ (need for subscription)

<https://www.thecity.nyc/2021/5/31/22458636/crown-heights-armory-towers-over-brooklyn-council-race>

<https://www.brownstoner.com/development/brooklyn-crown-heights-bedford-union-armory-redevelopment-affordable-housing-public-pool-marvel/>

<https://bklyner.com/opinion-the-bedford-union-armory-project-is-a-disgrace-we-cant-let-it-happen-again/>

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