CRITICAL PRACTICE IN AN AGE OF COMPLEXITY - AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CRITIQUE OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

• Paper / Proposal Title:
“Critical International Practice in a Lost Architectural Culture”

• Format:
Oral presentation; and written paper

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• University or Company Affiliation:
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• Abstract (300 words):
The new campus of the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv, western Ukraine, presents a challenge to build a new university in the context of a lost urban design and architectural culture. Ukraine’s urban and architectural traditions were suspended for over 50 years when the country was annexed to the former Soviet Union following WW2. With the advent of Ukrainian independence in 1992, it was necessary for the country to “start over” to re-think its future challenges as a new independent republic. Both architectural practice and the academy had been consumed by the Soviet system of architectural bureaus and centralized university control of education.

Design of the master plan for UCU’s new campus presented challenges to re-consider urbanism in Lviv and develop a new architectural language in a lost urbanculture. During six years of engagement with university faculty, staff and sponsors, the master plan for the 13-acre campus and architectural plans were developed. Four new buildings and one quadrangle have been completed. One residence hall is currently in design. Several additional buildings are contemplated during the next 10-15 years.
The master plan concept builds on city and church history, the spatial heritage of monasteries in the region, and carefully-selected precedents from other places in the word. The "object building" orientation of modern university campuses in western Europe and the Americas was rejected in favor of the spatially defined place-form examples of universities such as Heidelberg, Oxford, Cambridge, the University of Virginia and Stanford University. Organized by three major quadrangles, the campus design focuses inward to create a university community while reaching outward to engage the city and regional landscape.

Challenges in the campus design process, both in the master plan and architecture, were the “education” of faculty and staff who initially relied exclusively on historical references, how to physical express the future of the Church and University in the relatively new and struggling nation of Ukraine, how to adjust to changing methods of learning and teaching, and how to design and implement environmentally-responsible concepts of energy conservation, climate response and appropriate materials selection.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Gerald Gast is an architect and Principal of Gast Hillmer Urban Design in California. He is Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Oregon Portland Architecture Urban Architecture Program. Professor Gast prepared the first master plan for the new campus of the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in Lviv and has worked on the project for over six years. UCU is the first Catholic University on the territory of the former Soviet Union. To date, four major academic buildings have been completed and one is currently in design. For several years, Gast taught as Visiting Associate Professor in the Program on Urban Studies at Stanford University, where he developed the core courses in Urban Design. He is currently working on public schools in marginalized neighborhoods of Colombia with the Pies Descalzos Foundation. Professor Gast has several years of experience in public urban design practice in California and the western states. His research focuses on architecture for education and changing methods of teaching and learning.