

SERENDIPITY

ADSL LOGO

Dear students, dear guest professors,

It's a great honour to introduce this ADSL-edition and explain some intentions. This edition is the eight one in a series where specific items are introduced as a layer and thematic for an international design week.

THE WORD SERENDIPITY

Where two years ago the theme of 'urban scenography' and the setting of public-private was studied, and the last year edition was about 'sampling' of images to find new structures, flows, meanings and codes, this year's thematic is about 'serendipity'.

CAMPBELL SOUP

The word is not very well known in the architectural context, only the world of contemporary art is dealing with it since Andy Warhol used it in his oeuvre, connecting visits to a New York restaurant, famous for its "frozen hot chocolate", as he mentioned it also in his autobiography '*The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)*'.

SERENDIPITY MOVIE

But what is now the specific meaning of the word?

Serendipity is the effect by which one accidentally discovers something fortunate, especially while looking for something else entirely. In June 2004 the word has been voted as one of the ten English words that were hardest to translate.

WIM DELVOYE DUMMIES

'Serendipity' finds its origin in Twickenham, London. Horace Walpole, connoisseur, antiquarian and author of the famous gothic novel '*The Castle of Otranto*' wrote a letter to Horace Mann on January 28th 1754, which contains the first mention of the word.

WIM DELVOYE PIGS

All letters that Walpole wrote are put together in his 'Correspondence'. In the index there are two references at the word 'Serendipity'.

BEAUTIFALSE

The tale Walpole rescued from literary oblivion was '*The three Princes of Serendip*'. The letter was written to Horace Mann in order to acknowledge the safe arrival of a portrait of Bianca Capello, a 16th century beauty and Duchess of Tuscany. This letter contained among the 31 volumes of 'Horace Walpole's Correspondence' as edited by Wulmarth Sheldon Lewis.

CONTEXTURALISM

The three Princes of Serendip were always making discoveries, by accident and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of: for instance, one of them discovered that a mule blind of the right eye had travelled the same road lately, because the grass was eaten only on the left side, where it was worse than on the right.

COINCIDENTICAL

The second reference to serendipity is to be found in a footnote to a sentence in a letter to the social reformer and religious writer Hannah More. The pertinent sentence

from the letter, dated September 10 1789 reads: 'Nor is there any harm in starting new game to invention; many discoveries have been made by men who were "a la chasse" of something very different.'

SURREALISTIC

What is most significant is that history reveals many examples of accidental and sagacious discovery while in pursuit of something else. Christopher Columbus' discovery of America, Alexander Fleming's discovery of penicillin, Alfred Bernard Nobel's discovery of dynamite are just a few examples.

ACCIDENTICAL

Numerous writers have tried to link the Island of Serendip with the serendipitous experience, but most of these attempts have been contrived. However there are exceptions: for example John Barth in his Sinbad saga 'The last voyage of Somebody the Sailor' "You don't reach Serendip by plotting a course for it. You have to set out in good faith for elsewhere and lose your bearings serendipitously.'

PICTURES GUEST PROFESSORS

I think it's getting clear about the word now. So let's explain shortly the workshops specific themes and aims.

WORKSHOP 1

Workshop 1: Rubens Azevedo and Julian Löffler, called Swimming Pool although it's not about the design of a swimming pool, but about making videos about swimming pools without swimming pools!

Workshop 2: Roberto Cremascoli will research on architectural spaces as they can be traced in movies such as Match Point, Lost in Transition, La Mala Educacion and others

Workshop 3: Koen Deprez and Monique Verelst will investigate in the meaning and significances of words.

Workshop 4: Theo Deutinger and Andreas Kofler take the notion of Vitruvius third notion 'venustas' or 'Beauty' for a meaning in architecture.

Workshop 5: Job Floris will in a Plaster Lab concentrate on the Baroque principle of the 'poché' space, which was clear to us since the publication of Colin Rowe's book 'Collage City'.

Workshop 6: Christoph Grafe will also take use of the poché-space but rather go into the city to find some spaces where poché nowadays can have other meaning through form and counter form.

Workshop 7: Aleksandra Jaescke and Andrea di Stefano will explore the transition of a tree-like model into spatial digital and complex organisations.

Workshop 8: Frazer MacDonald Hay's item is about the re-use of buildings as most of the built environment is more about mono-functional aims which we know now is out of the question.

Workshop 9: Gennaro Postiglione's group aims at the exploration and searching for new possibilities into void areas in Antwerp through new exploitation.

Workshop 10: Heidi Specker starts out of fashion as one of the most well known images of Antwerp, to create new themes and strategies in historical and recent architecture.

Workshop 11: Bettina Vismann and guest critic Stefanie Seibold will deal with stochastic geometry to find new design methods.

Workshop 12: Maarten Wijk and his Universal design studio will design a fairground entertainment in which all human senses and capacities will be challenged to the limit and beyond.

We are very glad for having the possibility of organizing some lectures.

The final keynote is by William Mann, explaining how the accidental in his London Oxfam-project was giving the main content.

On Thursday we will have 3 lectures.

The evening lecture is by Mathieu Wellner about the main goals politicians are using now to put their city on the map and how city branding is becoming a new urban strategy.

The section of Monuments Care organizes two lectures, such as

Stefano Musso on the restoration of Ancient buildings in North Italy and

Ingvall Maxwell on the focus of recognising the various causes impacts and effects of fire to enable a, effective reading of the evidence.

On Wednesday evening there is the student Council lecture by Florian Beigel with Philipp Christou on their proposal for Seamangeum Island City in Korea.

For the Tuesday evening lecture of tomorrow we are enormously proud that famous Swiss architect and ETH-professor Marcel Meili accepted the invitation. First he mentioned his work was not at all about coincidence but one day later he found 10 different meanings of the word and accepted.

This evening Wim van den Bergh will tell about the perception of John Hejduk's work and how the theme of sagacity by a pun of the word into saga-city is getting us closer to the meaning of its architecture.

And now we do start with a keynote lecture by Joost Meuwissen, on the Coincidence of Architecture.

I was searching into my library and found some copies of the Wiederhall review of which Joost was founder and editor, it was about 1988. In one of these issues I even did find a text about 'Autobiographical Architecture', as an introduction for a collection of architectures in an exhibition on an idea of Wim van den Bergh. There hardly can be something more into serendipity and coincidental.

[Christian Kieckens 2009.03]