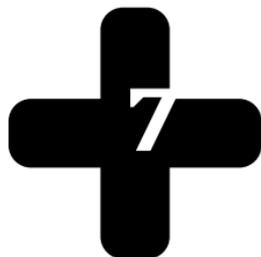




How children like to live, poster of the course 2003



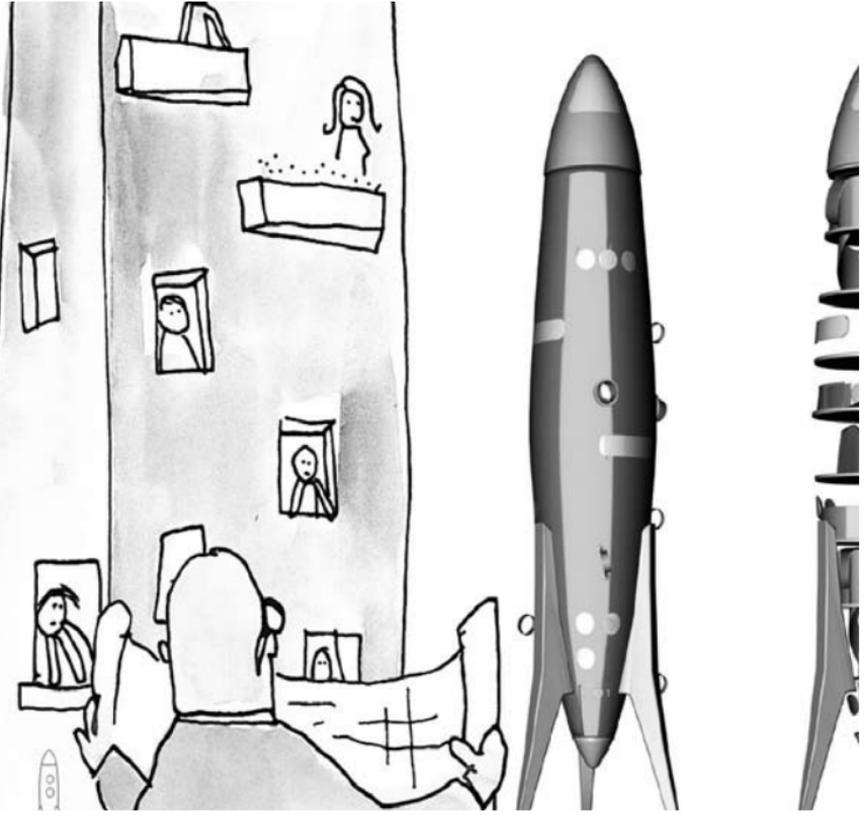
Hannes Hubrich

CITIZEN EDUCATION AS PART OF ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES: an official "Architecture and Children" –course at the Bauhaus University Weimar

"Environmental education" begins with the moment of our birth. We get our first spatial and social impressions in the circle of our parents, our family. We learn to see, to hear, to understand and to communicate. Playing, we gather experience about nature and the built environment. We learn to move in this world ...

Environmental experience is a permanent process of learning. In this process school can provide the most important impulse towards a conscious environmental behaviour of children. School education today should accept the fundamental significance of the built environment for all activities of our life and should prepare the students for their future role as citizens of tomorrow, as users of architecture, as clients or decision-makers on this field. This includes, in addition to their training in creative arts and aesthetic sensibility, knowledge about processes which create or transform the built environment, about the practical use of architecture and its social and economic determination.

The education to more awareness and knowledge of the built environment in schools requires committed teachers, who are well equipped with the complexity of architecture. They need an understanding of the concepts of space, form, function and meaning



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that are so important for the quality of the built environment. At the same time, we have to notice that architects also need more training in transmitting architectural ideas and principles to children and other non-professionals in a simple, clear and interesting way.

At Bauhaus-University Weimar we found favourable conditions to realise these intentions, because we train both the students of architecture and art teacher students. In a collaboration of *the Faculty of Architecture and the Faculty of Art and Design in 2001*, a compact seminar *Architecture and School* was established. The teamwork of an architect and an art teacher ensured architectural as well as pedagogical experience.

Two principles were set at the beginning:

1. The course is not aimed at a basic or part-time study of architecture for teachers and 2. The teacher training course in architecture should contain a basic conceptual framework of architecture, an overview of the important components and working fields of architecture and an approach to specific problems of current architecture. Soon it became clear that, the teaching program should be more flexible. The complexity of the subject Architecture is too high. A complete program is nearly impossible and eventually not required.

The further development was interesting. In 2001 we started with about 20 art teacher students – educated to teach in secondary schools - later followed by students of Visual Communication, Free Arts and Product Design. Then the students of Architecture demanded urgently to join the courses. Finally we also had some students of the new faculty of Media and today it is a real interdisciplinary event with a permanent growing number of participants. Why this interest in such seminars and workshops in architecture? We asked the students. The answer was simple. They like interdisciplinary subjects concerned with real life – about living in cities, in villages, in their homes and families, in student groups, during holidays, etc. They like to use their own experiences and to learn from each other – in contrast to special courses in Sociology, Psychology, etc.

There is an obvious demand for general subjects among our students and also among the children in schools. In addition to the strictly professional education or the singular (main) subjects in the school, they need a more cultural approach to daily life. They need



My Puppet House Dream, page of the book 2004

knowledge about traditional values, for instance of their family life, and the practical input of modern elements and behaviour to this life.

Themes were devised according to age groups. These included, for example, *Living as usual?*, *Living anywhere?*, *Playing Architecture* and *Life Stories – Living in History*. The most interesting seminar was *How Children like to live*, inspired by deep impressions of one's own childhood and youth. In addition to lectures, the students offered literature, films, visits to building sites or interesting new architecture.

The students can freely choose seminar projects. Only one condition is set – that they must relate to architectural or urban space, to the structure, function or form of architecture or to the behaviour of people in the built environment. Generally, the seminar work aims to find ideas and various ways to explain architecture to children and non-professionals. It aims to and to generate activity, their own creativity and also an interest in taking responsibility for the built environment.

Influenced by the increasing focus on interdisciplinary teamwork, the results are of a remarkable quality and present a big variety of ideas. The students make books, such as *The Rocket House*, *My Puppet House Dream* or *Have you been in Africa?* They produce films, games or models and serious analyses of children's drawings, of children's rooms, playgrounds and other places, where children live and play.

Teacher training and further education in architecture on the one hand, architecture for architects and other environment designing professionals on the other - points of view about cultural requirements can differ. Whether conservative or open to new ideas in art and architecture, teachers can ultimately influence the opinion of children in schools for a long time. Starting the communication between teachers and architects during their studies may help them to find a common language and to clarify arguments for the quality of the built environment.

