

TAXI

JO MEERS

University of Antwerp, Faculty of Design Sciences,
Department of Architecture

SESSION I

EXPLORATIVE STRATEGIES

KEYWORDS

Taxi

On this annual EAAE meeting I would like to talk about and explain an initiative that has been taking place on our campus for three academic years now because I think it fits the theme of the EAAE meeting 2019 'Hidden School' so well and is worth mentioning because it might inspire other European Architectural Institutes to organize a similar event. It is so easy to do and we notice it has meant so much to our students already.

It is called TAXI.

TAXI — phonetically the same in every language — is an ephemeral drive to any destination, taken from point A to B, driven by a myopic view ignoring the whole. Through specific focus a guest will take us on a tour with insights that are possibly fun, serious or interesting. This weekly-Thursdays-midday gathering intends to expand or explore anybody's frame of reference.

The weekly (really meaning weekly...) TAXI, a collaboration with student association Modulor, contributes to broadening and deepening the frame of reference of the students by inviting guests (teachers, students, international relations...) to come and talk briefly, not about their work, but about their own fascinations and inspiration. The initiative resulted from a team meeting of our Architecture department: one of the studio teachers mentioned the systematic lack of reference framework among students. I responded that maybe it was up to us, professors, to show them some examples of what we mean by that. Together with young studio teachers Steven Schenk and Wannes Peeters we brainstormed about a suitable format to do so.

This resulted in a weekly, half hour long, informal, during a lunch break, 'talk', in English, not about the work of the speaker but about his or her inspiration. There is no payment for the speaker, there are no ECTS credits to be earned by students. Nothing is being filmed, if you were not there, you missed it.

Steven and Wannes wrote a triggering TAXI text (quoted above) and Steven came up with the suitable name TAXI. For the practicalities we teamed up with our Architecture student organisation Modulor. They immediately reacted very enthusiastically and by now have a yearly responsible for TAXI. Together we do the programming, which mainly means to get people excited to come and 'do a TAXI'. We start asking people before the academic year and keep on doing so during the year until we have a full program. We really organize it every Thursday during the academic year, but during exams and jury periods we do not invite speakers and instead show interesting documentaries (ARTE Architecture series, etc.) because of the possible lack of audience. As mentioned it does on purpose not take place in an aula but in our Temple building. This is a

pretty shabby and informal but nevertheless full of character space (a picture of a TAXI taking place is among the images).

To keep it easy manageable we have a fixed format for the poster which also makes them very recognizable. We ask the speaker for a black and white picture, and a title. The top corners of the image are fixed, the bottom changes according to the size of the picture, characters on the picture are white, the ones on the white space black. Some examples accompany this text. TAXI is put on top of the image in a translucent mode. In the beginning I posted a weekly invitation on our internal online communication system to students and teachers. At this moment there is a weekly mailing you can enroll for.

Only a few ingredients are needed for organizing TAXI:

1 informal space, 1 laptop, 1 beamer, 1 white wall, 1 engaged teacher, 1 motivated student or student organization to team up with.

I am most happy to say that by now everybody on the campus knows that on Thursday a TAXI is taking place and that we get very positive reactions about it, not only from the students and the teachers but also from other people that have done a TAXI.

In short, in relation to the proposed EAAE themes TAXI could mean:

The educator:

As many types as guest speakers of that academic year, and it is a plus they are not seen as 'educators' but as 'inspirators'...

The content:

As broad as the guest speakers of that academic year...

The place:

NOT an aula...

The student:

Is/can be audience, actor and reactor...

The process:

As variable as the guest speakers of that academic year who all fill this in their own way...

I sincerely hope I get the chance to tell my European fellow Architecture professors about our initiative. I could talk about it or even 'do a TAXI'. I would like to end with a quote from one of our professors:

'TAXI not only triggers students and gives an insight in their professors minds but also makes these professors a little bit nervous because the question is to be really honest and interesting...'

LINKS

<https://www.uantwerpen.be/nl/overuantwerpen/faculiteiten/ontwerpwetenschappen/nieuws-en-activiteiten/taxi/>
<https://modulor.me/events.html>

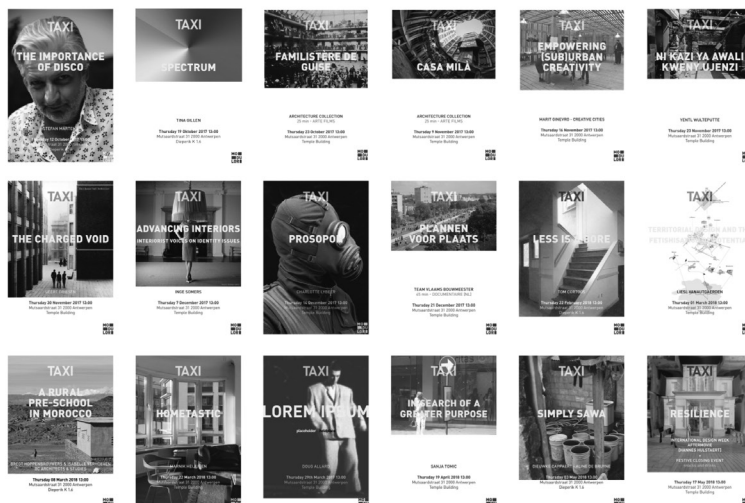


TAXI lecture series season 2017-18

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TAXI

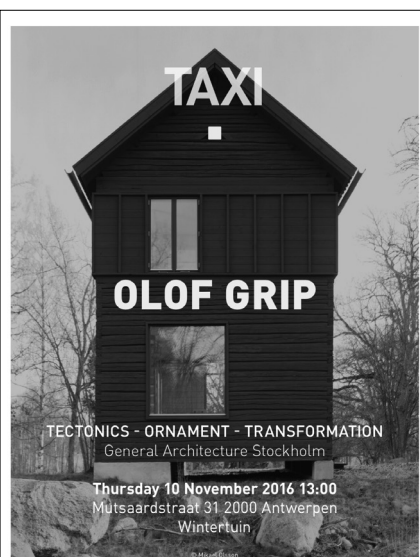
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FESTIVE CLOSING EVENT
snacks and drinks

Thursday 18 May 2017 13:00
Mutsaardstraat 31 2000 Antwerpen
Dieperik K1.6

MODULOR



TECTONICS - ORNAMENT - TRANSFORMATION
General Architecture Stockholm
Thursday 10 November 2016 13:00
Mutsaardstraat 31 2000 Antwerpen
Wintertuin

MODULOR

114

MEERS



VENICE ARCHITECTURE BIENNALE
Thomas Bosmans & Laurens Van Hoek

Thursday 3 November 2016 13:00
Mutsaardstraat 31 2000 Antwerpen
Temple Building

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