D E S I G N A P P R O A C H

BY

MONOLAB

01. NAIEVE CONDITION = POINT OF NO RETURN

a. Naivety is the best condition to think and reason freely.

b. At the start stop the urge to know more about the assignment. Do not jump onto it but take a distance instead.

c. Unburdened, associative thinking is the start of everything.

d. This valuable condition can never exist again as soon as you start research.
It is a point of no return, there is no way back.

02. STATE OF MIND = UNIQUE EVERY TIME

a. The fundamental state of mind is to be curious and hungry for new approaches and ideas.

b. Each assignment is unique and therefore requires its own unique mental state.

c. Only radical thinking exposes hidden qualities of an assignment. Middle-of the-road-thinking kills every opportunity, every project; it is destructive to any creativity.

d. Embrace so-called problems, so-called contradictions, so-called impossibilities: this is the rocket fuel that comes from dirty realism.

e. The notion ‘problem’ does not exist; do not seek problems but instead go for opportunities and possibilities.

f. The thinking process is radical and subjective (not scientific), which is a quality. Try to think different than other team members and otherpeople outside the team.

03. APPLIED RESEARCH = 5%

a. Reduce generic research, of which in the end only 5% will be used.

b. Do not operate in generic ways (going for the full 100%) and then select findings afterwards, but act the opposite way: pro active and selective.

c. Targeted research is required, focus on the 5%.

d. Selection is vital; what information and which data are distinct, valuable and powerful?

e. Applied research creates focus and it speeds up the process.

f. Sketching the findings by hand & brain and also in writing is essential. Only this combined sketching and writing makes you understand powerful combinations of information and data.

04. SELECTION & FOCUS = TUNING

a. Powerful findings should be isolated and proven; they need to have an undeniable logic.

b. Do not stack all findings (site-related, urban, programmatic, historic, cultural, societal, technical, financial, etc.) like a Mount Everest and then step into a consensus triggered and uninspiring proces.

c. Instead, preselect one finding that can steer the mindset, can fuel the process and can carry the project. Mostly it is the tiny, unexpected and overlooked determinant.

d. What to do next? The order of things to process defines the result; be cautious, one issue can help the next but it can also cause damage to the process of imagination.

05. SCENARIOS = 360 DEGREES

a. Obvious scenarios are boring and useless. They already exist.

b. What if.....? Scenario thinking is about logic that is surprising (new) and at the same time inevitable.

c. Imagine you have a 360 degree lens on your head.

d. By thinking ahead, defining what-not-to-do is more important than knowing what-to-do.

06. STRATEGY = A TIME MACHINE

a. Strategy comes from scenario thinking.

b. A project strategy is an undeniable and new reasoning which is more important than striving for a possible outcome.

c. A strategy is like a time machine; it brings future conditions to our current era.

d. It explains possible causes, effects and stakeholders that might look illogical in our current era.

07. THEORIES KILL DESIGN

a. Strategy + theory (approach) = concept.

b. Do not sit on theories and do not try to apply theories because they kill design.

c. A theory is never a start, it is the result; often it comes at the end, afterwards.

d. Parallel thinking and explorations on different trajectories create exponential results.

e. Apply a pragmatic intelligence; embrace simplicity, the radical banal.

08. CONCEPT = PROJECT

a. Concept has nothing to do with shape, style or how things look like.

b. The concept requires simple and powerful intelligence; it has an inescapable logic.

c. The concept develops into the design. The concept develops itself through logic and will tell you everything about the specific urban and architectural parameters of the project.

d. Concepts are not self fulfilling; they grow stronger and design themselves when criticized and attacked.

e. Architectural outcomes are directly related to the logic of the concept.

f. The computer is just a tool. Sketching (hand-brain communication) is often overlooked. Do not use a pencil (vague); with a pen the line is there or not (radical and clear).

g. Writing is a way of sketching and approaching. If you are capable of explaining the concept in words to others you understand the design. The text will adapt many times during the process.

09. DESIGN = RESEARCH

a. Design = not a result.
In fact it is an approach, a start.
Design = research.

b. Robustness and logic:
The design should withstand erosion.
Without any explanation by the designer the design should explain itself to outsiders and relate itself undeniably to the concept.

10. EXPLORE THE DESIGN

a. The design is a new spatial condition to its designer.

b. It is still unknown (what did we make?) and it needs to be explored to be understood and further elaborated.

b. Try to think and review as an outsider or a critic who has never seen the design or project before to discover its added values.

c. A critical approach unveils embedded qualities.

11. INTUITION = A RAZOR BLADE

a. Intuition is a highly underestimated sharp tool.

b. Intuition can unfold in conditions where predetermination does not exist.

c. Intuition = experience + curiosity + an open mind + ambition.