

Dominika Prokurat  
 subject area: IM  
 tutor: Øystein Grønning  
 project title: "TSA (Tree - Specific Architecture)"

**ABSTRACT**

The project is based on the idea of creating a Tree-Specific Architecture, which encourages us to discover Oslo's city trees from a different perspective and, at the same time, provides us with a space to rest our minds from the city rush.

**MODES OF DESIGN**

The project started from an investigation of feelings evoked by being surrounded by natural environment, resulting in a film, expressing my reflection. This experience led me to wonder how could I create a sense of tranquility, which we find in nature, without the need of leaving the urban setting. A place, which would allow the citizens to withdraw and rest their minds. I have decided to direct our attention to symbols of natural world - trees.

Through the investigation of Oslos' city trees and correspondence with Bymiljøetaten - an organisation responsible for taking care of the majority of city trees, I have built the base for my project which operates within two backgrounds. Firstly, my aim was to rise appreciation and awareness of City trees, encouraging the citizens to learn more about them. Secondly, I investigated the concept of architecture as a tool for viewing exteriority where the view becomes the main attribute of the space. I wanted to create a specific kind of relaxation space where, through the perceived views, we can reach to our interiority and stay present in the moment.

The marriage of this two aims resulted in the idea of Tree-Specific Architecture - an architectural installation, between viewing gallery and relaxation space.

I have transferred from my conceptual work to the making through sketches, 3d model making, photographic documentation of trees' seasonal changes as well as through looking at potential locations and studying them. The design task involved working within three categories: construction, access system and viewing gallery as well as creating the interiors of the gallery space. This process was based on continues reflection on the work through taking steps back and forth, testing different possibilities and solutions, leading to conclusions, through which I came up with the design choices.

My project went through several shifts. From being focused on human wellbeing to focusing on city trees, from a tree as a visual motif to a tree as an individual, from a sight specific structure to working with portable modules and from rather theoretical approach into a practical one with educational character. Finally, the correspondence with Oslo's Bymiljøetaten brought my project closer to reality with a chance for future execution. This fluid process of reformulating my framework widen my research and enriched design development.

Having gone through this process I have arrived with the final proposition. I have created an educational project supporting the tree care system in Oslo. I have designed a map of 6 trees of my selection within the central parameter of Oslo, which are "exhibited" in the viewing gallery all year. The variety of tree species brings the diversity through daily and seasonally changing narration. I have created a modular mobile structure according to the rules of TSA. The design enables to adjust the construction individually to each setting. The installation takes the visitors through the journey of exploring the tree piece by piece from unusual perspectives, giving them a new insight into its beauty and complexity. Lastly, I am proposing a concept of a virtual platform where citizens can contribute to the knowledge about individual trees as well as propose trees which they would like to be showcased in the next season.

**SELF ASSESMENT**

In this project I have drawn on things I have learned throughout the course of my MA studies.

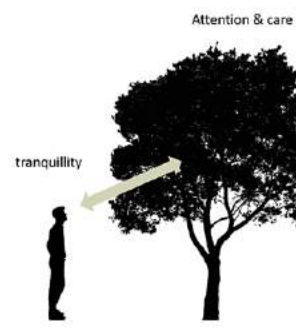
I strongly believe in architecture and design that can contribute to raising awareness of the problematic areas of our contemporary culture and lifestyle. I have decided to develop this project accordingly to the current debates: the impact of accelerating technological development and adoption on our perception of the world, and the urgent need of raising awareness around the ecological crisis. I have decided to address the topic through the locally oriented approach. In my project, the socially responding design is dedicated to the greater public entity of Oslo. I believe we should pay more attention to trees, start thinking about them in terms of living organisms - crucial elements of the ecosystems, instead of perceiving them mainly as a building material. It gains even more importance especially now, when preservation of trees became an important topic due to the climate change and recent extensive forest fires around the world.

In order to gain knowledge and develop understanding of Oslo's tree care system I had to find specific research covering information and regulations which allowed me to evaluate the accessibility of information about Oslo trees. The realisation that there is shortage of information about specific trees in Oslo had a big impact on my project resulting in altering my aims.

After watching the lecture by Richard Sennett "interiors and interiority", I got interested in the concept of being safely alone in public spaces. At the same time, following the steps of James Turrell and his "skyspaces", David Wards photography of intimate landscapes ("Landscapes Within") and the complexity of interlacing micro universes in Alfred Hitchcocks "Rear Window", I was discovering the potential of framing the view and the affect it can have on the viewer.

I have learned that it is difficult to design public spaces, because they are highly likely to be misused which often results in the need of taking structural or aesthetic compromises. An interesting part was the process of looking for right solutions. It was challenging to create a structure which balances between architecture and installation and which was meant to be easily reassembled and at the same time survive various weather conditions and remain safe and strong during yearly usage.

Regardless, I think I have achieved an innovative project, which can make us reflect on our relationship with trees, and by that, hopefully, with nature. But more importantly, by continuously reflecting on my work and not hesitating to challenge and re-evaluate my aims, I have developed more grounded and thoughtful project in comparison to my initial approach.



**Tree-specific architecture (TSA)**

Type of an observatory architecture which introduces a tree as a motive, viewed from an unusual perspective. TSA is characterised by minimal negative impact of the architecture on the tree's life and **represents a more mutualistic relationship between humans and trees**. By creating a tranquil refuge from the city rush where visitors can observe the beauty of trees from the close up perspective **TSA enables us to better understand, appreciate and care for city trees.**

**TSA & BYM**

