

# Collage as a Mechanism for in Situ Analysis

“In architectonic terms, then, Nordic space is topology, Nordic form collage, and Nordic gestalt a hybrid that unites contradictions.” - Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Nightlands: Nordic Building*

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The founders of Cubism valued collage as a hybridization of painting and sculpture, existing at the threshold of two and three dimensions. Collage has the capacity to abstract and communicate both formal and phenomenal characteristics, and thus can be used as an analytical mechanism. Like a collage, revealing evidence of time and its methods of construction, a work of architecture contains an accumulated history that can be represented through collage.

Challenged with how to reinforce empirical and analytical methods in a study abroad program in the tradition of the Grand Tour, Scandinavia became a sympathetic testing ground for collage as an analytical mechanism. Contemporary culture tends to prioritize the visual in the engagement of architecture, resulting in a “rainfall of images” [Italo Calvino] – perhaps a mental or photographic catalogue of diverse aesthetic moments, but lacking depth and criticality. As a more tactile medium, collage-making becomes a deliberate means of capturing the material and cultural substance of the architectural encounter.

The unique and dynamic natural landscapes of the Nordic countries have profoundly influenced the development of distinct forms of Modernism, rooted in a respect for the *genius loci*. The revelation and prioritization of process in both our analytical methods as well as our methods of exploration offered a sense of slowness to the study abroad experience. Both written and graphic reflection in situ became important tools for processing the experiences of one culture before becoming immersed in the next. Finnish theorist Juhani Pallasmaa advocates for slowness in the way in which we encounter and interpret architecture, and in the architectural artifact itself.

Through the daily practice of collage-making, students honed their skills and developed their own techniques, producing graphic analyses that served as a counterpoint to the written analyses conducted throughout the tour. The in situ collage-making comprised two components: one continuous and transformative, the other self-contained and serial.

A 10-foot long accordion folio served as the substrate for a continuous collage reinterpreting architectural experiences throughout Scandinavia. Collecting paper fragments throughout our travels, the meaning inherent in the image was subservient to the color/grain/texture/form. The transitions between collage moments became crucial. Additionally, in each city students created one collage postcard as a graphic analysis to support a written blog post topic. The small format allowed the construction of a discreet, contained composition, in contrast with the continuous collage.

Final products, created as a reflective practice after returning to the US, consisted of a graphic complement to a written precedent analysis. This series of analytical collages employed techniques that were developed on the tour. These collages were produced through mock-up and iteration to result in the best possible final artifacts for exhibition in the School of Architecture gallery. This exhibition was a curated display of the final collages as well as the continuous collages and postcards, again emphasizing the role of process and slowness in our Grand Tour methodology.

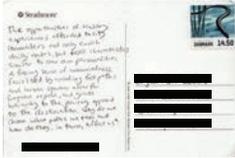


# COLLAGE AS A MECHANISM FOR IN SITU ANALYSIS



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"The degree of **slowness** is directly proportional to the intensity of memory..." [Milan Kundera]



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