

ADO The Architectural Detail

Master in architecture – phase2 – sem1 *Campus Ghent* Engagemant: Legacy

OPO 34 design studio

Semester	Sem3
Startweek	Week 1
Review week / sign in moment	Week 2, 8, 11 (jury)
Credits	15
Titular	Prof.Dr.arch.Jo Van Den Berghe
Teachers	Prof.Dr.arch.Jo Van Den Berghe

Title:

Crash Test Dummies: a Palimpsest of Probes

Introduction

This ADO builds on architectural practice, and on research on architectural practice. The central discourse of this ADO+ revolves around this basic argument: a creation process in architecture all too automatically is considered as a unidirectional process that starts with the poetic image (π)¹, that subsequently is substantiated on the construction site.

$\pi \rightarrow \text{©}$

The research of Jo Van Den Berghe (Van Den Berghe 2012) has revealed that this assumed unidirectionality is false, that the process of creation, which includes the substantiation, is much more negotiated, two-directional, and that the poetic image (π) is often more triggered by construction practice (©). The dream is triggered by the Substance.

$\pi \leftrightarrow \text{©}$

This AOB.ADO proposal navigates in the slipstream of Studio Anatomy (www.studio-anatomy.org) and operates according to two following angles of incidence.

Firstly, practices and discourses about the architectural detail and its proper materialisation are an ever returning theme throughout architectural history, from triglyphs and metopes in ancient Greece to contemporary practice, proving that materialisations of ‘an idea’ can turn architecture into an expressive medium of thoughts and emotions².

Secondly, the expressive potential of the architectural detail deeply affects the appearance of the architectural whole, and a consistent mereological relationship between detail and whole emerges through the mastery of the architectural fragment that occupies a strategic place between the architectural detail and the architectural whole in a process of architectural creation.

*“Tradition cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity” (T.S. Eliot, Tradition and the Individual Talent, first published in *The Egoist*, London, 1919).*

Out of the observation that students confirm to be very hungry for the architectural detail, and building on the assumption that the mastery of the architectural detail with its possibilities for architectural expression and the sense of self-empowerment this offers in the students’ emerging architectural practices, this ADO also critically questions contemporaneity of architectural practice (to which the students’ emerging practices may begin to belong), its agency and position when intervening in the fragility of existing architectural

¹ The concept of the poetic image has been brought forward proposed by Vitruvius, who called it the architectural idea, and following from this, Alberto Pérez-Gómez has further elaborated on it, “... the poetic image, called after Vitruvius the architectural idea (the images that are proposed by the architect, issuing from his or her mind’s eye” (Pérez-Gómez 2006).

² This is also a question of contemporaneity of architectural practice.

bodies, including physical landscapes (the obvious contexts in which the students' emerging practices may begin to operate), that we inherit as 21st century Europeans. These fragile bodies are repositories of future wellbeing and *cultural sustainability*. The cultural quality of this intervening starts from the assumption that this depends on the material precision with which it is done, hence the content and nature of the following research questions.

Research Questions

- Question 1: how can the architect's mastery of Technè become the generator of Poiesis? In other words, how can the direct materialisation become the generator of the poetic image (Vitruvius), as opposed to, but evenso complementary to the omnipresent assumption that an architecture starts from a poetic image that only subsequently can be translated into the substance of the world?
- Question 2: how can an architect act within projects imbedded in existing urban fabrics, architectural bodies, fragmented landscapes and even listed monuments as the inevitable settings within which future generations of architects will operate, yet produce *cultural contemporaneity* through precise materialisation?
- Question 3: how can an architect deal with the 'as found' in the way as defined by Peter and Alison Smithson (1990)?

Network

- Queen's University Belfast (UK): prof. Michael McGarry and Ben Weir
- Ecole Fédérale Polytechnique de Lausanne (EPFL)(CH): prof. Jo Taillieu (Atelier Tomographie)
- Politecnico di Milano: Prof.dr. Gennaro Postiglione, drs. Enrico Miglietta
- AHO Oslo: prof. Neven Fuchs
- Studio Anatomy: www. studio-anatomy.org
- Ongoing research of Jo Van Den Berghe
- The Juliaan Lampens foundation
- Master dissertation The Drawing and the Space (in collaboration with prof.dr. Thierry Lagrange)
- Research group The Drawing and the Space (KU Leuven Dept. of Arch.)

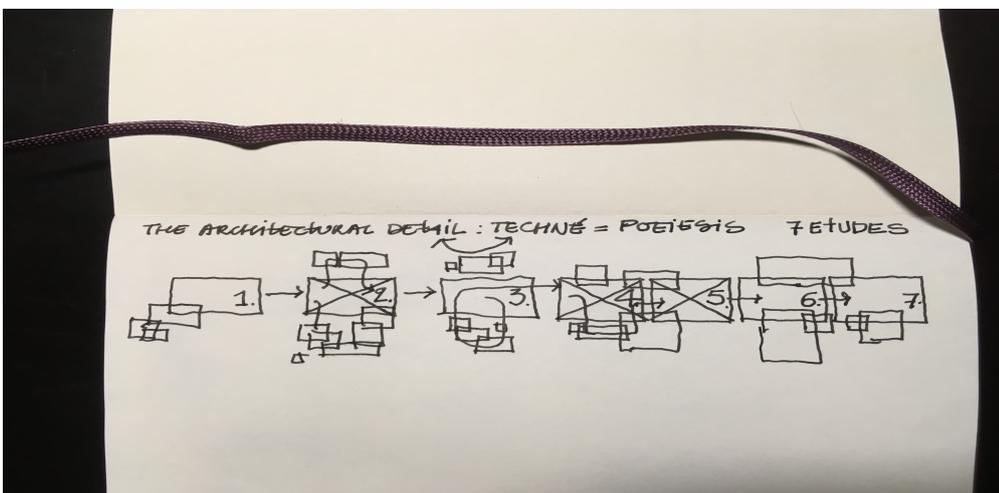
Method and Format: Drawing Dialogues through 7 Etudes

This ADO+ fits within the network of KU Leuven Department of Architecture, research group The Drawing and the Space (www.thedrawingandthespace.info).

Drawing—mainly drawing by hand—occupies the centre of the method of this studio. The architectural drawing is predominantly the locus of research, hence the drawing becomes a medium of registration and subsequent communication of the research process, yet going way beyond its mere role as representation (Van Den Berghe 2013, 2015, 2016a, 2016b).

In ADO+ The Architectural Detail, drawing will revolve around full scale 1/1 drawings of developing architectural details, connected with drawing (fragments of) the human body, both in ongoing *drawing dialogues* with scale 1/10 drawings, expanding into other scales of drawing through cyclical processes of drawing: Critical Sequential Drawing (CSD)(Van Den Berghe, Sanders, Luyten 2020).

In this process of drawing, the section, more specifically the vertical section, will constitute the backbone of the research process. In this ADO, the plan is merely a derivative of the section, not the other way round.



Through drawing, 7 Etudes will be developed, according to 7 design themes (see below), both as a linear process of development and improvement of prototypes (hence: Etudes) and as a comparative study between these Etudes that permits for cyclical movements in the research process (see image). Every Etude is seen as a study drawing with several layers of versions and adjacent drawings that investigate variants and variables.

Each Etude is an anatomical investigation of the architectural detail that will revolve around a deep and full-scale study of the detail of the 7 design themes (see below). The study and the development of provocative and innovative details will bank on:

- preliminary technical studies of existing technical details, situated in architectural fragments to be carefully delineated within existing architectural bodies.
- the investigation (by drawing) by every student of his/her 'sister fragments and sister details', coming forth from the concept of 'your favourite architect'³. In these studies, references of reknown architects, and more specifically how they develop emotional expressions through the materialisation in their work, their ideas and emotions through their mastery of Technè—the architectural detail—will be part of this research studio by researching and re-drawing their architectural details on scale 1/1, and on scale 1/10 in their contexts (architectural fragments).

Design brief

The student is expected to design a sequence of rooms:

(1) Shop Window / Window Shop + (2) Workshop + (3) The Other Room.

The shop window/window shop is meant to display something very precious. It is much more an exhibition display than a commercial device.

The workshop is the place where something very precious is being made. It is, of course, related to and connected with the shop window/the window shop.

The Other Room is the room where the maker of a precious thing is thinking deeply about this precious thing, a room of withdrawal and contemplation about thickness, substance, depth and darkness (or perhaps: life and afterlife).

Inevitably, this implies 'the window' (or: windows)(see also below: design themes) that has/have to be designed. The study of the window (Friedberg 2006), here, includes a comparative study on three levels:

(1) the opening (the view)

(2) the frame (the window detail), hence tackling respectively (2.a) the theme of looking and seeing (2.a.1) the physical and material world (sightlines, the reading of the topography, ...) combined with (2.a.2) more imaginative and symbolic ways of 'seeing', and (2.b) the deep study about how to materialize this looking and seeing.

(3) the opening and the frame in the context of the architectural fragment

Evidently, this research also encompasses the ways how the view and the frame interfere, contaminate one another, etc... ! Through this interference the studio wants to confront this question: how can the process of materialisation (Technè) influence, inform and propell imaginative and symbolic aspects of architecture (Poiesis), and the other way round? Technè = Poiesis?

Design themes

The 7 Etudes need to focus on the investigation (through drawing) of the following themes: (1) topography and stylobate, (2) treshold and door, (3) material grip (the moment and the place where one touches the architecture), (4) window, (5) wall and corner, (6) mantelpiece and chimney and (7) roof overhang.

By drawing, the student wanders from space to space in a slow pace, intensively absorbing and drawing every detail of each room, and specifically the transitions between these rooms. Hence, this wandering is a process of slowing, as it both takes moving physically and coming to a standstill in order to deeply observe and absorb. The draughts(wo)man dwells between flux and stasis and flux.

³ The pedagogic concept of 'Your Favourite Architect', developed by Van Den Berghe during his stay at Politecnico di Milano (2017), includes the following: for each Etude, and even for each step, the student is allowed to take another 'favourite architect'. The aim, here, is to constitute a gallery of favourite architects for every student, based on deep investigation through drawing, so as to gradually build a personal 'repertoire'. This research process happens through drawing, and these drawings need to be collected in a 'Catalog of Sister Fragments'.

This research is a qualitative technical study that goes beyond the secular field of quantitative and normative thinking in designing and making architecture. But this process needs quantitative investigations, aiming for dimensional precision that must encompass both the technical and emotional level. It takes emotional precision to identify what needs to be expressed. It takes technical precision to express in substance what needs to be expressed. Consequently, a further developing of technical precision may give rise to the discovery of new and unsuspected emotional precisions that otherwise might remain hidden but which are becoming explicit through the meticulous exploration and comparison of the technical possibilities.

Site:

1. Beguinage Our Lady of Ter Hoyen (Lange Violettestraat, Gent): Sint-Godelieve Chapel and Infirmary, plus adjacent spaces and architectural bodies (<https://inventaris.onroerendergoed.be/erfgoedobjecten/19429>).
2. Painting 'The Last Light' (Andrew Wyeth 1988): Brinton's Mill complex (Birmingham Township, Pennsylvania, US)(<https://wyethprintgallery.com/our-quality/>)(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brinton%27s_Mill).

If the Beguinage is available (negotiations ongoing), the research will be done on that site. If not, the research will be done with the painting of Andrew Wyeth as site of investigation.

Output

1. measurements of the site, resulting in a set of precise survey drawings (sections, topographical sections, plans)(scale 1/50) and a precise scale model of the site (scale 1/50).
2. 7 Etudes:
 - 7 sets of hand made drawings (mostly (vertical) sections) of full scale architectural details (scale 1/1) situated in their architectural fragments (scale 1/10). These 7 sets correspond with the 7 formulated design themes (see above).
 - scale models: section model that cuts through the 3 spaces (scale 1/50) and that includes the topography and adjacents built volumes and in-between spaces, model of at least 1 fragment (scale 1/10) and details (scale 1/1).
3. final exhibition in which the examination (jury) will take place.

Timing:

Important: every student will upload his/her work on a weekly basis in the Google drive folder that will be made available.

Phase 1 (week 1-2): **Introduction and site survey (Group work):** measurements of the site, resulting in a set of precise survey drawings (sections, topographical sections, plans)(scale 1/50) and a precise scale model of the site (scale 1/50).

Phase 2 (week 3-10): **Etude 1 –Etude 7 (Individual work):** design process (individual work or duo teams, depending on the size of the group).

Phase 3 (week 11) : **Exhibition (Individual and group work):** designing and building the final exhibition (with external jury)(collective work with the whole group).

Evaluation format

The evaluation will assess the aspects as formulated above, i.e. the process and the final production.

Criteria: see ects file and competention matrix.

The output will be presented on a weekly basis by the student, and in intermediary reviews in the presence of the whole group (reviews) and evaluated.

The reviews will be peer review, up-liner review by guest critics and academic review by the professors. There will be a final presentation with a public exhibition in week 14 for a jury of internal and external critics.

Review 1: week 2 (13 October 2021)

Review 2: week 8 (24 November 2021)

Objectives / Specific objectives (ECTS Sheets)

See https://onderwijsaanbod.kuleuven.be/opleidingen/n/CQ_51522855.htm#activetab=doelstellingen and https://onderwijsaanbod.kuleuven.be/opleidingen/e/CQ_51522858.htm#activetab=doelstellingen.

Learning Outcomes

Check ECTS sheet.

Indicators of Behavior

The indicators of behaviours through which the student will be assessed are:

- the student provides proof of having met with the Objectives (Specific objectives and additional objectives – see above);
- the student presents his/her work through a clear verbal and visual discourse by which the student makes a contextualized account of his/her position in the field of architecture.

References:

- Eliot, T.S. (1919). *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, The Egoist, London.
- Friedberg, A. (2006). *The Virtual Window: from Alberti to Microsoft*, the MIT Press, Cambridge MA, US.
- Glanville, R. (2002). Glanville, R. (2002.03), *Doing the Right Thing: the Problems of ... Gerard de Zeeuw, Academic Guerilla*, in: Glanville, R. (guest editor) "Gerard de Zeeuw—a Festschrift", Special Issue of Systems Research and Behavioural Science vol. 19 n°2.
- Moravánský, Ā (2005), *Tectonics and Topography*, in: Bearth & Deplazes: *Konstrukte / Constructs*, Quart Verlag, Luzern, Switzerland.
- Pérez-Gómez, A. (2006). *The Space of Architecture: Meaning as Presence and Representation*, in: *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology in Architecture*, Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa, Alberto Pérez-Gómez, William Stout Publishers, San Francisco, US, p. 22.
- Smithson, A. and P. (1990). *The 'as Found' and the 'Found'*, in David Robbins ed., *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Van Den Berghe, J., Sanders, M., Luyten, L. (2020). *Windows into an Architecture of Darkness and Depth*, in: *Des Traces et des Hommes Imaginaires du Château de Celles*, Silvana Editoriale, Milan.
- Van Den Berghe, J. (2016a). *Moratorium Space: the Architectural Solid and the Window*, lecture at Politecnico di Milano, in the series *Lezione di Architettura*, 30 November 2016.
- Van Den Berghe, J. (2016b). *Drawing Is / Not Building*. Treadwell, S. and Twose, S. eds., Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, pp. 82-83.
- Van Den Berghe, J. (2015). *A Window on Drawing*. Conference: *Making Research, Researching Making*, Aarhus School of Architecture, pp. 402-411.
- Van Den Berghe, J. (2013). *Architectural Drawing as Verb, not as Noun*. Conference *Knowing (by) Designing*, KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, pp. 664-673.
- Van Den Berghe, J. (2012). *Theatre of Operations, or: Construction Site as Architectural Design*, Ph.D Dissertation, SmallBook 2, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, pp. 71-74.
- many more references and 'favourite architects' will be distributed at the introductory session and as the course proceeds.