



The “Hemwegcentrale”, the last coal-fired powerstation – Port of Amsterdam.

PHOTO CREDIT: ANP

DESIGNING FROM MUSEUMIZATION TO HARDCORE HERITAGE: *‘Towards spatio-cultural strategies that provide handles to rethink hopeful and seemingly hopeless vacancies from the perspective of Contested Legacy’*

Statement:

“Hardcore Heritage represents a new way of thinking about monuments and cultural heritage. Through deliberate destruction, radical changes in context, and seemingly contradictory additions, a new field of tension arises between present, past and future.” (RAAAF)

Engagement: *Contested Legacy*

Design Studio MAIG42 Semester 1 + 2: arCsus – architecture – Culture – sustainability

Academic supervisor, prof.dr.arch. Marc Dujardin



The master dissertation tracks, supervised by Marc Dujardin stem from the tutor’s approach of architecture and design strategy as ‘culture praxis’ (Architectural Anthropology & Spatio-Cultural Sustainability) as developed within his ‘arCsus Lab’ (architecture-CULTURE-sustainability), and complemented by the ‘out-of-the-box’ thinking and acting of the innovative Amsterdam based RAAAF architects (RIETVELD Architecture-Art-Affordances).

To shape what is envisaged by the faculty's ADO approach (Academic Design Office) , arCsus Lab closely works together with the Amsterdam based design studio RAAAF (Rietveld Architecture – Art – Affordances) since 2016. The synergy and chemistry between the supervisor's academic teaching (MAIG14 and MAIG42) and research from the perspective of Architectural Anthropology, and RAAAF's innovative art based research, centers around the shared theme entitled: "Diversity, Vacancy, Affordances and Hardcore Heritage".

Since 2019, visual culture expert and photographer Hilde Braet has taken architectural teaching in the arCsus lab design studio's and related electives to an even more triggering and challenging level by introducing the perspective of 'paroxism'. Not only related to hardcore heritage architectures associated with the work of RAAAF, but more interesting to 'radically' influence the design process and attitude of the students, triggering and challenging them towards unexplored pathways in terms of reading, mapping, conceptualization, design strategies, form expression and representation modes.

However, from the vision and skills of the designer, **-the master dissertation in architecture is pre-eminently a DESIGN studio after all-**, the arCsus Lab team will focus on selective project sites in The Netherlands and Belgium in general, and on design by research questions, introduced and presented by the students that will partake in an international student exchange program in semester 1.

Design task proposals:

Essential to and shared by arCsusLab and RAAAF is the possibility and approval to conduct 'fieldwork' at the project sites selected. In these unreal times of Covid-19, rapidly changing measures and restrictions of national and international mobility, socializing and bubbling impact both the final choice of site location and the operational framework of our design studio.

For those students taking up an internship or exchange program abroad (European or Trans-European) in semester one, and willing to finalize their locally initiated master dissertation within the arCsusLab research modus, we welcome project topics and case studies, derived from local debates on vacancies and heritage issues.

From our side, we propose two possible case studies – one in the Netherlands, and one in Belgium.

THE NETHERLANDS:

From unintentional monument to spatio-cultural crossover: re-designing the closing coal-fired power station of NUON, located in the Port of Amsterdam from the perspective of Contested Legacy.



The closing HEM power plant embodies the iconic values of the disappearance of fossil energy in Amsterdam. Following recent proposals (Finn Dudok van Heel), the HEM power plant may well be given a second life as an energy museum (from coal to hydrogen) and at the same time be converted as 'heat battery' to serve the 50 to 70,000 homes that Amsterdam will build around the port until 2050. However, following the reconversion strategy of energy company Vattenfall, the present owner of the Hemweg power station, wants to keep the site and points out to the formal destination of the

area as 'industrial energy supplier'. From an urban planning point of view, this strategic place represents a link between the urban expansion of Amsterdam's 'Houthavens' and the HEM site in Zaandam.

<https://www.groene.nl/artikel/de-laatste-rookpluim>

<https://www.parool.nl/nieuws/grote-plannen-voor-sluitende-hemwegcentrale~bc0dcae6/?referer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>

BELGIUM:

From unintentional monument to spatio-cultural crossover: re-designing the 'Tour Saint-Albert', the closed coal wash house in Binche, Belgium, from the perspective of Contested Legacy.



The Péronnes-lez-Binche triage-wash house, in Belgium, is a former coal wash house today emptied of its machines, only the structure, -an impressive concrete cathedral with its intertwining of beams-, of the building remains. The coal wash-houses made it possible to transform the coal which had just been extracted from neighboring mines (such as the Hasard de Cheratte coal mines for example) into commercially usable coal. The municipality of Binche has been dealing with plans to demolish the tower since 2014. There would be room for a new neighborhood with 350 homes. The plans immediately met with protest. Rightly so: the package boat-style tower is an iconic structure. The demolition permit was rejected by the Walloon Region in 2015.

<https://sauvonstoursaintalbert.wordpress.com/>

<https://www.hullabaloo.be/steenkoolmijnen/tour-saint-albert>

Keywords:

Hardcore Heritage – Paroxism – Sequential Temporariness – Affordances – Drosscape – Liminality

The project context as trigger:

Both proposed project sites, -the HEMWEG coal fire Power plant, Amsterdam, and the monumental Saint Albert Tower in Binche-, provides us with a unique spatio-cultural matrix and exemplary case to explore what RAAAF identifies in their book "VACANCY STUDIES" experiments and strategic interventions in Architecture", investigating the diversity and potential of 'vacancy' connected to the issue of 'affordances' or possibilities for action from an unprecedented multi-stakeholder constellation and operational framework. We will work on, along and across the 'edges' (spatio-cultural crossovers) of what currently is defined as design perimeter with as epicenter the monumental vacancies.

The case study areas are seemingly prompted by merely “place making” design strategies and rather conventional heritage policies leading to either the “museumization” of the iconic structures as unintentional monument, or at the most re-designed as ‘urban incubator’. One that mediates between the industrial site and the valuable borders as backbone of a new strategy to questioning and triggering conventional modes of reuse, preservation and architectural intervention within an industrial heritage context.

The proposed and primarily ‘conventional’ planning, design ideas and strategies totally disconnect from everything that the arCsus-RAAAF modus stands for, and re-defined as “Hardcore Heritage on the edge of Paroxysm” radically influencing the view point, attitude, design process and skills of the designer, enabling him/her to rethink hopeful and seemingly hopeless industrial heritage vacancies from a more out-of-the-box or unconventional creative thinking process.

As such, within this studio, we will never start with a prefixed program that seeks a place and/or a form. On the contrary, the site of the former factory, within reach and limits of its various intertwining perimeters (relational, contextual, situational, design-based) seeks new narratives and affordances. No (architectural) design proposal(strategy and output) at the end of the design studio can emerge without a profound understanding of the place as an intersection of typical features that made up the spatio-cultural identity, content and imagery of this very rich but complex built landscape and iconic fabric.

The research modus:

arCsusLab ‘Designing for Spatio-Cultural Sustainability’

Whenever the ‘potential’ dimension of architecture as medium of (spatial) communication and mediation is at stake, the role and meaning of culture as key dimension of sustainable development is commonly referred to as ‘Cultural Sustainability’, the fourth pillar of the sustainability concept (social – economic – environmental it Architecture should be approached as a cultural praxis and is widely referred to as ‘Architectural Anthropology’.

But above all, arCsus aims at triggering, challenging and inspiring young designers to develop their micro-scale design strategies, interventions and statements from different entry points, conceptual frameworks, perspectives and modes of communication, representation and media. As such, the designer will develop his/her personalized skills to approach architecture in the broadest sense of the word and scale of intervention as a ‘cultural praxis’.

One or a combination of international renown theory and practice-based design strategies, initiated by the academic supervisor in close co-operation with RAAAF, may well appeal to and inspire the student to upscale his/her design strategies, tools and frames of reference in relation to architecture, approached as a cultural practice. They will facilitate the supervisor to understand what kind of designer you are, aims to be, and how you can develop your personal ‘design signature’, empowering you with more confidence to play your role as engaged designers of the future:

-DESIGNING FOR CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY –arCsus

-ARCHITECTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY& CULTURE MATRIX DESIGN – arCsus

-DESIGNING FOR MULTI-SENSORIALITY & INCLUSION – arCsus

-DESIGNING FOR SEQUENTIAL TEMPORARINESS – RAAAF

-DIVERSITY OF VACANCY – RAAAF

-ARCHITECTURAL BEHAVIOROLOGY – BOW-WOW

-POETICS OF DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION (TEACHING INSIDE RUINS – WANG SHU)

-LIGHT, ARCHITECTURE AND ATMOSHERES – PETER ZUMTHOR

-LANDSCAPE URBANISM (clearance – grid – casco – montage) – MARCEL SMETS

-THE THREE URBANISMS AND THE PUBLIC REALM (POST-NEW-EVERYDAY) – D. KELBAUG

-DESIGNING FOR MULTIPLICITY AND ADAPTIVE URBANISM – STEFANO BOERI

Taking the student's personal interest and affinities into account, none of the above listed design strategies are compulsory, dogmatic or conventional. None of the design strategies, listed below, will be enforced as a methodology to follow or adopt. Intensive design-based consults and reviews will enable the student to evolve as well informed, deeply moved creative 'scenographers' in the field of architecture and sustainability.

Contact: marc.dujardin@kuleuven.be

website: www.arCsusLab.com (under construction)

Docs: see case studies.