

Title	Het Trappenhuis Gent: brutalist Freinet education revisited
Tutor(s)	Aga Batkiewicz, Freek Dendooven, Mechthild Stuhlmacher
Campus (BXL/Ghent)	Gent
Language (EN/NL)	Eng/ NL
Engagement	Craftmanship
Semester (1/2/3)	3

BLURB:

The studio revolves around an exploratory study for the redevelopment of an existing structure with a heritage value. This semester's case will be Het Trappenhuis in Gent (former Macarius school), a brutalist schoolbuilding designed by Eric Bailliu and Johan Baele (BARO) whose first design dates from 1965. The building was originally inspired by Herman Hertzbergers Montessori school and was built in several phases.

Architecturally, the assignment focusses on the discovery and (re)interpretation of existing qualities, internal conversions and extensions, subtle and bold new-build interventions and fundamental sustainability. From an urban planning perspective, we examine the spatial possibilities of the existing site, possible (renewed) relationships with the surroundings and the role and meaning of public and collective spaces and gardens. Programmatically, we focus on the design of a school as a defined program.

EXTENDED DESCRIPTION:

Description of the studio:

The existing school building "Het Trappenhuis", built in the 1970s, is remarkable for several reasons. Not only is it a striking appearance and a brutalist architectural object, but it is also a reflection of its time and a built pedagogical ideal.

The building forms the starting point for a studio that introduces students to the school as a design assignment and the various architectural and pedagogical ideas, ambitions and references that it is based on. Even today, the building still bears witness to enormous ambition and presents itself as a direct translation of the pedagogical ideas of Freinet education. The building itself is currently in need of renovation and sustainability improvements. The (fictional) design assignment adds to this the task of doubling the size and capacity of the school while at the same time considering a possible contemporary architectural translation of the principles that define Freinet education today. The space for this can be found next to, on, near and/or in the existing building and may be at the expense of a later extension on the same site. For the extension or renovation, we are also looking for a combination of architectural form, the organisation of meaningful floor plans and spaces, the involvement of outdoor spaces in education and the fundamental philosophy of Freinet education.

Pedagogical principles are based on the idea that pupils should be able to learn based on their own motivation. This involves personal initiative, an individual learning plan and the realisation that research is not an end in itself but always leads somewhere. In addition, Freinet education seeks to make democratic principles tangible and put them into practice from an early age. In Flanders, 95 primary schools work according to this principle.

The studio is set up as an assignment that focuses on the renovation, reinterpretation and transformation of existing buildings – the most important design tasks of our time! The basis is a given, realistic programme of requirements, with structural, budgetary and architectural constraints that must be reconciled with architectural and content-related ambitions. In addition, we expect a keen observation of the current use and the many traces of appropriation that determine the reality of the current building (and other reference projects) after 50 years of heavy use.

Timing/schedule: The semester begins with several introductory lectures, various local site visits and independent research into reference projects. The first four weeks are spent familiarising students with the site, the assignment, different references and the existing building. This is followed by the development of plans and volumes, ultimately leading to work on an (interior) fragment.

Teamwork / Individual:

Students work in groups of two to three on a master plan for the site and determine the location and the urban and architectural frameworks and ambitions for their intervention/renovation/extension/new construction. The groups are required to remain together until the first interim presentation in week 4 or 5. Collaboration after this point is voluntary. In the last 3 weeks, students work individually on an individual (interior) fragment in drawings, images and models.

Excursion/study trip/...? (+ timing):

There will be several (partly spontaneous) local site visits in Ghent, an excursion to Antwerp and possibly an excursion to Amsterdam.

Extra budget information:

We expect students to be able to make good models using solid materials and to produce good prints and drawings on high-quality paper for at least two interim presentations and the final jury. In addition, there are costs involved in the excursions.

Evaluation:

The studio team assesses both the design process and the design product on the basis of the work produced by the students and their work and design presentations. The studio team may be assisted in this assessment by external parties. Depending on the chosen studio, other forms of evaluation may also be used (e.g. peer or self-evaluation).

References/Further reading:

De school als ontwerpogave, Schoolarchitectuur in Vlaanderen 1995-2005
Auteur:Maarten Van Den Driessche, Bart Verschaffel, 2010

<https://www.freinetvereniging.eu>

Reference for the image (if necessary):