

Premiere — Studio Seebach Sensing Space

NEWROPE The Design in Dialogue Lab Chair of Architecture & Urban Transformation ETH Zürich NEWROPE The Design in Dialogue Lab

22 December 2021
ONA building
Zurich-Seebach

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3. Credits

ETH Zürich



1.1 PROGRAMME 22 DECEMBER

PROLOGUE

09:30 - Tea, music, introduction (terrace)

ACT I

Sensing Transition: listen - moderation Stimmspektrum

10:30 - Stimmspektrum - Senga Grossmann,
Viviane Hug, Theresa Zuhr (theater)

10:45 - Anthropogenic - Elif Isikli, Roxana Puiu
(empty space)

11:00 - Design in Catalogue - Max Meier,
Gereon Siévi (theater space)

11:15 - Talkback - moderation Freek Persyn (theater)

ACT II

Sensing Transition: look - moderation Stimmspektrum

12:00 - ONA's kitchen - Alessandro Paterniti (theater)

12:30 - Lunch (theater, empty space)

ACT III

Sensing Transition: smell - moderation Stimmspektrum

14:00 - Schaukiste - Jakob Schaefermeyer, Sarah Vogel,
Virginia Zaretskie (theater)

14:15 - Sensing abundance - Linus Arnold, Jan Bauer,
Julian Volken (fokushalle)

14:30 - I've got a blank space, baby! - Charis Gersl,
Elena Geser, Fiona Wiesner (empty space)

14:45 - Blue Screen - Tabea Meienhofer (theater)

15:00 - Talkback - moderation Freek Persyn (theater)

ACT IV

Sensing Transition: taste - moderation Stimmspektrum

16:00 - break - hosted by Blue Screen

ACT V

Sensing Transition: feel - moderation Stimmspektrum

16:30 - Synthesising Seebach- Yannick Blattner,
Rita Engelberger, Tanja Reichmuth
(Seebach Station)

17:00 - Between facades - Fiona Hatz
(Schulhaus im Birch)

17:15 - The perception of space in time - Olivia Beeler,
Annick Bächle (corridor)

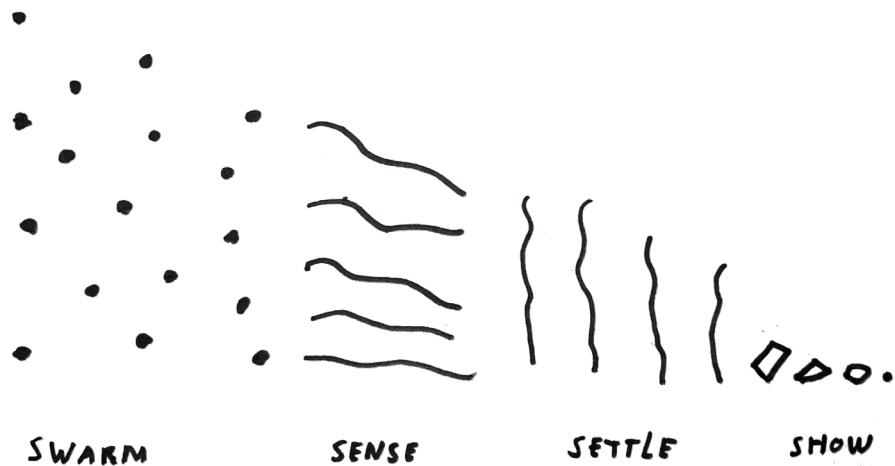
17:30 - Talkback - moderation Freek Persyn (theater)

EPILOGUE

18:15 - ONA Afterhours - Selin Civi, Carolina Palos Mas,
Sofia Uribe Gomez (all spaces)

18:45 - Apéro (terrace)

Please note that the 3G rule and a general mask
requirement both apply in all buildings of ETH Zurich.



1.2 BACKGROUND

For the Fall 2021 design studio, we took inspiration from people and practices that promote the use of all our senses when experiencing and shaping our environment. We invited students to join a multi-sensory exploration of the neighbourhood of Seebach and the ONA building, home to NEWROPE's Design in Dialogue Lab and a space we share with other chairs of the Department of Architecture of ETH Zurich.

After a long period of forced social distancing and self-isolation, and being freed from endless Zoom sessions, we could finally reconnect to the people and places around us. The HS2021 design studio centred around this reconnection and rediscovery of the physical world and the power of proximity, tactility and embodied knowledge. Starting from ONA and from the question of how we can design outside of our brains, we used our bodies and senses to explore the building's potential as a safe and social space where we can be and work together.

By joining Studio Seebach - Sensing Space, students became part of a collective effort to identify, reimagine, and potentially remove or redesign some of the barriers currently preventing people from feeling comfortable in and around the building. As frequent users and co-hosts of the space, they revisited ONA. They explored it as - what we like to call - an 'Open Public Structure' that is welcoming to many users, from students to residents and others.

EMBODIED DIALOGUE

The studio was, amongst many other sources of inspiration, shaped by the work of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty who argues that we are all caught - or embedded - in the fabric of the world. Students embarked on a slow and sensorial immersion in their environment through a step-by-step process. By combining a more open-ended and self-generative exploration of space with moments of critical reflection, their discovery of the body-space connection gradually transformed from an intuitive approach towards a more purposeful process and series of projects.

Students were not required to deliver a design in the traditional sense of a plan for a permanent, physical intervention. However, eventually, all projects expressed a deep engagement with the physical environment. Instead of creating a new context, students studied existing conditions. They focused on the myriad ways in which our understanding and use of space are scripted, restricted or supported by architecture and urban design.

Following the NEWROPE Chair's adage 'Design in Dialogue', studio participants established relationships with and between themselves and others by studying kindred spirits who have worked at the intersection of the body, space, and movement, while simultaneously engaging fellow students and other sentient beings through physical encounters and shared sensations.

The resulting projects and collaborations show how a more sensitive approach and embodied knowledge can help us reimagine our daily routines, realign users and spaces, and generate valuable knowledge for designing more inclusive and responsive environments.

1.3 SYNOPSIS

Studio Seebach - Sensing Space was structured around four movements and consisted of rehearsals, reflection moments and Design in Dialogue Sessions.

Each phase started with a rehearsal - a physical exercise under the guidance of a guest instructor - followed by a reflection moment, either in the form of a guest lecture or in the form of an interactive Design in Dialogue session where students received input from guests regarding possible next steps in their process.

DEEP LISTENING

Each studio day started with the same simple listening exercise, which we borrowed from the late American composer and philosopher Pauline Oliveros: "listen to everything until it all belongs together and you are part of it." By meeting in a different location for each listening exercise, from the bustling ONA building to a quiet chapel or cacophonous clearing in a nearby forest, this collective ritual created both a rhythm and a constant need to readjust.



“Listen to everything until it all belongs together and you are part of it.” Pauline Oliveros



29.09.2021



06.10.2021



12.10.2021



13.10.2021



02.11.2021



17.11.2021



15.12.2021



09.11.2021



19.10.2021



17.11.2021



14.12.2021



20.10.2021



06.10.2021



20.10.2021



09.11.2021



14.12.2021



I. SWARMING

The first phase focused on the collective experience of space and started during the introduction week with a workshop by mimographer and physical theatre maker Floor van Leeuwen. Through a number of small exercises, students learned about how we move in public space and how explicit and unwritten rules and expectations dictate our trajectories and interactions. Together we tried to re-imagine and momentarily change the ‘script of the street’ by swarming around Oerlikon as one body without a clear form or direction.

The first phase continued with a workshop by dance and theatre-maker Manuela Runge, who worked with students to help them move around the ONA building and explore their environment using their bodies and senses. Together they created a series of small interventions for the inaugural lecture of Freek Persyn, which they performed with other members of the audience in the main auditorium of ETH Zurich.



II. SENSING

The second phase revolved around the various senses as entry points for a more engaging exploration of the surroundings. During this phase, we were joined by architect and curator Carlos Mínguez Carrasco. As one of the authors of the 2019 book titled ‘Bodybuilding’, he talked about the interplay of bodies and space and the use of live performance by architects, insisting that performance is a critical tool to rethink architecture’s agency, goals, and aesthetics.

During the same phase, students had the opportunity to work with Dr Maria da Piedade Ferreira, an architect, performance artist, researcher and curator who explores how everyday objects and situations influence perception and extend or restrict the possibilities of the body. For her day-long workshop, students were asked to bring a selection of things from their daily life, and to defamiliarise themselves with these objects by wearing them in the form of a self-created costume during a “COVID Gala”: a masked ball to celebrate spontaneity, absurdity and playfulness as a way to challenge the social norms and physical conditions.

To conclude the sensing phase, Rory McGrath and Anton Westbom Weflö of London-based design studio OK-RM visited the Design in Dialogue for a workshop in which students were asked to summarise and visualise their ideas in a poster consisting of images and short texts.



III. SETTLING

During the third phase, students were asked to finalise the focus of their project. This time we were joined by Prof. dr. Erik Rietveld, a philosopher of cognitive science, specialised in enactive or embodied cognition and a specialist in the field of ‘affordances’: the quality or property of an object that defines its possible uses or makes clear how it can or should be used. From his role as Founding Partner of RAAAF [Rietveld Architecture-Art-Affordances], a multidisciplinary and experimental studio, he described and discussed a selection of their site-specific art installations, such as ‘The End of Sitting’, as real-life thinking models.

Our final guest was fashion designer Marga Weimans, whose work addresses a wide variety of themes concerning identity, technology, and beauty and incorporates elements from architecture, art and pop culture. Sources of inspiration are, among others, her Surinamese background and living in a major city like Rotterdam, as well as innovative techniques and materials. She worked with the students around the notion of the ‘carnavalesque’ or the idea of putting power hierarchies and stereotypes on their heads as an artistic and political act.

IV. SHOWING

And now it’s showtime.

2. Projects (in order of appearance)



2.1 STIMMSPEKTRUM

Senga Grossmann, Viviane Hug,
Theresa Zuhr

During this semester, we have immersed ourselves in the world of human sounds, tones and voices. Our initial fascination for the sense of hearing soon developed into an interest in the reception and the creation of vocal sounds. Following the topic of 'Sensing Space', we became interested in how we take up space with our physical bodies and our voices. In our society, it is one of the most common and significant tools which allows individuals to communicate their inner world to the outside. We discovered many dimensions of this extensive topic; Political themes and critical questions have captivated our attention, such as the feminist approach to finding the voice, the question of identity and prejudice, political control and oppression in public space and the personal relationship to one's voice.

Our goal is to create awareness of the diversity of voices within the Department of Architecture at ETH Zurich through playful exercises and theory. Everyone is responsible for creating an environment, which allows for more holistic communication.

How much space do you take up with your voice?

2.2 ANTHROPOGENIC

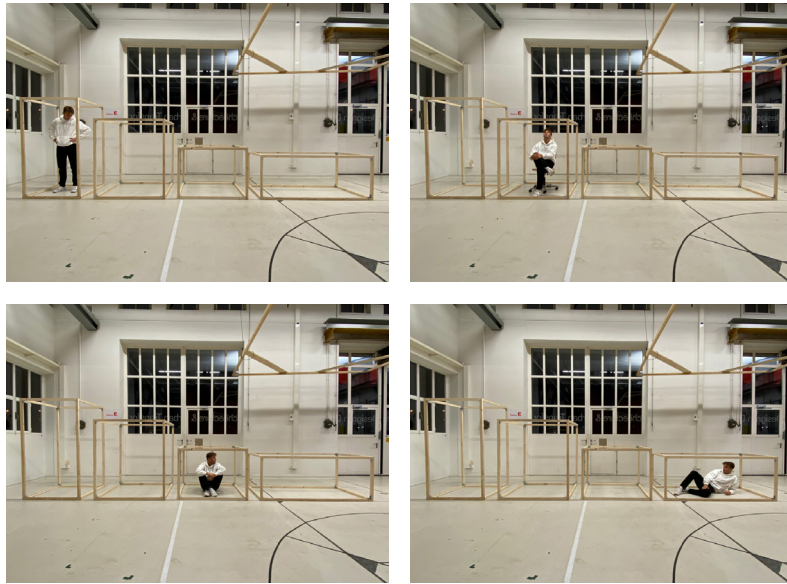
Elif Isikli, Roxana Puiu

We embraced the experimental approach towards design in architecture and started our journey by exploring the space with a tool we built ourselves. This tool, in the form of a timber frame, lead us to the next step in our project.

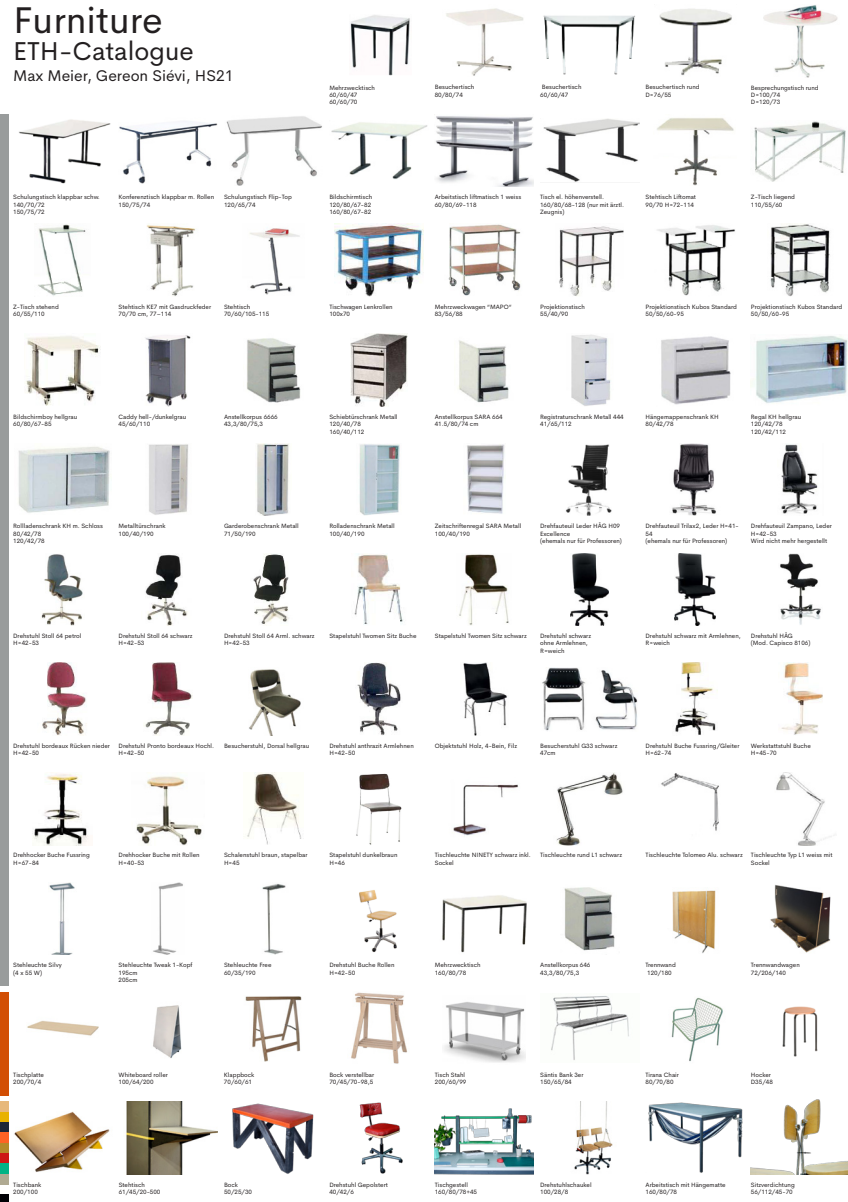
This first mock-up became our detector for themes like the dimensions of a space that can accommodate a person's needs. Initially, it seemed to be too big, since we could not lift it with two people. We needed a smaller frame, which we could carry around.

With the second mock-up, we could ask questions like: How much space does a person need? Who is this person? We found out that in the process of designing, we could apply specific standards to define the dimensions of the frame. Abstraction leads to higher inclusivity. Through research, we found out that if you use a body height of 186 cm, 95% of all humans would fit inside the frame. Starting from a human body with this height, we built frames that show the space a standardized body takes up for various movements and positions.

We want to explore the degree of inclusivity by visualizing the standard: who and what fits?



Furniture
ETH-Catalogue
Max Meier, Gereon Siévi, HS21

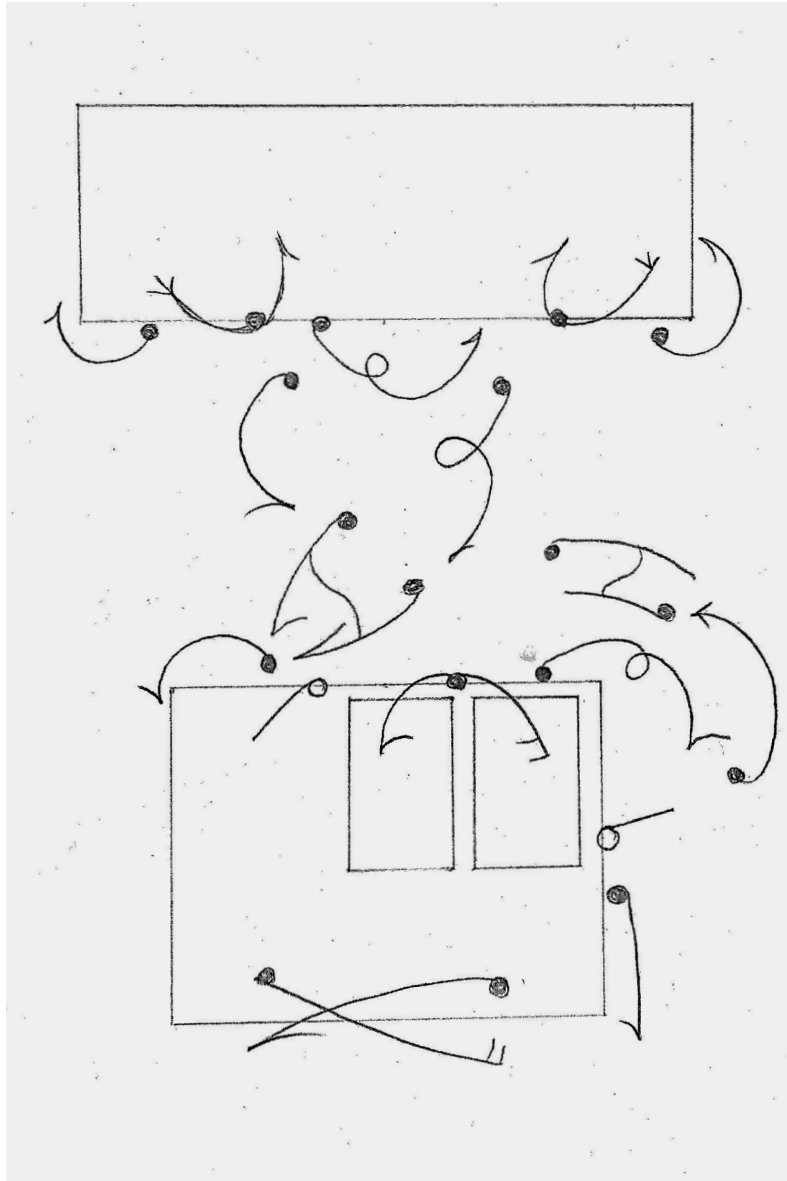


2.3 DESIGN IN CATALOGUE

Max Meier, Gereon Siévi

We looked at the environment that ETH provides for us students, focusing on its furniture pieces. The ETH furniture catalogue includes mainly grey, black and white pieces, which are functional and lifeless. New pieces only seem to be added if old ones aren't being produced anymore. As they only cover the basic needs of our studio work, it sometimes feels very limiting in how you can interact with them. We want to show the conclusions of our analysis by making it possible to use the existing pieces differently. Since they are not whole new pieces of furniture but only parts that connect to existing furniture, thus changing their use, we call them crutches.

It is time for more than one position that we can inhabit at ETH, which is the start at ONA.



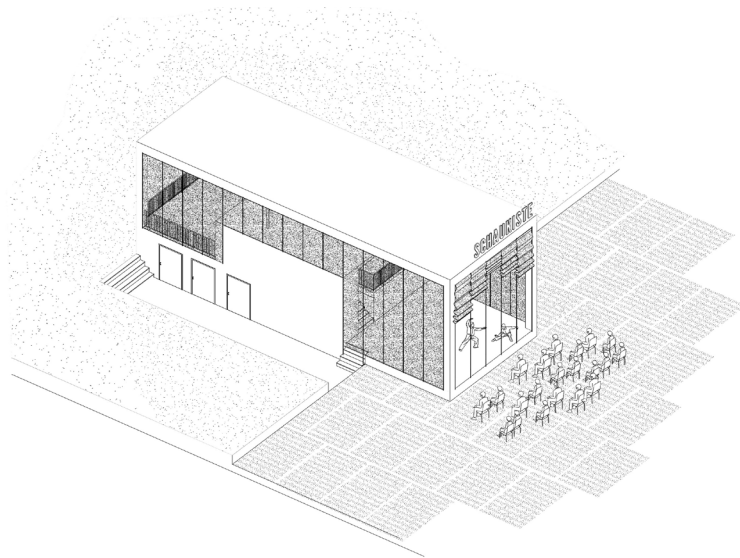
2.4 ONA'S KITCHEN

Alessandro Paterniti

ONA'S Kitchen merges the discipline of architecture with cooking and choreography. Cooking means a lot to me, and it is a means through which I can better express my creativity and emotions with the people with whom I share my daily life.

The recipe book as a final project should be read as such and should be interpreted as a repeated search for spatial reactivation within the ONA building. Although it is a partial and temporal reactivation, and therefore not permanent, the idea of using the spaces outside office hours, dedicating them to social interaction, community and the return to unity after the pandemic period, were the main aims of the project.

The work consists of 5 recipes adapted for many people, explaining in detail how the dishes were made. In addition, a large space is left to the sensory part of the project, where the feelings experienced during the realisation of the dishes and the evenings are expressed. Finally, a part is dedicated to the spatial disposition, which in the project is directly linked to a choreography composed of movements within the kitchen spaces, which make the work behind the portable stove more harmonious and efficient.



2.5 SCHAUKISTE

Jakob Schaefermeyer, Sarah Vogel,
Virginia Zaretskie

“Schaukiste” explores the possibilities of reactivating an unused pavilion in Oerliker Park through a process of acting upon and reacting to a variety of users and ideas. Initial actions on our part trigger responses through direct and indirect communication. In collaboration with different actors involved, both on-site and in the bigger context, the idea evolved into an architectural proposal that goes beyond the brief and timeframe of the semester. The process of communicating the project to the city involves the help of different parties with the shared aim of transforming the park. On a bigger scale, our project attempts to use the semester work to explore how students can actively participate in the life of the city.





2.6 SENSING ABUNDANCE

Linus Arnold, Jan Bauer,
Julian Volken

Within the frame of sensing space, we are intrigued by the notion of abundance. It allows us to read and engage the city in its' complexity while avoiding subjective abstraction.

While sensing and trying to make sense of Seebach we found a discrepancy: the space often comes across bleak, suffering from a lack of abundance. Research, however, laid bare a rich history, very interesting opportunities and many hidden layers.

Our goal became to express, visualise and project these hidden abundances without singling out either one, i.e. ripping them out of the fabric they collectively form.

We want to discuss the similarities of the city and linguistics; the complexity of its' processes of transformation and permanence. Do we need to scientifically pin down the mechanics of the city or of a language to speak it?

What is the city talking about, what could it be talking about? Who is it talking to, and what is the role of architecture as a medium?



2.7 I'VE GOT A BLANK SPACE, BABY

Charis Gersl, Elena Geser,
Fiona Wiesner



PO6-22883136-PP-CHE-MOB

Dear Reader,

In the first week of this semester we encountered an unprogrammed space in the ONA Studio Hall.
To keep it empty became our collective effort.

We see value that these 62.08m² in midst of the busy ONA always return to an empty state. We developed an understanding of the richness of it, despite its current character of a leftover, always subject to being filled unintentionally by its busy surrounding.

We have been moving, measuring and discussing the space, adding materials and removing them again, experiencing and telling stories about emptiness.

This is an invitation to recognise the necessity of this space for the functioning of its environment.

This is an invitation to discuss unprogrammed spaces at our institution and the right to claim vacancy.

Best,
Agents of the Empty Space

NEUROPE CHAIR
Neunbrunnenstrasse 50
8050 Zürich





2.8 BLUE SCREEN

Tabea Meienhofer

This semester took me on a journey to explore the values of carpets.

A carpet is much more than a five-millimetre thin furniture piece.

An ultramarine carpet laid out on the streets can destabilize urban space. A strange object in the city which lets people start to explore. Appearing like a blue screen, allowing someone to forget the rules of the carpet's surroundings. Sparking someone's imagination.

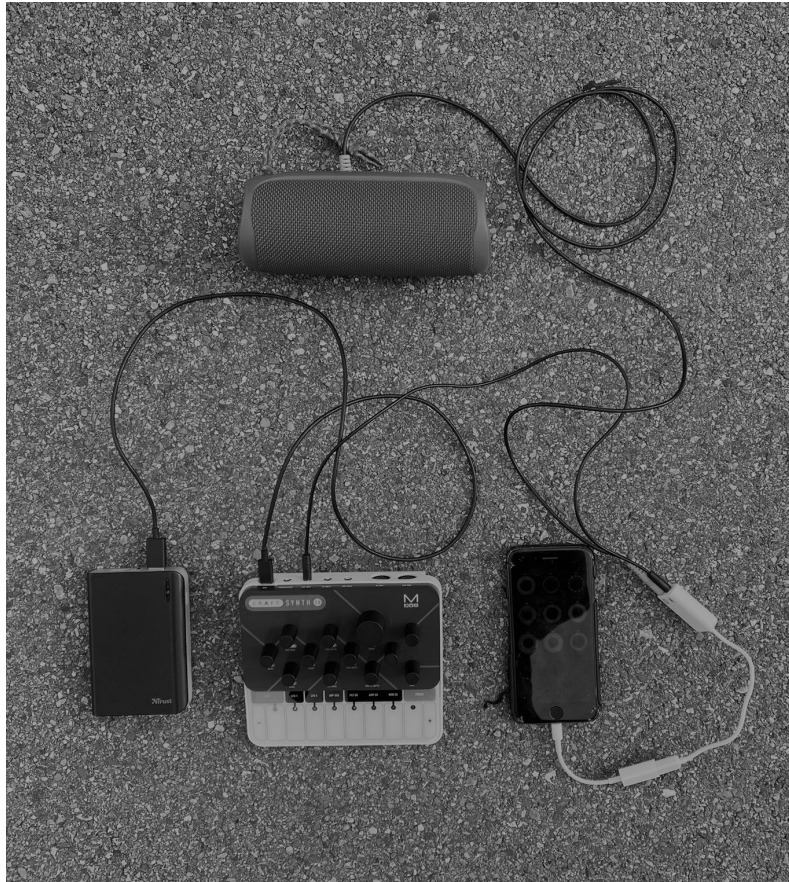
A carpet can create a space to gather, to connect to each other. A space where people feel comfortable, where people feel safe.

You can take it outside, you can eat, work, come together on it, you can explore with it.

You can create a space without any specific function, without clear boundaries.

Whenever you roll it out, it forms a space including all of that.

When we think about spaces in the city and our homes, why aren't we using carpets to create spaces that can include different uses and functions that include different cultures and backgrounds?



2.9 SYNTHESIZING SEEBACH

Yannick Blattner, Rita Engelberger,
Tanja Reichmuth

Architectural competitions always work with floor plans, sections and renderings. All these tools are used to visualise the planned project. However, life in the built environment is by no means only about visual aesthetics. We experience space with all our senses: we touch, we see, we smell, and we hear.

In the time we have had here, we have looked at the translation of public urban spaces in Seebach into music. Music has the wonderful ability to make people feel, convey atmospheres and reflect moods. That potential has motivated us to describe urban spaces through music and experiment with different ways to intervene in the urban territory through sound.

We singled out characteristics of locations and translated each of them into a sound loop. By putting them together, we created a soundscape that describes a certain location. Placing them in the right space evokes a beautiful interplay between architecture and sound.

By scanning the QR code, you will be directed to our documentation on Instagram.



2.10 BETWEEN FACADES

Fiona Hatz

The urban space can become a stage where anyone may be a performer. An individual temporarily appropriates the space as their presence is amplified. From the street and the surrounding buildings, an audience is generated.

If we feel seen, we conceive differently of our presence. A large projection of a silhouette simultaneously amplifies and abstracts a multi-layered individual. We are seen but hide behind a flat projection of ourselves.

In contrast to commercial media facades that want to influence us, we can shape and be the content. While commercial content is often reduced to very clear messages, the diffuse shadows allow for different interpretations and conceptions are based on our own experiences.

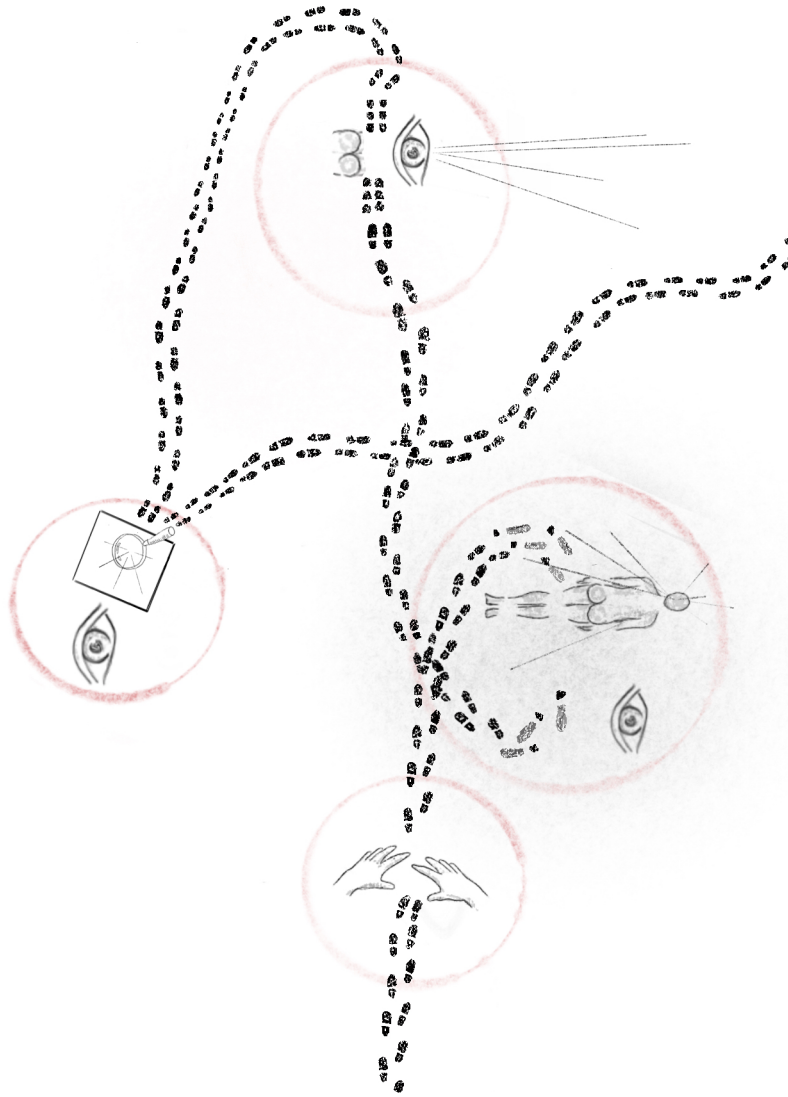
By reconquering facades to screen life in the urban space, we can become part of a neighbourhood that is more than a grouping of houses.

2.11 PERCEPTION OF SPACE IN TIME

Olivia Beeler, Annick Bächle

The perception of urban spaces in Seebach was explored in their emotional sensation through intuitive walks. Approaching the place by hiding the context as a translation and abstraction into a macro-photography of the structures opened a new field of interpretation. The spatial structure given in space and time becomes a challenge of perception of the scale of an undefined time. The picture detail concentrates on the traces of a past time, created and changeable by time and makes them timelessly visible.

The play of spatial perception through simultaneity and non-simultaneity of the happenings of space and time, active and passive participation in spatial action, and the speed and calming of movement in space are accompanying effects translated into a spatial exhibition walk along the passageway in the ONA. As if walking along with the urban space, pedestrians encounter explorations along the corridor. The play of scale as a tool leads in different stations of the exhibition from the timeless, one-dimensional picture of macro-photography to the tangible, three-dimensional urban space. The body as a medium is accompanied and stimulated through sensations, seeing and feeling the space, and at the same time is integrated into the spatial experience of the exhibition with different movements from lying, sitting and standing and thereby takes different positions within the spatial structure.





2.12 ONA AFTERHOURS

Selin Civi, Carolina Palos Mas,
Sofia Uribe Gomez

ONA Afterhours explores the invisibility of the cleaning staff in the old industrial building of ONA, which houses parts of the architecture department and various corporate offices. Through a series of spatial interventions and the establishment of new daily routines, our project not only renders the hidden or overlooked cleaning work as well as its workers visible but also creates an awareness of the symbiotic connections between the various users of the building. The goal is also to make the practices a habit that will exceed the duration and scope of a semester project.

CREDITS

Studio Seebach - Sensing Space took place in and around the ONA building in Zurich-Seebach in the fall of 2021.

NEWROPE Chair of Architecture and Urban Transformation.

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