

Denkraum #6

Multiplicity – Building Material

Multiplicity refers to a plurality of facets, implications and ramifications any question, even seemingly simple, can have. This layered reality, if fully embraced, verges on hyper-complexity, but can also be considered a productive entanglement, a richness. In architecture it can translate into the multiplicity of uses cohabiting in a common frame, or the multiplicity of spheres – client's ambitions, architect's agenda, community's interests, historical relevance, constructive intentions – intersecting in a project. A fruitful reality.

Meilen, situated on the banks of Lake Zurich, hosts a reformed church. Besides being a religious institution, its sheer size makes it capable of hosting large crowds and of serving multiple purposes as a place of political or cultural gatherings. After being extended several times over the centuries, it needs another addition today, to facilitate its many uses and expand the role the church can play for the local community. A small detached building, that will serve as a gathering space, a place of hospitality, for guests known and unknown. What could a church extension represent, in a picturesque lakeside settlement that might not seem to need much more than it already has? How could a small contemporary building influence the canonic use of churches, and modify the meaning of the existing building? And how could it give back to that part of the village some of the centrality it had until the 19th century, when the church's square extended all the way to the water and hosted municipal services? To better understand Meilen and frame the design process, we will be helped by Prof. Dr. Christian Schmid's Chair of Sociology, who will guide our initial observations of this context, and we will organize meetings with the Reformierte Kirche Meilen throughout the semester.

Building material will be our task. In an effort to embrace the multiple facets of the project, we will take the opportunity of working on a small-scale building to dive deep all the way into its materiality. We will tap into the specific tradition of stone architecture found in Zurich and Switzerland, thoroughly engaging with this material, which will guide the design of a low-energy project from spatial concept to detail. The building will be developed in close collaboration with the Dozentur Mettler/Studer für Bautechnologie und Konstruktion (BUK), and with stone mason Urs Schmitt (Schmitt Natursteinwerk AG) with who a series of visits and workshops will be held. This semester, looking carefully at the layers of materiality, construction, detailing, context, actors and uses, together, we will be building material.

Denkraum

Making architecture demands a constant reading and writing of reality, unveiling relationships that stem from past decisions, present dynamics and future needs. We architects are thus in constant need of specific ways of approaching the spatial questions we are confronted with. The Denkraum is thought as a place for collective reflection, organised each semester around a topic and a specific way of looking at architecture: an attitude. By taking a step aside to look at politics, literature, painting or other practices, we try to understand their potential architectural relevance, and strive to look, in turn, at our own practice from an alternative angle.

The Denkraum is a place to investigate, to structure our findings, to exchange and discuss ideas with guests coming from different backgrounds, regions or disciplines, and to position ourselves. A place where the reading and writing of reality happens at the same time. A place where the students' work and references can follow individual trajectories while remaining on constant display, concentrating questions, tensions and proposed solutions. A place where the multiplicity of individual efforts is united and develops a common reflection, discourse and production.

Introduction 18 February 2020, 9:45am, Reformierte Kirche, Meilen

Study trip focusing on stone (mandatory) – 19 February / studio cost max. CHF150

Professor An Fonteyne – Assistants Pablo Donet, Serafina Eipert, Galaad Van Daele

in collaboration with Dozentur Mettler-Studer für Bautechnologie und Konstruktion (BUK) /

Schmitt Natursteinwerk AG / Prof. Dr. Christian Schmid's Chair of Sociology / ETH Material Library