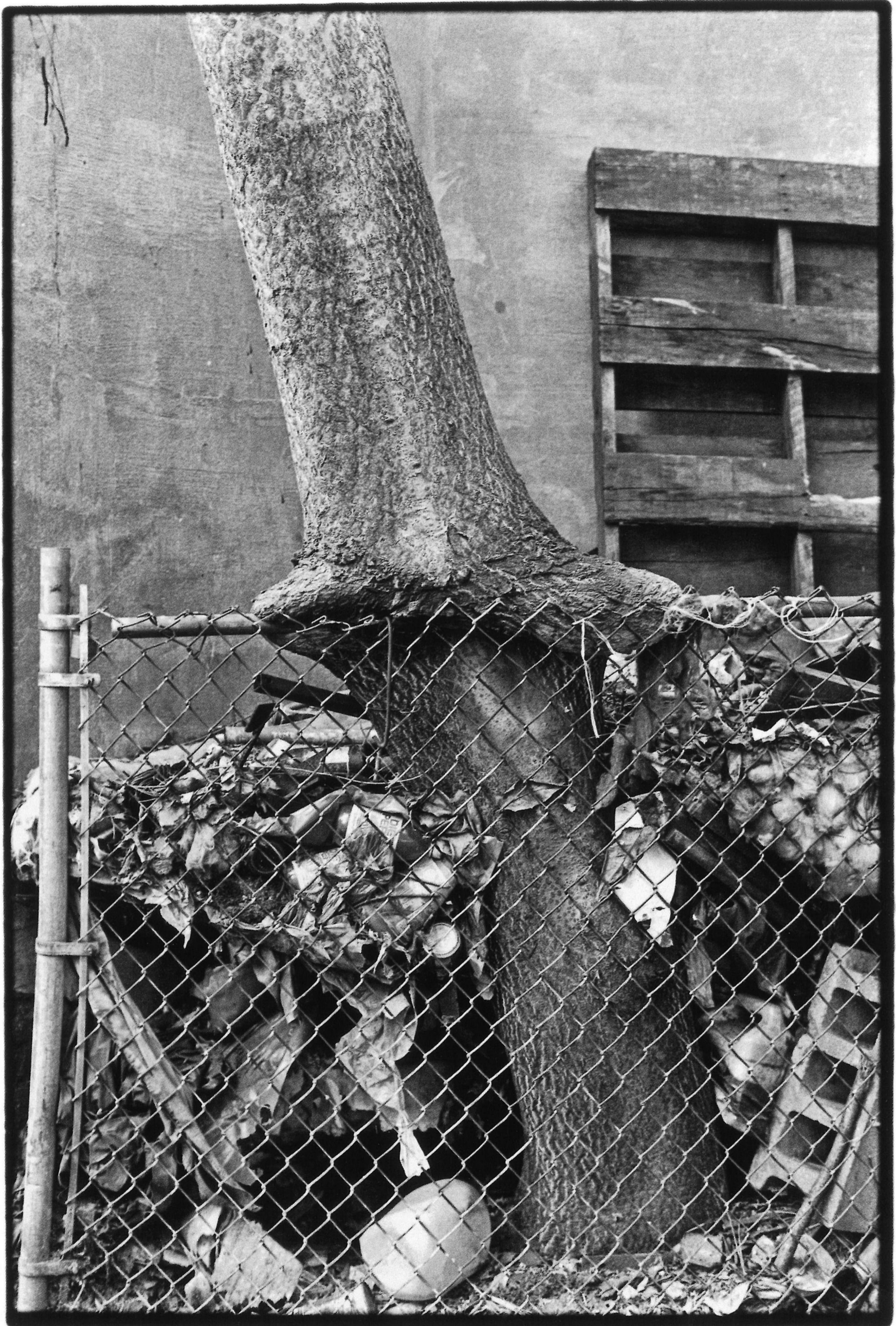


# Studio Maria Conen

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Guest Lecturer



Tree + Fence, Out My Back Window, 1998,  
Zoe Leonard

# Story

Every era has its own particular economic, political, social, cultural and technical conditions in which new ideas constantly emerge: how we live together, how we live out in the world and what progress means. Neighbourhoods, villages, cities and even the landscape are shaped by these buildings.

“History is, according to Aristotle, a narrative about what people have done and how they have suffered. Isaiah Berlin once made a radical generalisation of this: history is what historians do. Historical events never exist and are never perceived directly by anyone, i.e. there are no singular historical facts to be considered in isolation. Everything that has happened is only indirectly accessible (through secondary sources) and can only from a certain perspective (a problematization) be constructed as ‘fact’. The work of the historian consists – to put it in a nutshell – of ordering and defining the chaos of past lives, which people have suffered and endured in very different ways. The result of this work is a story, a narrative.”

from: Transithandel: Geld- und Warenströme im globalen Kapitalismus,  
Lea Haller, 2019

This semester, we will first act as “historians” by tracing the history of various buildings and trying to construct their narratives, their stories. The buildings are all in and around Zurich, stemming from different times and with different programs.

Why does this house look the way it does? What lies in the history of this house? What economic, social, political and cultural conditions prevailed at the time of its construction and how did these influence the language and ultimately the story of the building?

What role does the builder play in this story? What is the influence and role of the architect? How do stories or their meaning change over time? And how does this, in turn, transform the image of the city, or the neighbourhood, the landscape or the built environment as a whole?

By concentrating on a few built examples, we will try to understand certain stories, but also observe what is repeated. Namely, how the houses are built: with the basic elements of architecture such as walls, floors, ceilings and columns. Part of the investigation seeks to understand how and why their expression changes over time, and what we can learn from this. These investigations help us to take a critical stance towards the now and to question and rethink what has been built. We intend to use the medium of short films to convey these stories.

In the second part of the semester we will design our own houses or buildings and tell new stories in an existing neighbourhood on the outskirts of Zurich. We will work with the existing structures and, where necessary, add new buildings or elements. The stories of the houses we investigated should help us to develop our own language and tell our own stories which look optimistically into the future and offer new proposals for living together. We will test the potential of the different architectural elements for creating spaces for living that possess a rich spatial quality.

We will work with drawings, models and model photographs to illustrate the architectural ideas of the projects. We will also use drawings as a synthesis to summarize the different ideas of the projects. The work will be in groups of two. The seminar week is integrated into the design studio.