

# Academic year 2015-2016

campus Ghent – campus Bxl – campus Gent & Bxl

## architectuur AOB studio Anatomy

### deel A – assignment

semester	2
startweek	W1
aantal weken	14
reviewweek / indienmoment	W14
studiepunten	15
docent	Mira Sanders, Jo Van Den Berghe en Laurens Luyten

**title**

The Anatomy of *A Room with a View*?<sup>1</sup>

### Objectives

General objectives

Studio Anatomy (Academic Design Office) is a new environment where research in/on architecture, architectural education and architectural practice coexist. Studio Anatomy traces socio-historical layers, starting from the topography (geology, the vertical section) and stretching as far as the full scale architectural (constructive) detail (the section, again), incorporating construction in the design-research process from the very beginning. Doing so, Studio Anatomy spans the full stretch from poetics to technics in architecture. Studio Anatomy critically questions the too speedy nature at the surface of things we see (in architecture)—the superficiality of the world—by cutting into and under the skin of things (architecture).

Specific objectives (ECTS)

1. The student can generate a relevant design starting from different spatial scales and the dimension of time.
2. The student can generate a relevant design starting from a conceptual-programmatic logic.
3. The student can generate a relevant design starting from the concern for qualitative comfort and sustainability.
4. The student has an advanced knowledge and understanding of fundamental differentiations of structure.

### content: research question, theme and programme

**Key Words** anatomy, (human) body

window, detail, section, perspective, architectural drawing.

longing to see and re-establish a memory. **Research Theme**

*Windows on Perceptions and Sight* in architecture.

<sup>1</sup>

A novel by English writer E.M. Forster (Forster 1908). Film by James Ivory (Ivory 1985) based on the Forster's novel.

Investigate—by designing—the anatomy of *perception and sight* in architecture. These investigations have to be done through discipline specific methods and procedures, which mainly include making architectural drawings and scale models that range from the scale of the whole (1/100, 1/50, 1/20) over the scale of the fragment (1/50, 1/10) to the scale of the architectural detail (1/10, and reaching as far as the full scale architectural detail 1/1). These investigations also include all the other media at hand which can add to the insights, clarification and communicability of the anatomy of *perception and sight* in architecture. The investigation of the whole, the fragment and the detail will focus on the structural and technical aspects of the envisaged interventions. Situate these investigations in the context of *perception and sight* in architectural history, the arts, and science. Identify the references of this research in architectural history, the arts, and science, and incorporate these references in the course and the final output of this research through images and/or text. Each reference should be handled with academic rigor.

This research takes *Château de Selles* in Cambrai (France) as its starting point and field of operations. For a number of years this castle is struggling with the disappearance of its historical heritage of that have been made by its (political) prisoners during the history of the castle as a detention center. This heritage is gradually disappearing due to deplorable air and light conditions if the curators allow the public to visit the castle in its current state. They have to deal with a paradoxical situation: on the one hand they can no longer open their built archive and cultural heritage to the public, on the other hand they have to resist the loss of a (cultural) memory and the possibilities to share this cultural memory with society. The investigations and the design of the anatomy of *perception and sight* is a twofold: 1/ it is a reflective observation of the notion of 'a window', and its potential as a viewpoint (literally, figuratively, historically, imaginatively); 2/ it is a qualitative technical study that goes beyond the secular field of quantitative heat calculations and normative thinking when it comes to window making and architecture in general.

The research starts with a rigorous reading of the site of the castle and its surroundings. The student will do this topographic observation and analysis of the layered nature of the site and the landscape, in collaboration with the archeologic lab of the museum of Cambrai, by tracing vertical sections through the topography (the whole). Coming forth from this analysis, the student will identify (a) point(s) of (p)reference (the fragment). Subsequently, and situated within this/these point(s) of (p)reference, the student will create *perception and sight* (a window, windows) as spatial transitions, going as far as the full scale architectural detail.

TACTICS1. As a first tactic, the (vertical) section occupies a central position in this research, and the section has to anatomise space and substance. Space and substance will have to coexist in the architectural drawing (which includes the scale model) in the first place. The vertical section will be the subject of further in-depth investigations through its combination with the (central) perspective, in which the student explicitly will have to situate the eye level (the level of the horizon) as the cardinal point of observation, and through which a direct connection with the physical appearance and the dimensions of the human body is established. The cutting edge of the (vertical) section investigates and demonstrates the anatomy of the material construction of the architecture under investigation. The incorporated (central) perspective investigates and demonstrates the anatomy of space.

The (central) perspective also brings hight as the alledgedly accepted third dimension to the fore. But in Studio Anatomy, the plan is the derivative of the vertical section, and not the other way round. This results in the following mindset:

Normative thinking: Length (1st dimension) x Width (2nd dimension) x Height (3rd dimension)  
 Innovative thinking, shifting into  
 Anatomical thinking: Height (1st dimension) x Width (2nd dimension) x Length (3rd dimension)  
 Then: ~~Height~~ (1st dimension) x Width (2nd dimension) x Length (3rd dimension)  
 Subsequently **Depth** (1st dimension) x Width (2nd dimension) x Length (3rd dimension)  
 Conclusion: in Studio Anatomy, Depth is the first dimension in architecture.

2. As a second tactic the student practices the methods of live model drawing. This is meant as an attempt to understand the direct relationship between the construction, the dimensions and the scale of the human body, and the potential of accurate observation of construction and proportion. The (nude) human body will have to be drawn both in motion and at rest. This methodical approach is based on the conviction that a more humane architecture also needs a better understanding of the human body. This live model drawing has to be exercised in two ways:

a/ a series of methodical drawing sessions will be organised in collaboration with the Fine Arts Department of LUCA School of Arts.

b/ every student has to observe the human figure, its anatomy and its movements in everyday life. In trains and bars. At night. In light and shadow (depth, again). Every student has to exercise this through his/her sketchbook that always travels with him/her.

In this live model drawing, as in the investigations on architecture (see above), the student will pay attention to the exercise of the whole, the fragment and the detail. For instance: the human body, the head and the face, the expression and the look in the eye(s).<sup>3</sup> As a third tactic, the video and photo camera, with their camera techniques and editing procedures will be exercised and applied. This is another gate of entry into *perception and sight* in architecture (see above). It is also a meaningful exercise in choosing specific places in a spatial context, finding (a) point(s) of (p)reference from where to observe the world. By using the storyboard, among other techniques, the student has to explore and generate a consistent walk, a physical movement through the site. Transitions between spaces are key elements in the construction of this storyboard/walk, in the creation of spaces and in the invention of windows, vistas, window details etc... Out of the topographic whole, and through close observation of anatomical actions (making sections) the student will select fragments (points of (p)reference). Subsequently, the student will deeply elaborate on the (full scale) architectural detail. The physicality of the architecture, its selected fragments and the architectural detail will occupy the centre of the student's focus.

The student actively and consequently applies the method of annotated drawing in order to make his/her consistent process of reasoning explicit and communicable. **Questions of Content**

The element of TIME plays a key role in the investigation of ways to create and materialise themes like anatomy, windows, transitions with the intention to intensify the human EXPERIENCE (the human being as participant. Empowerment) as an antidote against architecture as an OBJECT (iconic architecture, the human being as audience. Disempowerment) in the actual architectural practice and discourse (RESISTANCE in architecture).

How does the student translate his/her consciousness of objective time (mechanical metrum) versus subjective time (organic fluidum) in creation processes in architecture, more specifically in the conscious creation of transition (passage, window) as a tactic to give space to time, and time to space?

How can SUBSTANCE (to make) be the generator of EXPERIENCE (to dream), starting from the inspiring substance situated on the (historical) timelines, spaces and paradoxes (see above) of the site of Château des Selles in Cambrai? In his/her research of perception and sight—the window—the student investigates the meaning of conservation and restoration of a historical site.

Which (kind of) perspective—the anatomy of a viewpoint—do we want to develop for the (materialised) reflection on a heritage? How do we deal with memory and its architectural translation or re-establishment? What are the actual restrictions in architecture (e.g. insulation calculations), and how can we surpass them?

**Programme** The anatomy of a room with a view for the inscriptions of Château de Selles.

1. Identify/design a spatial sequence in Château de Selles for the creation of a series of vistas and windows. The point(s) of (p)reference of the spaces, the spatial sequences, the vistas and the windows have to be well considered, not only literally (materially, technically), but also in terms of content: what is your position in the actual debate on heritage, and in the restrictive debate on insulation calculations ('EPB') that seems to narrow down, even annihilate other cultural concerns of architecture ?
2. Situate these investigations on three scales : the whole (overarching scale and vision, in relation with the landscape, topography, geology), the fragment (the strategic 'middle' scale) and the detail (the structural and constructive architectural detail). Constantly move back and forth from scale to scale as a means to create consistency between all the scales at work in the creation of architecture.
3. Contextualise this process and your creation in order to identify and define your own position in the field of architecture, in its historical perspective and in contemporary architectural practice and architectural discourse (your personal 'atlas').

The architectural drawing (the vertical section) and the scale model (the section model) are the key instruments for this research and creation process, for the output and the final presentation. These instruments will have to be consequently applied in the investigations of the context, the whole, the fragment and the detail. A final reflection booklet (collected reflection) collects the process until its final materialisation.

## timing en operation

PHASE I : W1 - W3 ANALYSIS & PRODUCTION (working in group):

Analysis of the site of Château de Selles in collaboration with the archeologist lab and through the reflections on two reference documents:

Firstly, the reflection of Bruno Latour on the digital/humanity (*Ce que le numérique fait aux humanités* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3lsSjp8dbl>) die hij gegeven heeft in BNF Parijs, as a consistent reflection on museums and cultural heritage.

Secondly, make a thorough analysis of the spaces and observation techniques in Andrej Tarkovsky's film *Nostalgia* ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6\\_kBq3\\_g10](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6_kBq3_g10))

Site investigations: topography and data collecting: measurements, photography, drawings, ... This phase focuses explicitly on the scale of the whole. The site has to be made as a plan and a scale model on scale 1/100. In a parallel line of research, every student makes a personal 'atlas', of which the format may be a book, a set of maps and/or a film. In parallel the students have a number of nude model drawing sessions, and every student has to observe the human figure, its anatomy and its movements in everyday life in the context of cityscapes. Every student has to exercise this through his/her sketchbook that always travels with him/her.

For Phase 1 the 'atlas' has to contain: 1/ the formulation of critical reflections around the given themes, contextualised in a landscape of references. 2/ the registration of research and creation processes, and the critical reflections on them.

PHASE II : W4 - W7 ARCHITECTURE & MONTAGE (working in group):

The student traces a trajectory (sequence) on the site by making use of the plan and the scale model on scale 1/100, and through 'the eye of' the camera, contextualised in the theme. This sequence has to be translated in a 'film' of about 2 or 3 minutes.

For Phase 2 the 'atlas' has to contain: 1/the annotation and imagination of the chosen sequence (trajectory) through the site, making use of the technique of the storyboard (photo, film, drawing, ...) and the architectural drawing (vertical section).

PHASE III: W9 - W11 PROJECT & THE DETAIL (individual work):

Rigorous design process of *perception and sight* as a coherent sequence of spaces, by (mainly) making use of the vertical section, the vertical sectional scale model and other media depending on the nature of the ongoing production. This design process is the continuation of the choice of the point of (p)reference in the context (the whole), 'out of which' a series of spaces, vistas, windows has to be designed organically (the fragment), in order to finally reach the full scale architectural (window)detail.

For phase 3 the 'atlas' has to contain: the spaces and the architectural detail, 'patented' in words and images.

PHASE IV: W12 -W13 THE JOURNEY & THE PRACTICE (individual work):

After an intense design process, the student completes his/her personal 'atlas' of the past processes. The student synthesises his/her stance in a reflection book (book, film, ...) as architectural designer. The project now has to be finalised and embedded in contemporary architectural practice and discourse.

PHASE V: Jury and exhibition.

### WORKING

The students work in groups (max. 2/3) and individually. The regular studio sessions alternate with specific exercises and independent work sessions. There will be a registration of the state of the process 'before' and 'after' each session. External tutors and critics will be invited. Different presentation formats will be tested: in the studio and on location.

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## evaluation format

see ects file and competention matrix;

specifically: the output will be presented on a weekly basis by the student, and in intermediary exhibits in the presence of the whole group (reviews, vertical studio) and evaluated. For the reviews, see the planning calendar. The reviews will be peer review, up-liner review by guest critics and academic review by the professors. There will be a final presentation with a public exhibition in week 14 for a jury of internal and external critics.

## evaluation criteria and output format

see ects and competention matrix;

specifically:

**Format output:** each student produces two components and presents these in an effective and dignifying way as an installation in a public exhibit. These two components are:

1. the architectural drawing: the vertical section(s). Each student makes sets of vertical sections of the design proposals.
2. the architectural scale model: the vertical section(s). Each student makes (these drawn) sections as scale models, including the real depth (on scale), and makes photographs and/or films of these cut-open spaces as central perspectives, with a specification of the eye level and focal distance of the section.

Next to this, the students also hand in all the documents that were required during the different stages of this project.