

Core Program Master-Thesis HS 2021: Topic description

Cooperation Partner 1:

Chair for Architecture and Construction Prof. Adam Caruso

Cooperation Partner 2:

Chair for Construction Heritage and Preservation Prof. Dr. Silke Langenberg

Picture (optional):



Title and short description (ca. 300 words):

Light touch, Marriott

Programmatic, performative and urbanistic inadequacies are the most common excuses for demolishing buildings. Interiors are too dark, too noisy, too cold, too hot. Façades are insufficiently insulated. Apartment plans are too old fashioned, they will never rent or sell. The quarter is simply not dense enough. All of these arguments usually conceal another deficiency, the building is not valuable enough. In fact, it is just not valued enough. Zurich's indefensible policy of Ersatz Neubau has unleashed a fury of demolition which is socially and environmentally unacceptable. With this diploma project we wish to explore alternatives to this waste, through strategies of lightweight responsiveness.

Our site for the semester will be the Marriott hotel, magnificent, if a little foreboding, on its site on Neumühlequai. We will imagine an ongoing programme of modifications that will better integrate this landmark into the social life of the city. We will act quickly before the model of international chain hotel becomes obsolete. The aim is to transform the under-exposed ballrooms, conference spaces and restaurants into a new kind of department store, still a location for consumption but now also a place that can accommodate the city's developing culture of sustainable manufacturing. Over time we will allow this commercial innovation to rise up the building, to effect how the hotel's rooms are used, and by whom. Eventually, the rooms at the Marriot will welcome more permanent residents and more varied households. All of these transformations will be undertaken with the minimum of means, taking seriously the complex relationships between a building's embodied energy, its energy consumption and its social value.

Description of preparation and elaboration phase in key-words:

The Marriot is an important figure within the city, but is not yet a listed monument. We will use the preparation phase of the project to measure, record and assess its construction, details, material and use. After a short introduction/input-lecture on building research, the work is done in small groups as a field study, with help of literature and archive research and material. The students will undertake a building survey by measuring and drawing parts of the building in different scales, with relevant details and descriptions. The results are presented, discussed and refined within a minimum of two desk-crits. At the end of the preparation phase, we expect a deep analysis, understanding and appreciation of the object as well as of its different values. After another input-lecture on different approaches of monument preservation, we will discuss their potential for the future of the Marriott. The second stage of the project will explore the programmatic, material and spatial transformation of the Marriott, building on the discoveries of the previous analysis. The means used will be fast, light and mutable, and we expect to discover a radical new architecture that is sustainable and emancipatory.

Ratio of grading by cooperation partners for preparation and elaboration phase:

Preparation phase:

Percentage designer(s): 40%

Percentage non-designer: 60%

Elaboration phase:

Percentage designer(s): 60%

Percentage non-designer: 40%