

Urban Architecture

MSc3_Black Hill City



Photography: Stephan Vanfleteren

Tutors

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Code	AR3UA120
Credits	55 ECTS
Location	tbd
Excursion	Yes
Costs	tbd

At the chair of Urban Architecture, we study medium-size urban sites that are inaccessible for the regular tools of urbanism, and where expectations of urban design can only be fulfilled by an architectural project. Adding a building thus means (re)designing an environment, both socially and physically.

This studio situates itself in the post-carbon city: cities where coal mines and carbon-fueled heavy industry have left the stage for decades, after having made their lasting imprint on the cityscape. Dark, conical slag heaps, towering above houses, steel frames and industrial silhouettes, mark a period of exhaustion piling up its waste, while offering vistas of heroic melancholy, challenging nature and cities alike to come to terms with them. These cities, dazed by the past, in quest of a sustainable future, determined to prove their social, cultural, economical and ecological resilience, are the topic of our studio.

This is a site-specific studio, setting off to explore a site in Liège or Charleroi. You are challenged to 'read' the physical, socio-cultural, historical and political forces that are at work and, with this knowledge,

to act upon the existing conditions of a particular site. The site will be urban, off-the-map, on the fringe, home to workers communities of the past and the present, eye-in-eye with the unsettling post-carbon landscape. It has not acquired a decisive urban form capable of sustaining further development – but it is not blank either, and too strongly invested by the hopes and interests of various actors to be wiped out.

The aim is to discover resources in a panorama of waste, to reintegrate an out-of-work place into a sustainable productive city, and to tie anew relationships with the urban and natural surroundings. What to keep and where to build? The studio will explore these questions with an open mind, a critical attitude and a keen eye for treasures and opportunities. You will work with bricks and iron, as well as with histories, people and crops. We invite inquisitive, creative and sensitive students, resourceful in their research approaches as well as in their design ventures, keen to offer programmes of hope and structures of beauty reconciling the city with its black hills.