

# Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



## Graduation Plan: All tracks

Submit your Graduation Plan to the Board of Examiners ([Examencommissie-BK@tudelft.nl](mailto:Examencommissie-BK@tudelft.nl)), Mentors and Delegate of the Board of Examiners one week before P2 at the latest.

The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

Personal information	
Name	Iveta Nikolaeva Nikolova
Student number	

Studio		
Name / Theme	A Matter of Scale	
Main mentor	Willemijn Wilms Floet	Architecture
Second mentor	Niels Tilanus	Building Technology
Third mentor	Eric Ferreira Crevels	Research
Argumentation of choice of the studio	I selected this graduation studio due to the creative freedom it offers to students, its encouragement for exploration and use of diverse research methods. Aligned with my ambition to practice architecture in a broader European context, the studio theme resonates with my interests and lies at the intersection of my academic pursuits and professional aspirations.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Kesklinn Community Centre: Reimagining Soviet-Era Heritage through the Lenses of Memory and Perception
Goal	
Location:	Tartu mnt 17, 10117 Tallinn, Estonia
The posed problem,	The regime of the Soviet Union has undeniably left a mark on the life, culture, and architecture of its former member countries. Estonia, having been under Soviet occupation between 1940-1941 and 1944-1991, also bears the imprint of this era through various buildings, constructed during that time. The Soviet period has become ingrained in the collective memory of the nation and its architectural remnants still serve as reminders of an oppressive history for many individuals. This may be one of the reasons why buildings stemming from this historical context are frequently the subject of a controversial

public opinion and are often not under heritage protection.

It may be inevitable to associate Soviet heritage with the trauma and memories of oppression and it is crucial to acknowledge history. However, dismissing buildings based on their historical associations, poses the risk of neglecting unique architectural and spatial qualities and missing opportunities to broaden our architectural knowledge. Therefore, this project places memory at its core and explores the nuanced relationship between memories, perception and architecture reflecting the Soviet ideology.

The chosen site for the project is a former foreign currency shop, previously called "Turist" and aimed at the tourists who were expected to visit Tallinn during the 1980 Summer Olympic Games. It was designed by the architects Peep Jänes and Henno Sepmann and the interior designer is Aulo Padar, with this project being one of his most important works. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, the land has been privatized and throughout the years the building has temporarily housed a bank, following that a store and since 2004 a succession of night clubs has been operating there. However, neither of the previously integrated functions in the building seems to have realized the full potential of the area. After years of trials between the plot owner and the state, the government has failed to secure a heritage protection of the building. An architectural competition has been organized for the development of the area and the plan is to demolish the building of the former Turist shop, replacing it with a high-rise. The architecture of the Turist shop is a

	<p>unique example and demolishing it would be a great loss for the architectural heritage of Estonia. Furthermore, introducing a high-rise in the urban block will intensify the problem of constructing without consideration for the surrounding urban context.</p> <p>In opposition to the accepted demolition plan, this graduation project aims to propose a solution which preserves the Turist shop. The exploration of memories and perception in architecture serves as a foundation for reimagining the space and guides the new design proposal. The goal of the project is to transform the Turist shop from a place where once only selected people were allowed, to an inclusive environment, which contributes to the current needs of public spaces in Tallinn and enriches the life in the city.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<p><u>Main research question:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can the intricate relationship between lived experiences, memories and perception of architecture inform a design strategy for revitalizing Soviet-era modernist heritage in the context of the former Turist shop?</li> </ul> <p><u>Research sub-questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do buildings function as instruments for preserving and recalling memories?</li> <li>• What role does the individual perception of architecture play in the formation of memories?</li> <li>• How can architectural heritage from the oppressive period of the Soviet occupation be re-integrated in a contemporary context?</li> <li>• How can the history and memories of a place remain acknowledged and coexist with the transformation of the place?</li> </ul>

design assignment in which these result.

The proposed design assignment entails transforming the Turist shop and its surrounding area into a dynamic community center. The renovated building of the Turist shop will host a library with an exhibition space, which will showcase individual memories of the place from the past, thus acknowledging the historical background of the site. The library building will be connected to an extension, which serves as a hub for various public functions, fostering community engagement and bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and age groups.

Different strategies, derived from the research on memories and perception in architecture, form guiding principles for the design. The former Turist shop, now re-purposed as a library, becomes a space where memories are not only preserved but also re-examined. The extension stands out as a contemporary manifestation of the present. An enclosed atrium between the two parts of the project, bridges the past and the present.

Beyond the community center, the design proposal extends to the courtyard of the urban block, which is currently an indistinct space dominated by cars and fences. This area is to become a green heart of the urban block, which residents from the area and visitors of the community center can enjoy.

## **Process**

### **Method description**

#### Research methods

The methodology of the research behind this graduation project is rooted in a conceptual framework, introduced with the Research plan. Three concepts constitute this framework:

1. *The object*, which is the chosen project site of the former Turist shop.
2. *The lived memory*, which explores individual memories and recollections of the Turist shop during the Soviet era.

3. *The built memory*, which explores how buildings can convey narratives and encapsulate memories through their material expression and forms.

An analysis on urban, architectural, and interior scale of the Turist shop (*the object*) is performed. The context of the chosen site is researched through site mapping and demographical research. The architecture and interior design of the building are analyzed based on archival drawings and photos of the original design of the building. The materials, organization and structure of the building are thoroughly examined.

The second concept (*the lived memory*) is researched through interviews with people who have visited the Turist shop.

The third concept (*the built memory*) is researched based on theory of phenomenology and perception in architecture. An axonometric drawing shows the transformations the Turist shop has undergone throughout time. A comprehensive material analysis will be performed, which will guide the material choices of the newly proposed design. Through detailing on a scale of 1:10 and 1:20, architectural elements that may trigger the "remembering" of the place will be shown.

#### Design methods

Prior to the re-design of the site, a 3D digital model based on archival drawings of the original design of the building is constructed. The main structural grid and loadbearing walls are identified and preserved.

Precedents on different topics, which correspond to the desired design goals, are analyzed, such as heritage preservation projects, community centers, libraries and other public buildings. The analysis of the precedent studies, together with the demographical research of the area, has informed the program and design brief of the project.

Sketching, collaging, and physical modelling are also employed as design methods in this project. The design is guided by testing out different concepts derived from the research, through trial and error.

## Literature and general practical references

### Precedents

- Castelvecchio Museum renovation by Carlo Scarpa. 1959-1973. Verona, Italy.
- Good Time Community Center by B.L.U.E. Architecture Studio. 2017. Beijing, China.
- Kolumba Museum by Peter Zumthor. 2007. Cologne, Germany.
- Muuratsalo Experimental House by Alvar Aalto. 1953. Säynätsalo, Finland.
- Neues Museum by David Chipperfield Architects & Julian Harrap Architects. 2009. Berlin, Germany.
- Oodi Helsinki Central Library by ALA Architects. 2018. Helsinki, Finland.
- Tama Art University Library by Toyo Ito & Associates. 2007. Tokyo, Japan.
- V.C. Morris Gift Shop (Circle Gallery) by Frank Lloyd Wright. 1948-1950. San Francisco, USA.
- Viby Library & Culture House by Christensen & Co. Architects + Primus Arkitekter. 2021. Viby Sjælland, Denmark.
- Yunzhai Village Community Activity Center by THAD+SUP. 2020. Changheng, China.

### Literature

Jagodin, K., & Pihlak, S. (2020). *Interior Architect Aulo Padar*. Estonian Museum of Architecture.

Malpas, J. (2012). Building Memory. *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts*, 13(13), 11-21. <https://doi.org/10.24135/ijara.v0i0.433>

Pallasmaa, J. (2012). *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (3rd ed.). Wiley.

Treib, M. (2009). *Spatial recall: Memory in architecture and Landscape*. Routledge.

Väljas, M., & Karu, M. (2012). *Architect Peep Jänes*. Museum of Estonian Architecture.

Zumthor, P. (2006). *Atmospheres: Architectural environments. Surrounding objects*. Birkhäuser.

## Reflection

1. What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

The graduation topic of my project is related to the studio topic, as it directly addresses challenges present in the chosen site of the graduation studio – Tallinn, namely the preservation of Soviet era architectural heritage and the lack of non-commercial community-oriented public spaces. The theme of the studio being *A Matter of Scale*, places importance on the development of architecture with specific

care for human scale and within this context, my project recognizes the individual's memories and perception of architecture as crucial elements for the formulation of design strategies. The project is developed through active exploration and uses a variety of research and design methods, which are practices encouraged by the studio.

The connection of my graduation project to the Master track of Architecture and the MSc program is evident in its multidisciplinary nature. My project integrates insights from urban research, architectural design, theory and building technology to formulate comprehensive design strategies for transforming the selected site in Tallinn.

**2. What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional and scientific framework.**

My graduation project addresses an issue not only present in Tallinn but also in a wider range of European cities which were under the occupation of the Soviet Union - the transformation of underappreciated architectural heritage into functional architecture that meets the contemporary demands for public space and fosters community cohesion. Through the theme of memory, this project aims to emphasize the idea that memory, perception, and the individual's experience are fundamental aspects in our understanding and design of architecture. On a larger scale, this graduation project may have the potential to aspire how to address heritage from the Soviet period not only in Estonia, but also in other countries affected by the regimes of that era.