

# Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

AR3MET105 A Matter of Scale

22 January 2024

## Graduation Plan: All tracks

Studio		
Name / Theme	Methods of Analysis and Imagination / A Matter of Scale	
Main mentor	Jorge Mejia Hernandez	Architecture design
Second mentor	Freek Speksnijder	Building technology
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>To begin with, I consistently grapple with the challenge of generating coherent and systematic language to form my design ideas. In the electives in MSc 2, I have already learned and conducted some experimental trials exploring interdisciplinary methodologies in design. I hope to take the chance in Methods of Analysis and Imagination to practice logical thinking and try more disciplinary methods.</p> <p>Moreover, my academic background has always been within the West European education system. Thus, I have a huge curiosity and interest in the criticized urban planning and stretched-styled architectures in East European cities during the Soviet era. As the only one that set the location in an East European country, this studio provides a unique horizon.</p> <p>Finally, the theme of the studio, "A Matter of Scale", is not only a discussion on "human scale". Under the circumstances that Estonia has a special urban fabric implying ideological symbols, it is a challenging and significant topic to integrate various scales and enrich the human experience in the city.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Redefining monumentality in Tallinn: A supplementary multimedia studio for the old radio building
Goal	
Location:	Gonsiori 21, 10124 Tallinn, Estonia
The posed problem, research questions and design assignment in which these result.	
<p>The most explicit feature of Tallinn city is hybridity: the co-existence of buildings from different eras, roads with different scales, and layers of renovation on building appearances...On one hand, it weaves a wondrous and multi-experienced fabric, while on the other hand, results in a chaotic and confusing spatial composition in the vast and empty city. The complexity can be traced back to the turbulent political situation in its history: Red-brick town in the medieval era, Neoclassicism façades in the early 20th century, large-scale blocks in the Soviet period sometimes with Western elements implicitly hidden, and all kinds of contemporary buildings after the independence. In the discussion of monumentality in my research plan, I claimed that Tallinn is a city lacking identity. The national consciousness was built by emphasizing resistance against external forces rather than fostering internal development. Therefore, traditional monuments have lost their role of representing collective memory, diminishing their public significance. Thus, <b>what is the new perspective to read the monumentality</b> in Tallinn becomes my first research question.</p>	

According to Hal Foster, monumentality is represented **in response to trauma**. The city itself is a large live archive. The existence of ideological symbols and the responses made by later generations can be traced in the city. For instance, facing the Soviet-styled architecture with a large scale, dense layout, and bored façade, Estonian decreased the height, enlarged the distance, and incorporated the landscape design and naturism decorations. Therefore, the research question is supplemented: **how to represent and visualize the implicit traumatic features in the existing architecture?** My project aims to translate historical events and their social meanings into existing architecture with devices, public space, and architectural design. The project would become **a magnifier to make the traumas and iterations more readable**. Therefore, the selected site is what I consider the most monumental site in my studied region, the building that best represents the architectural responses to a significant turning point or trauma over an extended period -- Raadiomaja.

Raadiomaja comprises an old building, a new building, and a passageway connecting the two. The 1938-designed old building, following German architecture of the time, was interrupted during World War II and completed by Russian architect Grigori Shumovsky, with added Stalinist decorations. The new building, representing the second wave of postwar Modernism, contrasts a blind facade with the transparent glass facade of the tower, initially constructed in concrete due to aluminum restrictions. The tower's blinds, now replaced by aluminum strips, only maintain their concrete appearance in the passageway. To address safety concerns, a 2019-approved design proposes a new radio building between the two buildings, aiming to integrate them into one complex.

My envisioned project would be **a complementary extension of the radio building as a multimedia studio** located in between the two existing buildings, reflecting some of the traumatic features and dealing with the heritage renovation challenges. The studio functions for **recording, editing, screening, and performance**, serving **both radio building staff and the public** seeking equipment rental and attending public events.

## Process

### Method description

In the previous study, I have already grasped a fundamental understanding of the historical and political background of Tallinn city, the theories of monumentality, and translation of monumentality through field study, literature review, and case study.

In the initial design at this stage, I focused on the **basic architectural form**, which would translate the **varying materials** of the long history and transformations of old buildings. I planned to use the same construction materials as the existing buildings: limestone, concrete, aluminum, and glass. The main functional spaces follow the transitions **from solid to transparent**.

In the upcoming process to improve the project, I plan to initiate the study on the **structure**, exploring the way to better achieve the material transition. I hope to provide the entire space with a more unified and organized logic. Another structural emphasis will be on the **joint spaces** and details where the new and old buildings connect.

Additionally, I will conduct **targeted case studies** based on certain keywords, such as the long ramp, penetrating massing, and load-bearing walls.

Finally, apart from the basic form, I will continue to explore other parts of the building, trying to develop **more forms of monumentality translation**. The priority would be concentrated on the detailed design of the spaces. Subsequently, I will also look into the small-scale design of public spaces near the building and explore potential device design.

## Literature and general practical references

## Literature topics:

### 1. Weak monument / weakness: Tadeás, Ríha, Linsi, Laura, and Reemaa, Roland

Tadeás, Ríha, Linsi, Laura, and Reemaa, Roland, "Sensitive Interventions in Venice", interview by Tüüne-Kristin Vaikla, Estonian Art 1 2018, Estonian Institute, 2018: 7-11.

<https://estinst.ee/en/prints/estonian-art-2-2018/>

Tadeás, Ríha, Linsi, Laura, and Reemaa, Roland, "Weak Monument: Architectures Beyond the Plinth", International Architectural Exhibition (16th: 2018: Venice, Italy). Zurich: Park Books, 2018: 7-23.

Tadeáš Ríha, "Weakness in Architecture", Estonian Art 1 2018, Estonian Institute, 2018: 13-18.

### 2. Trauma: Foster, Hal, and Lacan, Jacques.

Foster, Hal. "New Monumentality: Architecture and Public Space." *Perspecta* 42 (2010): 136.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41679230>

Foster, Hal. *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996: 127-170.

Zizek, Slavoj. "The Parallax View": 25-26, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006.

<https://files.libcom.org/files/Zizek-The%20Parallax%20View.pdf>

### 3. Heritage: Riegl, Alois

Riegl, Alois, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Essence and Its Development", *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, Los Angeles: Getty Conversation Institute, 1996: 69-83.

[https://marywoodthesisresearch.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/riegl\\_the-modern-cult-of-monuments\\_sm.pdf](https://marywoodthesisresearch.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/riegl_the-modern-cult-of-monuments_sm.pdf)

#### Precedents so far:

1. Red Box Exhibition Center / Mix Architecture (spatial composition)
2. Linde Center for Music & Learning / William Rawn Associates (auditorium design)
3. Ciudad Nueva Recording Studio / Grupo Culata Jovai (recording room design)
4. Casa Perfect New York gallery (staircase design)

#### Precedents to be studied:

1. Hybrid structure: load-bearing wall and frame system
2. Spatial design of atrium spaces
3. Ramp and staircase design

## Reflection

The relationship between my project and the theme "a matter of scale" is manifested in human orientation. a) Physically, the large-scale roads, crossings, and plazas left over from the Soviet era are subdivided in contemporary times, creating unused spaces and interwoven traffic lanes. The pedestrians seem to be navigating through giant-like spaces, struggling to find their way. Through my design, I aim to delineate the traffic lines in the Raadiomaja area more clearly, connecting the community with the green spaces to the south, and providing residents with **a more pedestrian-friendly environment**. b) On a social scale, the presence of people also needs to be enhanced. Many public areas have excess areas left unused, while the streets in the community are narrow. Besides, the continuous building facades emphasized the sense of wall and barrier and limited the range of the communal spaces. With the multimedia studio project, I hope to create a place that caters to **various social needs** and serves as a **threshold** for transitioning from the community to the public area.

In the disciplinary field, Tallinn is in the midst of rapid and dynamic development, yet its attitude towards heritage is not always rational. Except for some buildings in the capital Tallinn, Estonia does not designate Soviet architecture for preservation. Many new projects directly demolish existing buildings and construct new architectures that do not align with the forms and functions of the surrounding context. Some renovated projects just put the addition of a glass box on the existing

structure, as can be seen in Fahle House, the commercial district in the harbor area, and the Rotermann area. Through **a gentle, nuanced, and harmonious renovation project** with the original architecture, I hope to improve Tallinn's trend of extensive demolition and construction, providing an alternative perspective to understand the city and its history.

For the social meaning, translating the implicit monumentality in the existing architecture can be applied adaptively to any area in Tallinn and even in the whole country. Walking through the rich and diverse urban fabric is reading **a chronological history of architecture**. The translation project serves as **a "tool" that makes the site more readable**, enriching the city experience, and amplifying its unique features.