Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

Graduation Plan: All tracks

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

Personal information	
Name	Ramazan Ertug Çiftçi
Student number	5837235

Studio		
Name / Theme	Interiors, Buildings, Cities	
Main mentor	Sam de Vocht	Tutor & Coordination MSc3/4 Chair of Interiors Buildings Cities
Second mentor	Amy Thomas	Associate Professor of Architectural History Building Ideologies Group // Interiors Buildings Cities Group
Argumentation of choice of the studio	What I find particularly interesting about this studio is its focus on how different scales of architecture interact and influence each other. It's not just about abstract ideas, it's about designing real buildings, which makes the process feel grounded and practical, which is very important to me. The tutors bring valuable expertise, and the studio has a collaborative atmosphere where students help each other out, making it a comfortable environment for learning and growth. I particularly appreciate how the studio focusses on working with physical models. This approach allows me to step back and consider other important elements, such as the human experience in architecture and how people interact with space. Working with physical models offers a tangible perspective that feels different from studying designs on a screen. It feels like a unique opportunity to focus on details that are often overlooked in today's fast-paced architectural world.	

Graduation project

Title of the graduation project	Archiving Architecture: Designing a Cultural Space for the VAi

Goal

Location:	Antwerp, Belgium
The posed problem,	The Flanders Architecture Institute (VAi) holds an important responsibility in Belgium. It is tasked with preserving, studying, and sharing architectural knowledge from the Flanders region. However, the institute faces an issue, it struggles to connect with the public. Many people aren't even aware of its existence, making it feel more like a hidden archive than a space for engagement and appreciation.

The VAi's archive and offices are currently separated, which adds another layer of complexity to the problem. The institute operates out of the DeSingel building, a modernist cultural centre designed by Léon Stynen and later expanded by other architects, whilst the archive itself is in the city centre. While DeSingel serves as an important cultural hub in Antwerp, also hosting various other institutions, the building and its site feel isolated from the rest of the city.

The VAi needs a new home that remains close to its current location near DeSingel. This challenge is both architectural and urban. How can an archive be designed for the VAi that makes it more visible and accessible to the public? Additionally, how can this project help integrate DeSingel into the city's fabric, while still respecting its architectural and cultural significance? The goal is to create connections that allow both the institute and DeSingel to feel like integral parts of Antwerp. |

research questions and	Main Question: What is the role of an archive in Flemish society today and in the future, and how can its design evolve to better engage the public while preserving its core purpose? Secondary questions: 1. How can the design of the archive balance its functional requirements as a repository with its role as a cultural institution, responding to evolving societal expectations for education, engagement, and accessibility? 2. What is the impact of the design on the existing urban landscape and its relationship with the DeSingel complex? 3. What programs and facilities are missing in the VAi and DeSingel, and how can their architectural integration enhance public interaction and complement the existing urban landscape?

design assignment in which these result.	This assignment is about developing a design proposal for a new archival building for the Flanders Architecture Institute (VAi). The project aims to transform the institute into an open, accessible, and engaging cultural institution that addresses both its current and future challenges, all while respecting its context near DeSingel in Antwerp.
	The VAi is responsible for preserving and showcasing Flanders architectural heritage, yet its current setup limits public interaction and visibility. This assignment seeks to reimagine the role of the archive in the 21st century by balancing its technical requirements with its potential to educate and connect with the public.
	Through this studio, the focus will be on how the new archival building can complement the cultural significance of DeSingel while integrating into the urban fabric of Antwerp. By critically analysing the site, existing conditions, and the needs of the VAi, the goal is to develop a design that emphasizes programmatic flexibility, architectural identity, and the creation of meaningful public spaces.

Process
Method description
Collective Studies and Analysis; Group Work
Collective research was conducted to explore various archival typologies and understand their spatial, functional, and architectural principles. The studio, organized into several groups, carried out detailed studies on different archives and museums. Throughout this process, physical models were created at scales ranging from 1:12,5 to 1:25 to better understand the spaces. This process highlighted the advantages and limitations of each archive/museum, giving insights into how architects dealt with the challenges of designing archival spaces.

Site Visit
A visit to the VAi archive and the DeSingel complex provided an opportunity to experience the spaces and their context. This excursion offered a deeper understanding of the site's spatial and atmospheric qualities, as well as its relationship with the surrounding urban environment. Conversations with VAi staff gave important perspectives on their experiences working within the current archive, influencing the design approach.

Design Exploration; individual
An exploration of the architectural and technical requirements for archival spaces was conducted to understand their operational logic, spatial organization, and best practices. The research focused on key functional aspects such as environmental controls, spatial hierarchies, and user flows, aiming to uncover the rationale behind these standards while identifying opportunities for innovation.

Building on the gained insights, conceptual spaces were designed to test the integration of archival components with design principles. This process included designing and constructing a 1:20 scale physical model to explore spatial possibilities, challenge traditional archival requirements, and propose innovative solutions that prioritize both functionality and user experience.

DeSingel Research; Group work
Group research into DeSingel and its surrounding area was carried out to explore its architectural, cultural, and urban relevance. This involved archival research, the production of detailed site-specific architectural drawings, and historical analysis, all aimed at gaining an understanding of the context and identifying opportunities for intervention.

Design proposal; Individual work
A personal conceptual proposal is developed to guide the project during the design phase. Based on both collective and individual research, this proposal offers a clear rationale for design, technical, cultural, and contextual factors. As the project progresses, the proposal evolves into a design, adapting to new insights and addressing design challenges.

Literature and general practical references

Research Seminar Readings

- Summerson, J. (1978). Soane and the furniture of death. *Architectural Review*. https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/john-soane-and-the-furniture-of-death
- Summerson, J. (1945). *A description of the buildings of Sir John Soane's Museum*. Soane Museum.
- Boucher, B. (2024). *John Soane's cabinet of curiosities: Reflections on an architect and his collections*. Yale University Press.
- Willkens, D. (2019). Clouds and cataracts: Optical experiments at Sir John Soane's Museum. *Technology - Architecture + Design*, 211-220. https://doi.org/10.1080/24751448.2019.1640539
- Willkens, D. (2022). Design by "considerable degree": Jefferson's architecture as applied science. *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 110*, 167-194.
- Willkens, D. (2016). Reading words and images in the description(s) of Sir John Soane's Museum. *Architectural Histories*. https://doi.org/10.5334/ah.204
- Manoff, M. (2004). *Theories of the archive from across the disciplines*. MIT DSpace. https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/35687
- Mbembe, A. (2002). The power of the archive and its limits. In C. Hamilton, V. Harris, J. Taylor, M. Pickover, G. Reid, & R. Saleh (Eds.), *Refiguring the archive* (pp. 19-27). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-0570-8_2
- Nieuwe Instituut. (n.d.). Gathering #5: Post/De/Colonial. https://nieuweinstituut.nl/en/articles/gathering-5-postdecolonial
- Ursprung, P. (Ed.). (2005). *Natural history*. Lars Muller.
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Literature

- Beltamini, G., & Zardini, M. (Eds.). (2024). *The future of architecture museums.* Centro Internazionale di Architettura Andrea Palladio.
- Derrida, J., & Prenowitz, E. (1996). *Archive fever: A Freudian impression.* University of Chicago Press.
- Frampton, K. (2006). *Georges Baines*.
- Het Nieuwe Instituut. (2023). *The architecture archives of the future: Conference proceedings, Jaap Bakema Study Centre Het Nieuwe Instituut 2023.* Het Nieuwe Instituut. https://nieuweinstituut.nl/en/articles/proceedings-architecture-archives-future
- *Léon Stynen: A life of architecture, 1899-1990.* (2018). Flanders Architecture Institute.
- Richards, L. (Ed.). (1989). *Canadian Centre for Architecture: Building and gardens.* MIT Press.
- Woollen, M. (2019). *Erik Gunnar Asplund: Landscapes and buildings.*

Practical Sources
- *Collectiegebouw Vlaams Architectuurinstituut. (2019).*
- *DeSingel International Arts Campus: A conservation study. (2015). Huyghe, M. KU Leuven.*
- *ICAM. (1999). Guidelines for Archival Description (ISAD[G]). Second edition.*
- *VAi. (2022). Collectiebeleidsplan.*
- *Urban development in Antwerp: Designing Antwerp. (2012).*

Reference buildings
- Markus Schietsch Architekten. – BIZ, Berlin, Germany
- Markus Schietsch Architekten. University Campus, Brig, Switzerland
- Office KGDVS. Media House (VRT), Berlin, Germany
- OMA. BLOX / DAC, Copenhagen, Denmark
- David Chipperfield Architects. James Simon Galerie, Berlin, Germany
- Bedaux de Brouwer Architects. Museum Singer, Laren, The Netherlands
- Picture Plane. Lambeth Palace Library, Lambeth, UK
- Winhov Architects. Stadsarchief, Delft, The Netherlands

References from collective research
- ArkDes. Stockholm, Sweden.
- Beinecke Library. New Haven, USA.
- Bordeaux City Archive. Bordeaux, France.
- Canadian Centre for Architecture. Montreal, Canada.
- Drawings Matter Archive. London, UK.
- Herzog & De Meuron Kabinett. Basel, Switzerland.
- The Soane Museum. London, UK.
- Ungers House Extension. Cologne, Germany.

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 project plays an integral role in the studio's exploration of reimagining architectural typologies, with a focus on designing a new archival building for the Flanders Architecture Institute (VAi). The primary objective is to improve the archive's accessibility and engagement with the public, addressing the need for greater visibility and interaction with architectural heritage. This goal aligns with the architecture master track's emphasis on designing spaces that serve both functional and cultural purposes within urban contexts.

The master programme encourages using design as a problem-solving tool in the built environment. The studio's work spans various scales, from interior spaces to entire buildings and urban environments. The graduation project focuses on a relevant cultural challenge, with the opportunity to contribute personal insights to solve it. It requires a multi-scale design approach to address and resolve the identified issues, whilst integrating theory, context, and human experience into practical design solutions.

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

The relevance of the graduation work lies in its potential to rethink the role and function of archives, both architecturally and within the modern urban landscape. By transforming the archive from a traditionally closed-off space into one that focuses on public engagement, the project contributes to a wider conversation about how architecture can improve public access to cultural knowledge.

On a professional level, the project addresses the evolving needs of cultural institutions, and also providing a well thought through design proposal for the VAi.

From a scientific perspective, it contributes to the ongoing discourse on archive typologies, exploring innovative approaches to integrating both the functional and experiential aspects of these spaces in the 21st century, while addressing the technical challenges involved in designing such a building.