

# Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



Personal information	
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Studio		
Name / Theme	Palace   Interiors Buildings Cities	
Main mentor	Sam De Vocht	Architecture
Second mentor	Matthijs Klooster	Architectural Engineering
Third mentor	Amy Thomas	Architectural Research
Argumentation of choice of the studio	The complexity of the design assignment as a public building allowing to address more personal approach to the role of the architect within the society. Besides - the studio's methodology of developing the project from within the human perspective at every stage resulting in the integrated proposal addressing the sequence between interior, building and city; its representational methods focusing on the material work in models and immersive pictures that encompass the contemporary approach of the post-digital architectural design.	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	All Under One Roof: VAI Archive in deSingel as the cultural campus
Goal	
Location:	Antwerp, Belgium
The posed problem,	<p>Despite being one of Europe's most influential architectural institutions, Flanders Architecture Institute does not have a proper headquarters. Present in deSingel campus with its offices and a shared space for the temporary exhibitions, the institution's collection is located in numerous locations scattered around Antwerp, therefore lacking one edifice to unite the archival material and open it to the general public. Despite organising an open-call competition in the St Hubertus church, VAI has failed to conclude it by constructing the winning proposal due to financial insufficiency. At the same time, deSingel campus - designed in the 1950s and experiencing a constant transformation of the external context, as well as within its internal structure - seemingly lost its initial coherency and relation with the city as an extended landscape. These two issues can be understood as a common ground for the new VAI archive within deSingel as a facility uniting all arts.</p>

research questions and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What should be the role and character of the contemporary architectural archive?</li> <li>- What is the mission of the VAI and how could it be represented through the new archive facility?</li> <li>- What is deSingel lacking as a comprehensive arts and culture campus, what has it lost throughout the consecutive transformation and what could be done to restore its conceptual coherency and representation?</li> <li>- Which elements from the existing tissue of both Stynen and Beel wing should be preserved and which could be eventually demolished?</li> <li>- How can the brief (open call 2021) be translated and integrated architecturally in the plot or existing deSingel building?</li> </ul>
design assignment in which these result.	<p>Following the research on precedent examples of existing architectural archives, as well as on deSingel art and culture campus in Antwerp (chosen as a site for the graduation studio projects) - an architectural design proposal for the architectural archive facility of Flanders Architecture Institute (VAI) that would be relevant for today's Belgian society and could formulate deSingel's societal mission as a centre for Flemish and Antwerp culture.</p>

## **Process**

### **Method description**

#### **Precedents Research**

The Research Seminar started with collective research in small groups regarding the buildings and their interiors as precedent case studies to the main assignment of the archive. The group researches approached the design philosophies of the architects', their methods, the designs' aesthetic and material aspects, as well as its situation and atmosphere. As a product, the groups prepared a photographic reproduction of a representational image (by model photography) and research booklets including drawings, diagrams and images.

#### **Antwerp Excursion**

On site investigation deSingel campus and its direct context and a visit to VAI archives with a personal time slot dedicated to the archival research of a assigned Flemish architect. The findings were collected personally and captured in the project journals in text and image. Some of the material was later revised for a group research on deSingel campus.

#### **A Room for an Archive**

Through making a model (in a chosen scale -1:15, 1:20, 1:25, 1:33) for an archival room without any context, we tried to comprehend the spatial qualities, materialities, and atmospheres resulting from the architectural decision that build a space for an archive. The room was supposed to express the first fascinations and findings on what each of us wants their archive to be. The only constrain for this assignment was a drafted archival ensemble of an architect from the VAI's collection. However, this design constrain could be interpreted individually.

#### **DeSingel Research**

In order to understand the site better we divided the studio into groups and dedicated our time into researching different aspects of deSingel's context: historical, spatial, landscape, societal, structural, etc. As products we developed drawings, diagrams and models varying in scale: from urban 1:1250 to structural 1:100.

#### **Developing an Archive**

Throughout the year, various design approaches will be employed to explore and evaluate the architectural qualities envisioned for the building. This process will involve a "thinking-through-making" approach, utilizing physical models alongside complementary 2D drawings, diagrams, and 3D models. Research methods will be consistently applied to refine and advance the design. Additionally, Building Technology workshops will support the development of the technical aspects, culminating in a proposal for a sustainable building. Throughout the journey, a project journal, incorporating both visual and written reflections, will document the process of the design and research.

## Literature and general practical references

### Literature

- 51N4E, & l'AUC (Eds.). (2023). *How to not demolish a building*. Berlin: Ruby Press.
- Avermaete, T. (2018). *Léon Stynen: A life of architecture, 1899-1990*. (D. Laureys, Ed.). Antwerp: Flanders Architecture Institute.
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- Engels, J., Liefoghe, M., & Çiçek, A. (2022). *Staging the Museum = Museum Scènes*. Rotterdam: OASE Foundation.
- Gerrewey, C. V. (2024). *Something completely different: Architecture in Belgium*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Gilad, U., Pronkhorst, A., & Wingender, J. P. (2024). *Architecture repurposed: Office Winhov*. Rotterdam: nai010 publishers.
- Huyghe, M. (2015). *DeSingel International Arts Campus a Conservation Study Marie Huyghe Aut* (thesis). *DeSingel International Arts Campus a conservation study Marie Huyghe aut*. KU Leuven, Leuven.
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- Mbembe, A. 'The Power of the Archive and Its Limits' in Hamilton, C., Harris, V., Taylor, J., Pickover, M., Reid, G., & Saleh, R. (2002). *Refiguring the archive*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

## Literature and general practical references

Richards, L. (1989). *Centre Canadien d'Architecture: Architecture et Paysage*. Montreal: CCA Press.

Scalbert, I., Emerson, T., & Macdonald, S. (2013). *Never Modern: On bricolage and the works of 6A architects*. Zurich: Park Books.

Scheidegger, E., Casciato, M., & Moos, S. von. (2010). *Chandigarh 1956: Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, Jane B. Drew, E. Maxwell Fry*. Zürich: Scheidegger & Spiess.

Silberberger, J. (2022). *Against and for method: Revisiting architectural design as research*. Zurich: gta Verlag.

Ursprung, P. (2002). *Herzog & de Meuron: Natural History*. Baden: Lars Muller.

Yaneva, A. (2021). *Crafting history: Archiving and the Quest for Architectural Legacy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

## Precedents

Collective research on the following precedent projects:

- Sir John Soane's Museum. London. John Soane. 1812
- Beinecke Library. New Haven, CT. Gordon Bunshaft / SOM. 1963.
- Canadian Centre for Architecture. Montreal. Peter Rose. 1989.
- Ungers Archive for Architectural Studies. Cologne. Oswald Mathias Ungers. 1990.
- Drawing Matter Archive. Somerset. Hugh Strange Architects. 2014.
- Kabinett. Basel. Herzog & de Meuron. 2015.
- Archives de Bordeaux Métropole. Bordeaux. Robbrecht en Daem. 2015
- ArkDes conversion. Stockholm. Arrhov Frick. 2024.

Collective research on the architecture of the deSingel art and culture campus by Léon Stynen, Paul de Meyer and Stephane Beel (additions)

## Practical references

Lecture by Mark Pimlott Mark Pimlott on the architecture archive as changing typology.

Lecture by Dr Danielle Willkens on Sir John Soane Museum and Monticello.

Lecture by Catja Edens on gender and the archive.

Lecture by Irina Davidovici on Contemporary practices and the gta archive, ETH Zürich.

Lecture by Sophie de Caigny on her work as a former director of Flanders Architecture Institute in Antwerp.

Lecture by Petteri Kummala on the Museum of Finnish Architecture.

Lecture by Alejandra Celedon on the archive - Microcosmos project (Santiago de Chile).

## 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 Interiors Buildings Cities graduation studio focuses on the concept of the Palace. The term Palace refers to prominent public buildings that have played a significant role in shaping our societies and their cities as both the stimulus and product. The architecture of the Palace embodies the characteristics of society, showcasing complexity in its spatial atmosphere, infrastructure, and logical organisation. As an emblematic of collective public life, it serves as a space where people gather, interact, and engage with one another.

The Archive, as another incarnation of this description, makes a contestable fit. Aspiring to be a transparent institution, fully open to the public (like in Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam), on the one hand, effectively fails to do so regarding its inherently hermetic organisational scope and character. The Palace is, therefore, a call for discussion on what is the role of the archive as a place within the democratic society.

The archive serves as a vital component of the city's social and cultural infrastructure and aims to play a significant role as a figure within the city. A public archive, in particular, aims to address all citizens, acting as a space welcoming individuals from diverse backgrounds. Investigation and developing the architecture for an archive as a type is crucial for understanding complex building typology within both architectural and societal contexts. This endeavour also involves positioning oneself and one's design in relation to precedent architectural works — Léon Stynen and Stephane Beel — as a direct context, by carefully analysing the existing building and thoughtful intervention within its material tissue.

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

The archive as a type and institution has experienced a radical shift in the paradigm of its public mission concerning the aspects of transparency, digitalisation (and digital cultures), decolonisation and curation. This raises the question of the public archive's role in society and the message of the architectural discipline through this type of institution.

The project aims to investigate the architectural archive as a type, and its role in the Flemish society. The research will be conducted on the typology as a whole and how can it relate to deSingel as a specific example for situating it. Developing the architecture and its technological aspects that will ensure the building functions effectively within its context and remains relevant for today and the future will provide valuable insight into comprehending both the existing and contemporary architectural context.



