

Care.

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Chair of Architecture and Care
Office HIL E 70.5

Teaching Team

Anna Puigjaner, puigjaner@arch.ethz.ch
Pol Esteve Castelló, estevecastello@arch.ethz.ch
Dafni Retzepi
Lisa Maillard, maillard@arch.ethz.ch
Shen He, shen.he@arch.ethz.ch
Ethel Baraona Pohl, baraonapohl@arch.ethz.ch
Barbara Bosshard, queerAltern
Jenny Schäubli, queerAltern
Claudia Thiesen, Queerbeet

Design

Tom Joyes



UNFAMILIAR



AGEING



■ The intersection of ageing and a life that does not conform to traditional heteronormative structures requires forms of care beyond our existing provisions. At present, most caring facilities, spaces, services, and legal frameworks are structured around a highly limited understanding of “next of kin”. In recent times, LGBTI+ collectives have been seeking alternative communities and spaces of care that respond to other social realities. To give a response to the later life stages of homosexual co-living nuclei, single persons, transgender individuals, and other variations of non-conforming coexistence, self-initiated architectural projects have emerged in different countries. Switzerland is no exception, and associations like queerAltern promote buildings that look at care relationalities from a different perspective, transgressing traditional understandings of family, dismantling binary understandings of ability/disability, and fostering interdependencies and mutual care.

Jack Halberstam argues that queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities that allow life narratives outside paradigmatic markers of life experience. Ageing, and the increase of dependencies associated with it, affects in a differential manner social groups who do not conform to heterosexual temporalities. LGBTI+ individuals often face discrimination when confronted with existing care systems. In response to the lack of public and governmental provision, LGBTI+ communities self-organise and thus depend on activism, volunteer work, and solidarities to function. Many, if not all LGBTI+ spaces in Switzerland rely on, or initially relied on such forms of interdependency and kinship. In most of these scenarios, the need for care is answered collectively, beyond the dichotomy of care-giver and care-receiver.

In response, this Master’s thesis programme will explore alternative caring spaces while understanding bodily dependencies as means to create positive kinships and ageing as a political condition. Ageing tends to be oversimplified, reducing the individual to a non-productive member of society. Often, elderly people are segregated within constricted spaces of heavily regulated care that impede self-determination on multiple planes. In the design process, we will look to the ageing body with all its potentialities, addressing its spaces, contexts, and rituals. The LGBTI+ community will be taken as an entry point to defy assumptions and biases around caring models and collective living. With these premises, we will seek architectural and aesthetic proposals that embrace non-normative relationalities and distributed forms of care at different scales, from the body to the city.

From top: Film still from *After Sunset, Dawn Arrives* by Andy Yi Li, 2022
Film still from *Cloudburst* by Thom Fitzgerald, 2011





Orthophoto of Viererfeld and its context

■ SITE

In the context of Bern's ongoing densification, the district of Viererfeld will be transformed into a new neighbourhood comprising approximately 1,140 apartments for 3,000 residents, at least half of which is being built by non-profit housing developers. The site, currently used as agricultural land, is in the middle of a complex territorial area, including natural elements such as the river Aare and Bremgartenwald hill, highway infrastructure including an underground tunnel traversing the parcel, and low-rise suburban housing, all while within walking distance of Bern's main train station and the city centre. Thus, as a place, it articulates a series of different urban conditions. On 5 June 2016, the population of Bern approved the housing development project for Viererfeld with 53% of the votes. The masterplan for Viererfeld, resulting from the competition initiated in 2018, has a diversity of housing typologies, ranging from private to communal living.

The parcel for the projects takes into consideration the masterplan developed by the winning team (Ammann Albers StadtWerke). It is located in the southern part of Viererfeld, close to the urbanised areas of the district of Engeried. The plot faces a public square, providing potential interactions between the building design and public infrastructure. It is also near the access to the new neighbourhood, which will require an understanding of both what is already there and what will come in the future.

The site is not to be seen as a limited building lot, but rather as the starting point through which to conceptualise an urban territory of care, ranging from the scale of the body to the city. This way, we aim to rethink the boundaries of care, transgressing the domestic and institutional domains where they are conventionally found.

■ URBAN CONTEXT

Measuring a total of around 160,000 square metres, Viererfeld is part of the Engeried district, with 1,116 inhabitants in 2020 (of which 942 were Swiss residents and 194 foreign). Historically, Engeried has been a low-density agricultural district. In 1964, as a result of the rapidly rising number of students enrolling at the University of Bern, Viererfeld was bought by the Canton envisioning a project for a University Campus and student facilities. The project was abandoned in 1982, when the Canton acquired instead the industrial building that formerly housed the Tobler chocolate factory.

At present, the Viererfeld site accounts for very few constructions: the Hotel Innere on its south-east boundary, the Japanese embassy in the south, and Burgerspittel, an elderly housing project constructed in 1964, also in the south. Within Viererfeld one can find family gardens and children's playing facilities. To the north, Viererfeld shares a boundary with the very small district of Äussere Enge, a low-rise

low-density residential area, with only 269 inhabitants in 2020 (of which 223 were Swiss residents).

The eastern boundary of Viererfeld is adjacent to the district of Neufeld, with 5,450 residents in 2020 (of which 4,545 were Swiss). It is a densely built, low-rise neighbourhood characterised by apartment buildings. Along the Bremgartenstrasse, one finds the hospital Lindenhofspital, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, the Nutztierklinik animal hospital, and the Universitätssport of Bern, along with sports facilities (such as tennis and football courts, a swimming pool, etc.). On the north-western boundary of Viererfeld is Bern's international bus terminal.

The districts of Neufeld and Engeried are connected to the city centre through the district of Länggasse, with a population of 3,233 in 2020 (of which 2,648 were Swiss). After the destruction of Bern's northern fortifications in 1831, the district of Länggasse started developing into an industrial neighbourhood right outside the perimeter of the old city. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Bremgartenstrasse became the site for the Von Roll factory and the construction company Schneider (later Muesmatt). Around 1865, a silk factory arrived in the district, followed by the Tobler chocolate factory in 1868 and the printing house Stämpfli in 1877. As a direct consequence of this urban development, the architectural morphology of the district is still largely characterised by the low-rise residential buildings initially constructed for factory workers.

During the 1890s, a series of public buildings appeared in the district of Länggasse: a school at number 40 Neufeldstrasse, university buildings on Bühlplatz, and in 1902, Bern University's main building at 4 Hochschulstrasse. The SBB/CFF building opened at 43 Mittelstrasse in 1902. Over the course of the twentieth century, the industrial buildings that characterise the district were progressively acquired by the Canton for various university faculties.

■ PROGRAMME

In this particular context, the Bernese association Queerbeet will collaborate with the local Cooperative HGB to develop housing for the queer community. With the guidance of members from Queerbeet and queerAltern, this diploma studio will carefully look into these collectives' intersection of needs in order to propose housing facilities with daily care infrastructures that can also respond to wider neighbourhood needs.

A brief of the programme and the spatial requirements foreseen by Queerbeet for the Viererfeld project will serve as a foundation to imagine new spatial and functional relationships. During the preparation phase, each student will reconsider the brief, turning it into their own script, reflecting their personal theoretical research as well



Homes for Senior Citizens by Peter Zumthor, 1993

Reversible destiny lofts by Shusaku Arakawa and Madeline Gins, 2005



as the collective discussions. There should be critical reflection on how LGBTI+ ageing experiences may differ from heteronormative ones, and the spatial implications these kinds of otherness involve. Imagining the relationships between the different activities of each programme will determine new scenarios of mutual care, in terms of breaking the boundaries between intimate and collective notions of domesticity, and questioning the family-based organisation of care. Thus, the impact of the designed programme should go beyond the limits of the physical building.

Projects for housing facilities aimed at ageing populations are very common in the Swiss architectural context. However, it could be argued that the adopted approach is often from a point of view of hospitalised control and dependency, rarely addressing questions of social belonging, personal development, and an active participation in public life. Considering the above a central element in the projects, essential infrastructures of care will be rethought in ways that serve both collective and individual wellbeing.

The project and its position within this context should mirror, amplify, and reflect on existing provisions of care – or their absence, if this were the case –, in order to offer alternative scenarios from an understanding of the urban context as an indispensable medium for care beyond the confinement of the home. Recognising the current conflicted relationship between domesticity and care, or the also conflicted isolation of care homes or retirement homes, the projects need to be able to dismantle biased constructs, “unworlding” – or in other words, unmaking – spatial dispositions of inequality and predefined architectures of seclusion. This process of redefinition and reorganisation needs to consider the present context in order to propose a construction that, while implemented at the scale of the building, operates at the same time in a transscalar manner, linking the body to the city.

The programme should respond to at least one of the following:

- Domestic spaces that transgress the nuclear family apartment type.
- Domestic spaces that foster intergenerational relationships.
- Domestic spaces that incorporate shared domestic chores.
- Domestic spaces that facilitate medical care when needed.
- Urban spaces for daily routines such as personal hygiene, cooking, eating, laundry,...
- Urban spaces for neighbourly socialisation.
- Urban spaces for everyday health care such as taking medicine, first-aid, treatment,...
- Urban spaces for elderly empowerment.

■ ABOUT QUEERBEET

Founded in September 2022 in Bern, the association aims to create places of life for LGBTI+ people, rainbow families, and refugees. The association was founded with the aim of proposing a concept of housing for the development project in Viererfeld, responding to an open call for visionary ideas initiated by the Hauptstadt Genossenschaft of Bern (HGB), in 2022. The project “Queerbeet im Viererfeld” won the contract with the HGB, and will subsequently be a part of the new neighbourhood.

■ ABOUT QUEERALTERN

Founded in 2014, the association queerAltern promotes the social life of ageing LGBTI+ people, is committed to LGBTI+ housing, LGBTI+ friendly care and assistance, supports LGBTI+ politics, and organises events. The association has been working with the Foundation for Retirement Homes (Stiftung für Alterswohnungen, SAW) and the Health Centers for Old Age (Gesundheitszentren für das Alter GFA) to promote housing and living space for ageing members of the LGBTI+ community as one of the first measures of the Ageing Strategy 2035.



Opposite, from top: Film still from *Where do all the old gays go?* by Cathy Dunne, 2022
Film still from *The End* by Fernando Reinaldos, 2022

Methodology

PREPARATION PHASE
28.08 – 16.10.23



Film still from *Where We Grow Older?* conceived by Giovanna Borasi and directed by Daniel Schwartz, 2023

■ FRAMEWORK

→ Bibliographical and theoretical research

The course will start with an immersion in the topics. We will spend our first weeks building up a discourse around ageing bodies and architectures of care through readings and lectures. These initial sessions will take place around a common table as a collective happening. We will set a place to share knowledge, experiences, and thoughts. We will pay close attention to how we communicate ideas, caring for the words we use and their architectural correlation.

→ Cases

A selection of cases depicted in films will set the starting point for all the projects. Each student group will take one case to develop an analysis on the spatial and social conditions of a given situation in relation to ageing and care.

This initial group of cases have an intersectional nature in common. Beyond their particularities, they all expose complex realities that will require a kaleidoscopic approach to care, queer, and ageing relationalities.

We will look at them from an architectural point of view, paying close attention to the spatial configurations of everyday life, focusing on urban relationships, programme organisation, and architectural elements that construct the infrastructures of queer ageing care.

→ On-site and contextual research

After this initial theoretical phase, students will start studying the site and the particular context of the queerAltern and Queerbeet community – their housing and care needs. Members of queerAltern and Queerbeet will provide insights and any relevant information needed to develop a design proposal. During this phase, site information as well as expanded research around LGBTI+ ageing in Switzerland will be provided to students to facilitate their understanding of the context.

→ Development of a critical position and a programme scheme

In response, students will be asked to take a critical position and define a design strategy around housing and care, which must answer to different scales: from the body, to the building, to the neighbourhood. During this phase, students will also define a programme, select a community, and strategise a management scheme.



PREPARATION PHASE (CONT.)

28.08 – 16.10.23

■ TASKS

Site research, theoretical and bibliographical research, programme scheme, and form and typology of the project.

■ DELIVERABLES

- One constantly evolving multiscale document condensing the programme scheme, the theoretical understanding of the topic of “Unfamiliar Ageing”, and the analysis of the urban context.
- Plans and sections of the urban context at 1:500 or 1:1000.
- Plans and sections of each project at 1:100.
- A first draft of moving images document.

■ EXPECTATIONS

Formulating clear and precise questions, using abstract ideas to interpret information, considering diverse points of view, reaching well-reasoned conclusions, and testing alternative outcomes. Performing qualitative and quantitative architectural research and translating it into architectural language. Gathering, assessing, recording, and comparatively evaluating relevant information and performance data in order to support conclusions. Designing an initial strategy in response to territories of care and their characteristics, including the urban context and historical fabrics, soils, topography, ecologies, climate, economies, etc. Making clear architectural drawings and moving images at different scales to illustrate and communicate an architectural design both technically and experientially.

Opposite: Film stills from *Gen Silent* by Stu Maddux, 2011

ELABORATION PHASE 16.10 – 15.12.23

After the preparation phase, projects will start to be detailed. We will work on the proposals so that they are sufficiently and adequately resolved. Discussions around form, materiality, construction, and structural systems, as well as environmental control and impact, will be part of our weekly conversations. Experts in different fields will provide input to support the development of the project.

■ TASKS

Form and typology of the project, structural and constructive details, definition of materiality.

■ DELIVERABLES

- An evolved version of the multiscale document condensing the programme scheme, the theoretical understanding of the topic of “Unfamiliar Ageing”, and the analysis of the urban context.
- Plans and sections of the urban context at 1:500 or 1:1000.
- Plans and sections of each project at 1:100.
- Plans and sections of the details of each project at the scales 1:50 and/or 1:20.
- An evolved version of moving images document.

■ EXPECTATIONS

Using formal, organisational, social, and environmental principles and informing two- and three-dimensional design. Understanding construction and structural systems and their coherent formalisation. Considering the environmental impact and reuse of the design. Making clear architectural drawings and moving images at different scales to illustrate and communicate an architectural design both technically and experientially.

■ FEEDBACK

Students will work in constant conversation with the teachers as well as with external voices who will be invited to participate, not only in formal crits and reviews, but also during the project development process. QueerAltern’s members will review the work and provide feedback every two weeks. There will be three major interim crits during the semester.

Opposite: 18 logements in Rixheim by Lacaton and Vassal architects, 2021



Studio guests and collaborators*

■ BARBARA BOSSHARD

Since 2019 Barbara Bosshard is president of queerAltern. She has made various documentaries on social topics, and she is the author of “Den Himmel berühren” (2010) and “Verborgene Liebe” (2012).

■ ILLIAS HISCHIER

Illias Hischer is a senior researcher at the Chair of Architecture and Building Systems. He has received the “swiss electric research award 2011” for his work in the field of solar thermal power.

■ JACQUELINE PAULI

Jacqueline Pauli is Full Professor of Structural Design at ETH Zurich. Her research is concerned with the quest for highly efficient and practicable load-bearing structures based on resource optimisation processes.

■ JENNY SCHÄUBLI

Jenny Schäubli is an interior designer and member of queerAltern. She has recently founded her own practice, Ruum. As a trans woman she has consistently advocated for a visibly lived identity.

■ DANIEL STUDER

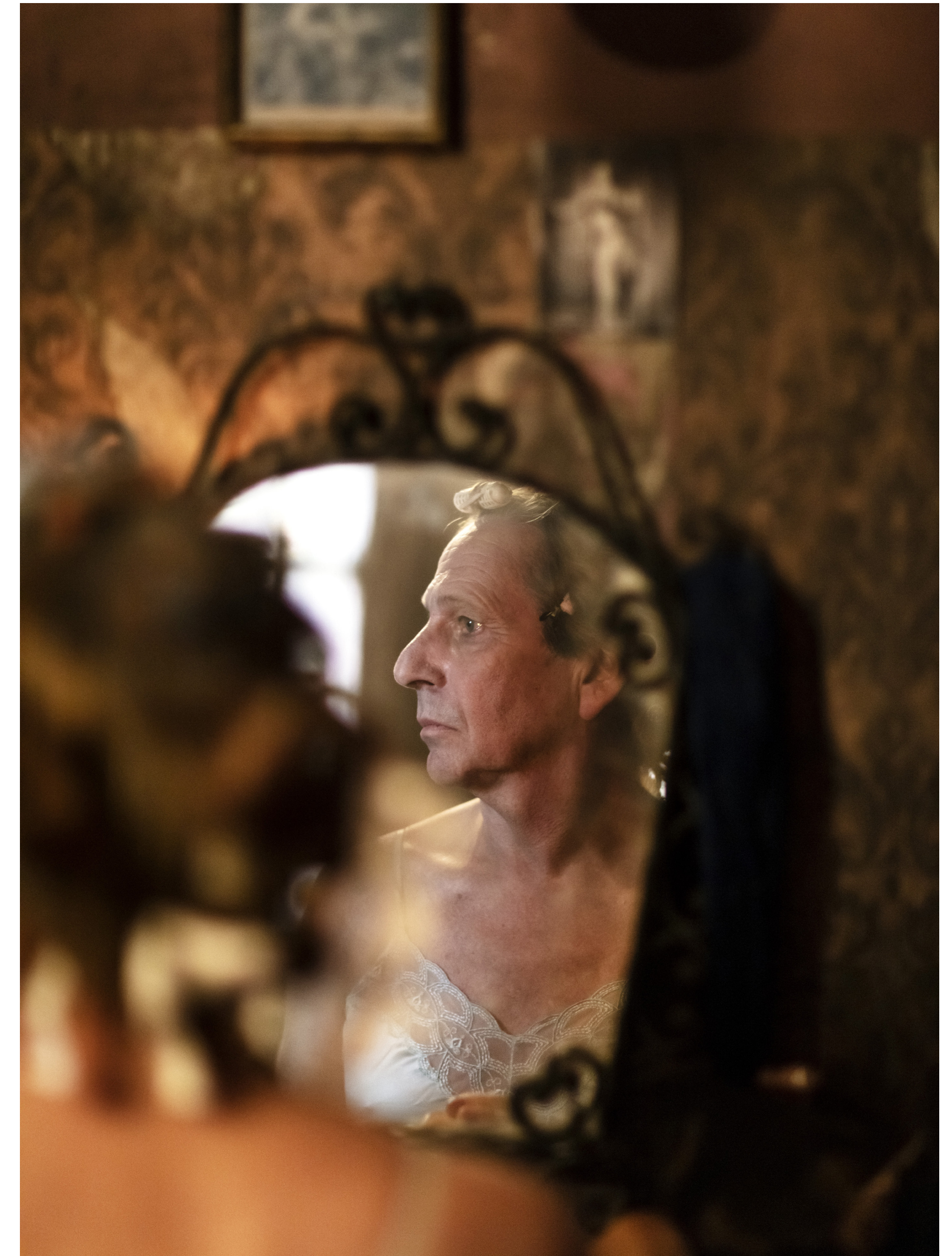
Daniel Studer is an architect and founder of Studerarchitekt. Since 2013 he has been a Lecturer at the Chair of Bautechnologie und Konstruktion in ETH Zurich, where he examines fundamental principles of architectural construction methods.

■ CLAUDIA THIESEN

Claudia Thiesen is an architect and founding member of the architecture office Thiesen & Wolf, established in 2019 in Zurich. She is one of the founders of the association Queerbeet.

* Complete list of studio guests and collaborators to be confirmed.

Film still from *My Tender Matador* by Rodrigo Sepúlveda, 2020



30.08.23

9:00 – 12:00. The semester will start with an introduction to the syllabus, and to the themes of ageing and queer ageing in the context of Switzerland.

13:00 – 18:00. The course bibliography and the case studies will also be introduced and distributed among the students.

SEPTEMBER

06.09.23

→ Reading, researching, and critical understanding of the texts and cases.

09:00 – 12:00. The texts and cases will be discussed collectively.

13:00 – 15:00. The project site and the programme will be introduced and discussed, along with the format and deliverables of the first interim crit.

15:00 – 15:30. Lecture input from Barbara Bosshard (president of queerAltern) and Jenny Schäubli (interior architect and member of queerAltern) concerning the activities and objectives of the association.

15:30 – 16:00. Lecture input from Claudia Thiesen (architect and co-responsible for the Viererfeld project) concerning the development of the project, the programme, the site, the context, etc.

16:00 – 18:00. Collective discussion.

31.10

13:00 – 18:00. Individual student tutorials on structure with Jacqueline Pauli.

NOVEMBER

01.11.23

→ The students propose a list of deliverables for the following interim crit and the final submission.

→ The students produce detailed drawings of their projects (1:50, 1:20) and prepare questions for the experts in structure, climate, and construction.

09:00 – 12:00. Individual student tutorials on construction with Daniel Studer.

13:00 – 18:00. Individual student tutorials on climate engineering.

12.09

The students visit the site in Bern.

13.09

→ Critical review of the Viererfeld programme and site. Understanding of the site. First draft of the multiscalar document.

09:00 – 12:00. Visit of the construction site of the queerAltern project Renggergut with members of queerAltern.

09:00 – 18:00. Individual student tutorials.

● 20.09

→ Each student's architectural and theoretical narrative will be presented in one multiscalar document. This document will condense the critical review of the programmatic requirements provided by queerAltern, the theoretical understanding of the topic "Unfamiliar Ageing" from the bibliographical research, as well as a primary analysis of the urban context.

13:00–18:00. First interim student crit Presence of Jenny Schäubli and Claudia Thiesen.

18:00–18:30. A screening of *Where We Grow Older* (2023).

08.11

→ The students elaborate their projects and prepare drafts of all the documents to be presented at the next interim crit.

09:00 – 12:00. Individual student tutorials.

13:00–18:00. Individual student tutorials. Presence of Barbara Bosshard, Jenny Schäubli, and Claudia Thiesen.

● 15.11

→ Each project will be presented according to the individualised formats established. Every project should attain a certain degree of structural detailing (1:50, 1:20).

09:00 – 12:00. Third interim student crit. Presence of Barbara Bosshard.

22.11

09:00 – 18:00. Individual student tutorials.

29.11

09:00 – 18:00. Individual student tutorials.

27.09

→ Elaboration of individual narratives and transcription into spatial design.

→ Urban context at 1:500 or 1:1000, plans and sections at 1:100.

09:00 – 18:00. Individual student tutorials.

OCTOBER

04.10.23

→ Elaboration of individual narratives and transcription into spatial design.

→ Urban context at 1:500 or 1:1000, plans and sections at 1:100.

→ Moving images document.

09:00 – 12:00. Individual student tutorials.

13:00 – 18:00. Individual student tutorials. Presence of Barbara Bosshard, Jenny Schäubli, and Claudia Thiesen.

DECEMBER

05.12.23

09:00 – 17:00. Individual student tutorials.

17:15. "Who Cares?" Lecture by Anna Puigjaner. Rämistrasse 101 Hauptgebäude F 30 (Auditorium Maximum).

13.12

09:00 – 18:00. Individual student tutorials.

15.12

Submission.

● 11.10

→ Discussion of architectural and urban intentions of the project.

→ Plans/sections of the project at 1:100. Urban context at 1:500 or 1:1000.

→ The multiscalar document presented for the first critic will be reviewed and updated according to the evolution of the project.

→ Presentation of the moving images as an animated document (ideo files, gifs, etc.) narrating key elements of each project in order to address the complexity of moving bodies and temporalities.

13:00 – 18:00. Second interim student crit Presence of Barbara Bosshard.

■ 17.10

→ The students will re-work, precise, and present a dense summary of their projects. The students start elaborating their projects at more detailed scales (1:50, 1:20).

09:00–18:00. Colloquium. Student presentations based on the material produced for the second interim crit.

18.10

→ Elaboration of the projects, accompanied by detailed drawings (1:50, 1:20).

09:00 – 18:00. Individual student tutorials.

■ 18.12

09:00 – 18:00. Final colloquium for diploma.

19.12

09:00 – 12:00. Collective conversation. Presence of Barbara Bosshard, Jenny Schäubli, and Claudia Thiesen.

Learning objectives

→ Forming critical architectural positions

Formulating clear and precise questions, using abstract ideas to interpret information, considering diverse points of view, reaching well-reasoned conclusions, and testing alternative outcomes. Performing qualitative and quantitative architectural research and translating it into architectural language. Gathering, assessing, recording, and comparatively evaluating relevant information and performance data in order to support conclusions.

→ Detailing architectural proposals

Designing in response to territories of care and their characteristics, including the urban context and historical fabrics, soils, topography, ecologies, climate, economies, etc. Using formal, organisational, social, and environmental principles and informing two- and three-dimensional design. Understanding construction and structural systems and their coherent formalisation. Considering the environmental impact and reuse of the design. Making clear architectural drawings and moving images at different scales to illustrate and communicate an architectural design both technically and experientially.

Evaluation

- Final grade consists of 40% preparation and 60% elaboration phase (fixed).
- Each student's work will be graded as a whole project after the final crit.
- The grade will reflect the work presented in the final crit and the overall progress of the project over the duration of the studio.
- There will be no arithmetic breakdown of the final grade, but a single final grade.
- You will be given formative feedback on the progress of the project in three interim crits and during tutorials.
- Tutorials shall be used to inquire on progress and receive formative feedback.
- By the end of the preparation phase, a decision will be made whether students continue or interrupt the Master's Thesis based on their grades for the preparation phase.
- Written warning will be sent to students at risk of failing, however the absence of such notification is no guarantee of a pass.
- Each student is responsible for recording any feedback during crits. Students are encouraged to coordinate with class peers to take notes during crits and presentations.
- Attendance to all programmed teaching activities is mandatory and only justified absences will be accepted.

Code of conduct

The studio will comply with all regulatory codes of conduct applying to university life and teaching activities in the ETH.

Further information on ETH code of conduct and conciliation service and respect can be found in the following pages:

→ www.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/associates/campaigns-dam/respekt-dam/documents/Code_of_Conduct_Respect.pdf

→ www.ethz.ch/staffnet/en/employment-and-work/consulting-and-coaching/difficult-situations/interne-fachstelle-respekt.html

→ www.arch.ethz.ch/en/parity-diversity.html

In addition, and aligning with the ethos of the Chair for Architecture and Care and the Parity Group initiative, special attention will be put towards any form of discrimination including gender, sexuality, age, ability, neurodivergence, race, ethnicity, religion, and social and cultural background.

Due dates

→ 20 September 2023. 13:00 – 18:00.
First interim student crit

→ 11 October 2023. 13:00 – 18:00.
Second interim student crit

→ 17 October 2023. 09:00 – 18:00.
Colloquium

→ 15 November 2023. 13:00 – 18:00 .
Third interim student crit

→ 15 December 2023.
Submission

→ 18 December 2023. 09:00 – 18:00.
Final Colloquium

Bibliography and filmography

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