



The Wall as a Possibility

Walls function as both separators and connectors. Their symbolic and functional roles as boundaries and thresholds define spaces physically and ecologically. They create distinct zones on either side and offer a multiplicity of conditions – an inside and an outside. A wall can interrupt a stream of light, moderate the force of a breeze, filter visual continuity, enhance moisture and shadows, and alter temperature.

Traditionally perceived as barriers, walls can transcend this role to become elements that support life forms and human activities. Rough surfaces and imperfections offer opportunities for “vertical landscapes” that reflect the complexity of natural environments.

In ‘Essay on Architecture’ (1743) Laugier explores architecture’s anthropological origins, beyond the idea of shelter that the primitive hut embodies. We are interested in Laugier’s vision of architecture as a mediator between humans, nature and biodiversity – a vision relevant to today’s challenges. While accommodating a growing population is crucial, sustainability and biodiversity within urban areas must also be prioritized. The densification of cities often leads to habitat destruction, making it essential to consider various species and natural elements in our living spaces. As Donna Haraway notes in *Staying with the Trouble*, “We are all responsible for shaping conditions for multispecies flourishing in precarious times.”

This semester, within Winterthur’s urban context, students will develop housing projects that engage critically with the interplay between architecture and nature, focusing on thresholds and borders. Circular thinking will guide a shift in paradigm in architectural planning, encompassing not only the responsible use of materials, but also the act of inhabiting spaces. We will emphasize the vital role of water, while exploring the balance between energy production and resource consumption, enhance biodiversity, and create innovative living environments through both reuse and new construction. Our goal is to skillfully negotiate the thresholds between inside and outside, transforming them into sustainable living spaces that resonate with the natural ecosystem.

Specific workshops and lectures will provide an in-depth exploration of the topics at hand, with ideas being developed through drawings, models, synthesis drawings, and photographs capturing the core concepts and narratives of each project.

Students will work in groups to stimulate positive dialogue and foster a collaborative design process. This approach will encourage the exchange of ideas and the development of innovative solutions that respond to the intricate relationships between inside, outside, and the natural world.