



Monument for Change

Power to Renovation

“Facts are no longer enough to convince people; we have to tell a story.”

(Oana Bogdan in *Architecting after Politics*, 2018)

As part of the general master topic at the Department of Architecture “How to house Europe? Within the existing!” station+, the chair for architecture and storytelling, wants to address the need for transformative action in the building sector, from another angle. Throughout history since, monuments and symbolic places have played a crucial role for change, embodying and revealing a transformative power. This design studio invites students to critically explore, conceptualize, and design a “Monument for Change” that represents the necessary shifts—in the building industry, in the housing sector, in the labor market—and tells its stories – ambiguous and full of contradictions.

Students are asked to develop both the concept and design for such a monument, starting from monuments’ role in society and their historical significance: how they

traditionally served as embodiments of collective memory, values, and significant historical moments, often in a religious or enduring context. As embodiments of change, students are asked to analyze cases where monuments have not only commemorated the past but also inspired social or political transformation. Challenging the current system where economic value often outweighs ecological and social value not only in the building industry, leading to segregation, concentration, and separation.

This research will be the basis for a critical discussion—with sociologists, architects, historians, and philosophers—on the necessity and form of monuments in today’s society—do we still need them—and if so, what should they represent, and how should they function? And can construction of any kind, including monuments, be both part of the problem and the solution?

Based on this research and discussions, students are asked to develop a concept which explores how a monument can symbolize the urgent need for change in the building sector toward sustainability. Considering that monuments are not just observed but experienced, fostering engagement and reflection on climate issues, and investigating how existing structures can be reused and transformed, emphasizing the overall themes of the master topic.

For the design, students shall reflect on how the monument can maintain cultural narratives while promoting new values centered on sustainability and inclusivity, deconstructing the existing narrative of “either-or” for a dialogic approach of “both-and” – not either social or ecological but both social and ecological, by envisioning a space that brings communities together to discuss and engage with agency and action, constructing the monument’s message to resonate on both a global scale (climate crisis) and within the local context where it is situated. This includes exploring non-traditional forms of monuments, such as virtual

installations, events, or initiatives that can symbolize change without the environmental cost of construction.

Key Questions

- Redefining Monuments: What constitutes a monument in the 21st century, especially in the context of climate urgency?
- Purpose and Functionality: How can a monument serve both as a symbol and a functional space that contributes positively to the environment?
- Sustainability Paradox: Can a new construction truly advocate for sustainability, or should the focus be solely on transforming existing structures?

Expected Outcomes

- Written Reflection: A critical essay discussing the role of monuments, the paradox of building new structures in a climate crisis, and how architecture can lead transformative change.
- Design Proposal: Develop a comprehensive concept for a Monument for Change, including formats of representation and storytelling
- Presentation: Semester presentation and installation aimed at communicating the project's ideas, fostering discussion on the role of architecture in sustainability.

Partners

[Prof. Ursprung](#)