

Perhaps more than any other European city, Berlin has been the subject of major infrastructural change either by design or because of war or overarching masterplans by monarchy and maniacal visionaries. Crudely divided in two by the Berlin wall from 1961 to 1989 any previous urban coherence was lost, and the city has experienced a collision of very different narratives, concepts and projects since. It has therefore evolved over time as a result of half-finished dreams, pragmatically led transport plans and small-scale interventions on its urban fabric. It is a city in a constant state of transformation, beautiful in its incompleteness and improvisation.

Perceived as ugly or antiurban in the conventional sense, this fragmentation is also an expression of heterogeneity and diversity and could in fact represent the image of the European city of the future. A future that by necessity, either due to the climate emergency or by the increasing pluralism within social structure, evolves in a more open-ended way. Robert Venturi's idea of the 'both-and' suggesting a new pluralism and a new tolerance in architecture and Alison and Peter Smithson's interpretation of the 'as found' as a new way of seeing the ordinary, remain relevant and poignant in this new cycle of the European city. This new precariousness is what we must make sense of as we speculate upon the future just as others have done in the past like Peter Smithson who, while participating in a symposium on BBC Radio's Third Programme in 1956, was asked what he thought the future ('tomorrow') would be like. He replied: 'Well tomorrow, I think, will not only be rather like today but rather like primitive times and rather like the Middle Ages, and rather like life on the moon, if man ever gets there ...'

It is now our imperative to find a new language of architecture; an architecture of reuse, an architecture that creates the new from the existing, that reassembles and reinterprets things. New and old are equal parts of this architecture, neither one more precious than the other and this sense of the 'ongoing' makes the project more clearly part of the constant process of transformation. One important factor relevant to both the transformation of existing buildings or new building is the circularity of materials and the recovery, reuse and re-application of materials previously used, contributing to reducing emissions, waste and resource consumption by returning materials to the cycle after a period of use. To integrate this new emphasis into the conventions of architectural thinking, up until now led by the guidance of proportion, exacting material detail and volumetric coherence is a significant challenge. How can we work without such certainty, without such completeness while retaining a conceptual and strategic rigour? Perhaps it is about finding discipline and guidance through a lightness of touch, an economy of means and a pleasure in the improvised and unfinished?

Berlin is growing, pushing further and further to the periphery. Open spaces, commercial and production areas in outer districts such as Kreuzberg and Lichtenberg are increasingly being competed for by both businesses and creative industries. The fabric of these edge-places is characterised by gaps and discontinuities, different building types, blank walls and undefined space between things. These areas have an improvised architectural character, and they prompt the question as to what is an appropriate form and material language to adopt. This will be the context of our work this semester as we design buildings of mixed use in the semi-industrialised areas of Kreuzberg and Lichtenberg and work within the constraints and opportunities of urban mining - recovering and reusing the city's waste material to make resilient buildings for the unknown future – to do more with less.



Calendar
Week 1 23 rd /24 th April 2025
Introduction to the Semester by Studio Krucker Bates, Wednesday 3.00pm (Room 2380) Introduction to exercises one and two, Thursday 2:00pm (Room 2380)
Week 2 28 th – 30 th April
Excursion to Berlin
Week 3 5 th /6 th May
Assistant tutorials (exercises one and two) Introduction to exercise three
Week 4 12 th /13 th May
Assistant tutorials (exercises one, two and three)
Week 5 19 th /20 th May
Lecture by Bruno Krucker, Monday 11.30am Pin up 1 with SB and BK (exercises one, two and three) Introduction to exercise four
Week 6 26 th /27 th May
Assistant tutorials (exercises three and four)
Week 7 2 nd /3 rd June
Lecture by Bruno Krucker, Monday 11.30am Pin up 2 with SB and BK (exercises three and four) Introduction to exercises five
Week 8 10 th June
Assistant tutorials (exercises five and six)
Week 9 16 th /17 th June
Lecture by Stephen Bates, Monday 11.30am Pin up 3 with SB and BK (exercises five and six) Introduction to exercise six
Week 10 23 rd /24 th June
Assistant tutorials
Week 11 30 th June – 1 th July
Lecture by Stephen Bates , Monday 11.30am Pin up 4 with SB and BK (all exercises)
Week 12 7 th /8 th July
Assistant tutorials (all exercises)
Week 13 14 th /15 th July
Assistant tutorials (all exercises)
Week 14 21 st /22 nd July
Final review with Stephen Bates, Bruno Krucker and guest critic

Production list

Exercise one: Inventory

In the first exercise, we ask you to make a visual inventory of the existing building on your site or assigned to your site. This will include a careful observation and precise documentation of the existing in sketches and photographs during our field trip to Berlin. Therefore, prepare a set of plans before the fieldtrip which will be essential when recording your observations during site visits, adding measurements and detailed sketches of existing elements. A template sheet for a structured documentation of building components might be useful. Think also of a strategy how to gather information and how to proceed on site as a group. Through careful observation of the existing, you will gain an understanding of the building; aspects of its materials, details and construction will become apparent. You will document rooms and spaces, objects, structural elements, walls and ceilings, claddings and floorings, surfaces and colors, etc. The documentation will be the base for all projects, therefore be careful and conscious of what you find on site. After the field trip we ask you to summarize your records in an appropriate representation in plans, elevations, axonometry, technical drawings, sketches and photographs. A clear and structured representation of the visual dismantling of the existing in all its components is needed. Through careful documentation we will give value to the existing. We will discover materials with reuse potential, which we will recover and reuse for our projects. We will use sites as mines. An introduction to this exercise will be given in the first week of the semester.

Exercise two: Re-assemble

This exercise is the first take on reuse. Without any program or function in mind you will build a model representing the material that you found in the urban mine of your site. It is kind of a 1:1 mock up that you find next to building sites. Elements of the building are defined and tested how they fit together. By excluding many factors we want to stimulate you to think freely about how to combine elements, use material for what is was never intended. How could you make of something small something big. Not everything reused will be seen. This opens opportunities. What are the layers where most grey energy is contained and therefore are beneficial to be made of reused material? Question the obvious. What is a wall? What is a floor, ceiling, pillar, foundation, door, window ...? The model showing the combination and layering of material is in 1:20. An introduction to this exercise will be given in the first week of the semester.

Exercise three: Urban strategy

This exercise requires you to produce a 1:200 block model of your site and its immediate surroundings, using grey card. The model will be made as a group project and demands both precision and careful coordination, so that all site models can come together as a coherent cluster formed by the models produced by each group in the studio. The block model will serve as a tool for developing a strategic plan for your building. Painted foamboard study models should be used to explore the scale and form of possible interventions — whether adapting an existing structure (if present on your site) or designing infill within the surrounding urban context. Once the formal character of the urban massing has been established, you should produce a grey card version of your project to be placed precisely within the site model. While the primary focus will be on an extensive exploration of different reuse and adaptation strategies and their corresponding massing options, you will also be expected to produce supporting drawings — including sketches, schematic plans, sections, and elevations. An introduction to this exercise will be given in Week 3 of the semester.

Exercise four: Building organisation

At this stage in the development of your project, we ask you to study the internal organisation of your building at a larger scale and to develop a detailed proposal for the adjustments and connections between found and new parts of the structure. This proposal should follow the strategic reuse plan developed in exercise three. Study models at a scale of 1:50, produced in white foam board, should be used to investigate the internal spatial organisation of your project — including the interconnection of different rooms and spaces, and the relationship between the existing structure and new interventions in working with a host. These models are not intended to be ‘complete’, but rather to serve as tools for studying the relationships between floors and spatial connections, in dialogue with the overall building organisation. An open approach to the rooms and their intended use should guide your thinking in terms of internal planning. The positioning of doors and windows, the spatial opportunities for linking rooms and enabling movement, and the arrangement of large and small spaces with varying ceiling heights should all be carefully considered. An introduction to this exercise will be given in Week 5 of the semester.

Exercise five: Detail

Now with the inventory of the whole studio at hand and your skills developed in exercise two, you can react to the specific needs of your building(s). What material and what combination enhances the expression and atmosphere of your project, or maybe consciously counteracts. Is it necessary to express that it is reuse? How much material do you need in the end? You will present a detailed fragment of your façade as part of the overall building. The layout of openings in the façade is represented in your urban model in 1:200. The detailed model is in 1:20. An introduction to this exercise will be given in Week 7 of the semester.

Exercise six: Small moments

This exercise focuses on presenting key spatial situations within your building. These special moments are intended to highlight the distinctive qualities of your project, and if working with existing structures it may focus on the overlap between new interventions and existing structures, as well as on adjustments and extensions to what is already present. Each moment should be represented as an image — we ask for between two and four with at least one being outside — created either digitally or through careful photography of a model. Whichever method you choose, it must be executed with precision and attention to detail. Great care should be taken to convey the atmosphere of these different moments in your project. An introduction to this exercise will be given in Week 9 of the semester.

Final review

The final review in July will consider all the work produced during the semester. In addition, you will be asked to prepare a PowerPoint presentation of your project. It is important that you are able to describe the development of your work accurately and precisely and include models of your final project at 1:200, 1:50 and 1:20, the inventory, assemble / reassemble and ‘small moments’. In addition to the material you have already produced you are required to present a 1:200 site plan and plans and sections at 1:100/1:50.