

Denkraum #4

# Ambiguity – Building Giotto

**Ambiguity.** The capacity of an individual object or idea to be perceived in multiple ways. A status which can be seen as unclear and confusing, or as valuable in its complexity and richness. This semester, after exploring exactitude and consistency, the studio will investigate ambiguity, or the potential of leaving spatial meanings and relations open to generate ambiguous qualities and accommodate different readings, functions or expressions in a single architecture.

**Giotto di Bondone**, one of the most prominent figures of the trecento, made architecture one of the key motives of the grandiose fresco cycles he executed in Assisi, Padua and Florence. His painted architectures, conceived as backdrops for narration, were made to frame and represent; they are recognized as buildings, yet they are left half open, their scale is off, their structure approximate, their organization unrealistic. Deeply ambiguous, they question many aspects of what is accepted as a typical or clear space yet offer a compelling architectural expression which was one of the first manifestations of the spirit of the Renaissance.

**Building Giotto.** The studio will start with a trip to Florence and Assisi, to visit some of Giotto's frescoes as well as a selection of late Medieval and early Renaissance buildings, along with Belgian painter Benoît van Innis, who will accompany the whole semester. Following those on-site observations, a selection of Giotto's painted architectures will be investigated, built in model and photographed to understand their qualities and discover what can be learnt from them.

**Space, scale and colour.** These painted buildings will follow us all semester long, and their spatial qualities will be drawn from and translated into a contemporary setting, guiding the design of small-scale architectures for a collection of sites in Zurich. The scale of those interventions will allow to carry out an in-depth and detailed reflection on their spatial qualities, proportions, structural characteristics and chromatic strategies.

Throughout the semester, with Giotto's help, ambiguity will be embraced and celebrated as a way of generating a different understanding and conception of architectural practice.

## Denkraum

Making architecture demands a constant and dynamic reading of given contexts under the angle of specific briefs and questions, allowing to unveil explicit and implicit relationships stemming from past actions and present dynamics. We will investigate different ways to read, and from there we will proceed to place findings in a framework, to structure them and create our own hierarchies, to situate ourselves in relationship to it. Within the studio, the multiplicity of individual tracks will be united under the common theme, in a common space of thinking: a Denkraum.

The Denkraum is a space of presence. A place where the work is on constant display and grows organically in time, concentrating questions, tensions and proposed solutions, developing a common design endeavour and discourse, a joined output based on associative thinking and reflection by analogy. A place where reading and writing reality happens all at once. A place to discuss together and with guests coming from different backgrounds, regions and disciplines, guests who will talk to us and think along.

Introduction 19 February 2019, 9:30am, HIP C1

Study trip to Florence & Assisi (*mandatory*) – 26-27 February / studio cost max. CHF150

Professor An Fonteyne – Assistants Pablo Donet, Thomas Klement, Galaad Van Daele

in collaboration with Benoît van Innis, painter; Mario Rinke, Chair Joseph Schwartz for Structural Design



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