

AR-402(c)

**Studio MA2 (Geers)**

Geers Kersten

| Cursus       | Sem.     | Type |
|--------------|----------|------|
| Architecture | MA2, MA4 | Obl. |
| Mob. AR      | E        | Opt. |

|                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Language of teaching | English             |
| Credits              | 13                  |
| Withdrawal           | Unauthorized        |
| Session              | Summer              |
| Semester             | Spring              |
| Exam                 | During the semester |
| Workload             | 390h                |
| Weeks                | 14                  |
| <b>Hours</b>         | <b>6 weekly</b>     |
| Courses              | 2 weekly            |
| Project              | 4 weekly            |

**Number of positions**

**It is not allowed to withdraw from this subject after the registration deadline.**

**Remark**

Inscription faite par la section

**Summary**

Through the notion of classicism, we want to investigate the possibility of architecture to reinstate the common cultural identity.

**Content****Architecture as Theme**

Between 1832 and 1836, Schinkel built his final masterpiece, the Bauakademie, completing the Berlin landscape he had started a decade earlier with the Altes Museum. A compact block that in one gesture organized its immediate neighborhood, the building epitomized an ambition to expand its design into a complete urban masterplan. The collapse of two institutions in one building somehow represented this ambition. The Bauakademie housed both the *Building Academy*, and the State Construction Commission (*Oberbaudeputation*), to which Schinkel served as a director, while the ground floor was occupied by shops. Schinkel also had his apartment on the third floor – in his universe living architecture, building architecture and teaching architecture remarkably coincided.

Inspired by Schinkel's visits to numerous industrial buildings in England, the Bauakademie was the first building in Prussia constructed as frame and infill (with masonry frames as cheaper replacement for cast-iron). This construction system anticipates that of later American skyscrapers, adopted by Mies. Not only was this building a contemporary tour de force, an example of industrial brick building, it was also an excellent example of modern classicism. An industrial building with an aesthetic of a classical *palazzo*, it represented the architecture Schinkel wanted to teach and execute, perhaps in its idealised and most radical fashion. The urban gesture exemplified an urban idea of building, block and city organisation, that Schinkel tiresomely tried to implement.

The Bauakademie served as a model of modern architecture long after it was built, and its significance reverberated long after it was demolished in 1961. Today, thirty years since the reunification of the two Germanies, The Bauakademie, or lack thereof, has been a subject of fierce debate. One could consider it ironic that a building once constructed to present the most modern and advanced idea of architecture is now victim of a megalomaniac form of advanced urban nostalgia. We believe the only way to engage in this debate is by regarding the meaning of the building, and consequently, to engage in a similar effort: a building for architecture in Berlin, elsewhere.

In 1973 Oswald Mathias Ungers made a project for the competition of the Landwehrkanal, also in Berlin. The project was in many ways a failure (he didn't win) but it did make an argument for an urbanity that at first seems opposed to the careful classical composition of Schinkel. But is it? Ungers himself never really hid his respect and fascination for the Prussian master. In a short text "Five Lessons from Schinkel's Work", Ungers even tries to salvage Schinkel from the claws of too eagerly interpretative nascent postmodernism. Perhaps the virtue in Ungers' work lays where he shares an attitude and method of Schinkel. Or to paraphrase Ungers, where "Architecture becomes a theme, not a style".

In this studio we would like to start where both German figures left us. The world has obviously changed. Confusion has only increased. In the age of social media and toxic nationalism, education is ever more under peril. At the same time the commonplaces of the classical canon, fundamental for Schinkel, and still important for Ungers, are rendered irrelevant. However, one could ask: was it not always like this? Were Schinkel and Ungers and perhaps, finally, ourselves, not always dirty mannerists, confused and picturesque? A building for architecture might give some answers. As long as the question remains old fashioned, we hope the answers will make the difference.

## Keywords

Form, difficult whole, the even covering of the field, Roman Architecture, Europe, Conventional Wisdom, Trouble With Classicists, Architecture Without Content.

## Learning Prerequisites

### Required courses

UE L : Art et architecture: construire l'image I (Philipp Schaerer).  
De la structure à l'ornement (Picon).  
Visions et Utopies (Braghieri).

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Develop independently a consistent architectural project with a critical mindset and a precise cultural foundation.
- Produce drawings, models, perspectives that are able to communicate the idea of the project.
- Conduct a research of historical architectural types.
- Elaborate on the Even Covered Field and other themes that are discussed in the atelier FORM.

## Assessment methods

Intermediate sessions (35 %). Final sessions (65%).

## Supervision

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| Office hours | Yes |
| Assistants   | Yes |
| Forum        | No  |

## Resources

### Virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI)

No

## Websites

- <http://form.epfl.ch>