

ETH Zürich
D-ARCH Departement Architektur
Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur gta

Seminar Week

Organizer: Chair of Prof. Ursprung

Lecturers : Prof. Dr. Philip Ursprung, Assistenz Prof. Dr. Alexander Lehnerer

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Melancholia, a term known since Antiquity, defines a state of sadness, introversion, reflection, aimless inactivity and pause. Since the Renaissance, melancholia is considered a precondition of creativity. On our seminar week we will use the notion of melancholia to describe our attitude towards the architecture realized between the late 1990s and the early millennium in the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg. What embodied the future and served as a point of reference for architectural discourse is now turning into a recent past, hovering between the contemporary and the historical.

The state of melancholia also applies to the current situation of Europe. The optimism of the 1990s has given way to uncertainty and concern. Former seminar weeks have lead us to the outer borders of the European Union, to Skopje, Marseille, and the Bialowieza forest in Eastern Poland. Now we want to encounter Europe's center. Nowhere else has the dream of a united Europe, the environment of the welfare state and architecture converged more fruitfully than in the BeNeLux area between the 1990s and the early millennium.

How can we make fruitful the term of melancholia as a concept of architectural theory? How can we link historiography with the description of buildings? Does the design of Europe manifest itself in the moment of its partial dismantling?

Our journey will lead from Zurich to Colmar, Strasbourg, Luxemburg, the Ardennes, Lille, Dunkirk, and eventually to Holland, along a line that both separated united Europe over the last centuries.

In our pocket we will have Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn's book *Licht- und Schattenbilder aus dem Innern von Java* (1854), a critique of Dutch colonialism. Our trip will end in Leiden where Junghuhn who guided us in the seminar weeks to Java and the Harz, passed seven melancholic yet also highly productive years, writing almost his entire scholarly oeuvre.