

Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



Graduation Plan: All tracks

Submit your Graduation Plan to the Board of Examiners (Examencommissie-BK@tudelft.nl), Mentors and Delegate of the Board of Examiners one week before P2 at the latest.

The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

Personal information	
Name	Jackie Chak-kei Ho
Student number	5796555

Studio	
Name / Theme	Urban Studio – Last Green in Town
Main mentor	Sam Stalker Design Tutor
Second mentor	Eireen Schreurs Research Tutor
Argumentation of choice of the studio	Design approach with strong emphasis on site Integration and balance across urban, architectural, and detailed scale Complex, metropolitan context of the Friche and Brussels

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Nature Augmented
Goal	
Location:	The Friche Josaphat, site on eastern edge adjacent to Clos de l'Oasis 11-19
The posed problem,	<p>In a world increasingly under pressure due to housing shortages, urbanization, and climate change, the Friche Josaphat stands as the last green in town in the midst of metropolitan Brussels. It has become an increasingly contested space, subject to numerous redevelopment proposals with criticism against primarily arguing for the site's ecological importance.</p> <p>In the Brussels context, green is town is typically viewed as either the various bourgeois picturesque 19th century public parks, the humdrum front and back yards in garden cities, or the various guerilla gardening initiatives around the city. However, metropolitan green spaces are usually experienced by distracted urban audiences, preoccupied by day-to-day issues of bills, work, and children, or absorbed in the over-stimulating digital worlds within their smartphone screens.</p>

	<p>Therefore, it is important to rethink contemporary approaches to nature and urban green space. Apart from contributing to the environment, the economy, and the community, they should offer memorable and immersive experiences with nature. "We need, at least occasionally, to be confronted with the wild otherness of nature and to be astonished, enchanted, humbled by it" (Hitt, 1999). By provoking those who experience them into re-encountering their relationship with the natural world, this can lead to new engagement and imaginations, even empowering them to make changes. In doing so, urban green spaces become not just environmentally resilient against the increasing forces of climate change, but also resilient from demolition to meet demands in ever-growing cities.</p> <p>American landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh used the term 'hyper-nature' to describe his firm's approach to design, which distills and amplifies the intrinsic qualities of natural site, creating an exaggerated version of constructed nature. As outlined in Elizabeth Meyer's manifesto 'Sustaining Beauty', this approach emerged from pragmatic concerns, first as these spaces are often in tough urban sites. But second, it needs these elements to draw the attention of users who usually experience the site half-heartedly in the course of their everyday urban life.</p> <p>Perhaps the Friche Josaphat can offer this for the people of Schaerbeek and Brussels? The existing site as a case of re-wilding already recreates natural processes. In its redevelopment, how can the nature and intrinsic qualities of the site be reinforced and amplified.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<p>What are the intrinsic qualities of the site and nature, and how can they be exaggerated, juxtaposed, or even distorted in the architecture?</p> <p>How can these design strategies be translated into my design assignment, especially across the various scales (urban, architectural, and detail)?</p> <p>How can these design strategies be integrated to serve ecological and environmental concerns?</p> <p>How should the entry (or entries) to such a large site be designed from the arrival of the adjacent quiet residential streets?</p>

design assignment in which these result.

Beyond meeting environmental, programmatic, community, and economic requirements, the project should distill and augment the sense of the nature and unique qualities of La Friche. It should draw attention, offering a true escape for city dwellers from the hectic city life, daily stress, and prevailing digital addiction. By incorporating elements that exaggerate constructions of nature, it should create more memorable experiences, therefore increasing the engagement and ensuring the resilience of the project in the urban context.

During the masterplan development, we proposed housing blocks perpendicular to the eastern edge on Clos de l'Oasis to serve as 'anchors' to the existing context. The Clos de l'Oasis is a quiet street of only row houses bounded in the north by the Avenue de Loisirs. It runs along the eastern edge parallel to the Avenue Leopold III, buffered by a strip of trees and hedges, and ends roughly halfway lengthwise of the site. It also has 4 short side cul-de-sacs, that are only 3 to 5 houses deep before reaching the abrupt steep slope and tree line, which roughly marks the boundary of the Friche Josaphat.

As they only served a few houses each, the cul-de-sacs were under-utilized. This potential was affirmed during site visits, where I sketched the experiential journey approaching the Friche from that area. They could serve as pedestrian-only entry points and utilize the split level to pass through the proposed building to reach the lower ground level of the Friche. For my project, I am proposing to build on the eastern edge of the Friche, more specifically entering from the cul-de-sac at Clos de l'Oasis 11-19. As it is proposed at the edge of the site, the design assignment also needs to be seamlessly integrated in both the existing site context, and proposed masterplan done in groups.

As a quiet, residential-only street, it demands the entry to the site and building project to be relatively unobtrusive. I am proposing housing for the upper floors of the building due to the modest entryway from the existing cul-de-sacs, with public programs at the ground or lower floors. As shown in the masterplan proposal, there is a possibility to repeat this typology at the other cul-de-sacs along Clos de l'Oasis, incorporating the interstitial green spaces into design.

Process

Method description

From P1 in my group "Phantasmagoria: Friche Voide Vedute", we explored how the preconditions of the Friche formed the many imaginations imposed on the site. Research ventured into the sublime, the surreal, and the ambiguous and changing perceptions towards wilderness. It served as a springboard into my current design topics.

My research aims to understand how design is deployed to recreate or amplify natural processes and the intrinsic qualities of a site. This would be conducted by site visits to selected projects. I have predominantly selected land art projects as they offer pure and highly distilled examples of this exaggeration and re-framing of nature.

For example, James Turrell's Celestial Vault serves as a magnifying glass that momentarily confronts and re-centers our ability to see and appreciate the sky. The artificial crater, forming the edge of the enclosure that frames the view of the sky, is an exaggerated version of the dune formations in the surrounding natural landscape of Kijkduin in Den Haag. Here, tension is created between the real and unreal, between belonging and being out-of-place, between intimate and immense, and between nature and artifice.

At the site visits, emphasis would be placed on the experiential journey- the surprises, apprehensions, transitions, moments of rest, vantage points, etc. Key moments that exemplify this 'hyper-nature' (the recreation/ amplification/ transposition of nature) would be captured by sketching. It will be supplemented by writing and photography to note the changes in atmosphere and sensory experiences. Across the selection of precedents in my site visits, these key moments would be analyzed to identify common design strategies.

For example, in the selection of projects, there is always a relative unobtrusiveness or secrecy from the outside (nestled in the site's gentle topography, a shallow earthen mound seamlessly merged with the polder landscape, an invisible bridge sunken into the slopes and water). This contrasts with the assertive and outspoken forms experienced from close-up and within. With their monolithic forms, they seem to have emerged from the ground, inducing a sense of primitive timelessness. This focus on sequence would also guide my research into understanding how to design my approach and entry to the site for my design assignment.

Exploration of the site's qualities can be explored through developing speculative and fictional scenarios. The qualities, material aspects, or natural elements of the genius loci could be taken, transformed, and exaggerated. For example, the seasonally transforming border of the Friche formed by the tree line could be recreated and exaggerated in the façade. Another example would be to explore how the basic T-shape massing of the building along the N-S axis creates dramatic differences in light and micro-climates in different parts of the building and outdoor space. This speculative drawing can help me develop more specific aspects for my program(s) that will be conceptually tied to my project topic of augmenting nature and the unique qualities of the site.

Literature and general practical references

Precedents:

Celestial Vault, James Turrell 1996.

Observatorium, Robert Morris, 1977.

Moses Bridge, RO&AD Architecten, 2011.

(Additional)

Buitenschot Land Art Park, H+N+S, Paul de Kort, Witteveen + Bos, 2011-2013.

Parc Reine-Verte, Erik Dhont Landscape Architects, 2007.

Minnaert Building, Neutelings Riedijk Architects, 1997.

Literature:

Goldberger, P., & Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. (2009). *Michael van valkenburgh associates : reconstructing urban landscapes*. (A. Berrizbeitia, Ed.). Yale University Press.

Herrington, S. (2006). *Framed again: The picturesque aesthetics of contemporary landscapes*. *Landscape Journal*, 25(1), 22–37. <https://doi.org/10.3368/lj.25.1.22>

Jorgensen, A., & Tylecote, M. (2007). *Ambivalent landscapes—wilderness in the urban interstices*. *Landscape Research*, 32(4), 443–462.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01426390701449802>

Krauss, R. (1979). *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*. *October*, 8, 31–44.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/778224>

Meyer, E. K. (2008), '*Sustaining Beauty: the Performance of Appearance. A Manifesto in Three Parts*', *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture* Spring 2008: 17-18.

Mollard, Manon. "Nature Nurtured: Carla Juaçaba Studio, Brazil." *Architectural Review*, 13 Nov. 2020, www.architectural-review.com/today/nature-nurtured-carla-juacaba-studio-brazil.

Nassauer, J. I. (1995). *Messy ecosystems, orderly frames*. *Landscape Journal*, 14(2), 161–170. <https://doi.org/10.3368/lj.14.2.161>

Rinaldi, Bianca Maria. "Editorial: Hyper-Landscapes." *Journal of Landscape Architecture*, vol. 9, no. 3, 30 Sept. 2014, pp. 4–5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18626033.2014.969019>.

Wit, S. de. (2018). *Hidden landscapes : the metropolitan garden as a multi-sensory expression of place*. *Architectura & Natura*.

Reflection

1. What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

The studio is titled 'Last Green in Town', referring to the site La Friche Josaphat in Brussels. In my graduation project, as I explore the urban green space in the present metropolitan context, landscape and architecture will be highly interwoven. Situated at the edge of the site, the project also deals with the challenge of integrating a new building (and the rest of the masterplan) with a complex existing context.

2. What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional and scientific framework.

The project addresses the approach towards urban green in the sustainability discourse, looking beyond the science and economics and focusing instead on the experience in nature as an argument for ensuring the resilience of the site. It also explores the interesting interplay between the artificial and natural, tying in with the increasing initiatives for re-wilding and re-naturalisation of urban voids in Brussels and other European cities.