

Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences



Personal information	
Name	Lise Zoé Sarda
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Studio		
Name / Theme	ExploreLab 37	
Main mentor	Aleksandar Stanisic	Architecture
Second mentor	Erik Hehenkamp	Building Technology
Third Mentor	Sabina Tanovic	Research
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>Growing up in the Alps, exploring the mountains, discovering their flora and fauna, walking, cycling and skiing for years there, and simply looking at them from the valley bottoms in my everyday life. I dived into researching on the history of what surrounded me my whole life during the Master 1 History Thesis: « Sheltering the Mountains, Tracing the human behavior in wild environment through high-altitude Architecture from the 17th century to present day. »</p> <p>For this Graduation year my wish was to continue learning on the history and problematics of my homeland and directing an ethnographic study linked to architecture in the aim of a more sensible approach to the mountainous building environment.</p> <p>Being part of the ExploreLab Studio allows for great liberty in the parameters of the Graduation research and project, thus giving the opportunity for an interdisciplinary study in a chosen location. Through these decisions, the project and research can be oriented on a more comprehensive analysis based on personal knowledge and experience as a native of the region.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Forgotten Heritage of World War II, the Narratives of the French Alps fortifications.
Subtitle	Les Rochilles Unveiled
Goal	
Location:	French Alps - Maurienne
The posed problem,	The Maurienne mountains, situated within the French Alps, were the front line of the Battle of the Alps in 1940 and later in 1945. Both the Italians and the French built an entire system of fortifications on either side of their border, the Vallo Alpino facing the Maginot Line. Substantial

	<p>investments in positioning military infrastructure within the mountainous terrain were made. However, after the end of the Second World War and later the end of the Cold War, following the creation of the United Nations Organisation, the primary function of these military infrastructures became obsolete, relegating them to a state of neglect. What remains are concrete structures, corroded steel, and kilometres of underground galleries, often overlooked.</p> <p>The abandonment and neglect of the Fortifications suggests an evolution in their significance for both the public and the State. In many cases, the very existence of these structures is ignored, even by the locals. Their concealed locations, remoteness, and the historical and military symbolism they encapsulate appear to have hastened their deterioration.</p>
<p>research questions and</p>	<p>How is the collective understanding of the Maginot Line fortifications in the French Alps reflected in narratives? How do they influence the materiality of the fortifications?</p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>Museum Path for the Maginot Work of <i>Les Rochilles</i></p>
<p>The design will focus on the Maginot structure at Les Rochilles in Maurienne, in the heart of the French Alps. The structure in question is not unique. It is part of a largely ignored historical ensemble: the Maginot Line of the Alps and the Battle of the Alps. As such, in its environment, the structure is a key - visible point - in an ensemble of elements that together form the heritage of this historical period.</p> <p>The research describes a cycle of action-reaction of indifference and abandonment dynamics between the structure and the people. It sheds light on the history of the site and its interpretations, and how these are reflected in the buildings, bringing together an architecture, a place and a history. The design is conceived to break through this cycle and to reconnect people with this ensemble.</p>	

The graduation project will be tackling heritage and memory, and developed as a 'Museum Path' linking the territorial and relative scale of the fortification. It will consist of interventions for the different scales of landscape, building and material, taking into account the following objectives Observation, Information, Protection and Interaction. The approach is both to reactivate the site on a human level and to consider its particularities related to the altitude and the ecosystem of the site.

Process

Method description

I believe that human behavior towards architecture is profoundly influenced by lived experience of space, shaping how it is perceived. This perception, based on the (historical) knowledge, memory and sensory experiences of a person/community, is the basis of my research. The aim is to uncover the nuanced relationships between these elements, informing the subsequent design process. My focus is on conducting an ethnographic study of fortifications, with the ultimate aim of creating a design that integrates and sustains built heritage within its ecological context, as part of an ecosystem.

The study focuses on French military structures in Savoie, highlighting various bunker structures from the Second World War. To understand how narratives influence the condition of such military structures, I looked closely at the history and anthropological impact of the Maginot fortifications in the Maurienne region of the French Alps. A two-week study trip allowed me to collect a range of narratives from fortification enthusiasts, locals, tourists, historians and guides. During the trip I undertook expeditions to twelve fortifications of various types. The journey is documented in the form of a drawn Carnet de Voyage.

Each structure is considered under three scales: Landscape, Building, Material. This makes it possible to consider the broader context of the structure within a landscape, to analyze the impact of a typology on the overall perception of the structure, as well as to reveal how the presence of temporal progression and human interaction influences the experience of the place. In this way, the relationship between narrative and physical integrity can be highlighted.

A variety of sources are used, including archives of plans and official documents, maps detailing approaches to the structures, blogs and Facebook groups written by history and fortification enthusiasts, as well as a photographic record of the physical condition of the structures and their surroundings from the study trip, and a personal record of my experience of the place as a native of the region. This mixed approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how perceptual lenses captured through narratives intersect with the historical and architectural aspects of these structures.

The analysis of the structures and their narratives enlighten the different aspects and definitions of 'the Bunker'. The documentation is then classified and interpreted according to these definitions: An Encounter, A Material, A Shelter, A Memory, and presented in a research paper along with a photo catalogue. This allows a new interpretation of the military heritage.

This approach, based on the scales of landscape, building and materials, as well as a renewed vision of the military bunker, continues in my graduation project, nurturing the possibility of making this heritage accessible and visible.

Literature and general practical references

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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)?

My graduation project is an exploration of the possibilities for interpreting and displaying a little-known heritage. While putting into perspective the need to consider such a memory marginal to society in its location - lost in altitude - and in conversations - a forgotten battle -. At the same time, it is a personal exploration of the history of my region, which is particularly close to my heart. The theme of conservation and transformation in the built environment is a recurring one in architectural studies. Addressing this theme in the context of such structures and within a multidisciplinary framework allows me to embed my project in the continuity of my education within the AUBS Masters programme. The emphasis on understanding the dynamic interplay between narratives, physical integrity, and community engagement underscores the holistic nature of the research, ultimately contributing to a nuanced and sustainable reinterpretation of the military heritage associated with the Maginot Line in the French Alps.

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

The project I am working on is interdisciplinary research on architecture and, in particular, on the valorisation of a war heritage. Considering historical research and ethnography to develop an architectural design is a way of challenging the conception of the Architecture practice, exemplifying a holistic methodology applicable to heritage conservation and sustainable development. The aim is to find ways for individuals to re-appropriate their heritage and reintegrate these overlooked structures into the cultural dialogue. As the object of study is located in a fragile ecosystem, the approach also considers the protection of the environment and focuses on the coexistence of the human and the more than human. The eternal aspect of the concrete, mocked by erosion, also raises questions about the collapse of buildings and the ruins of the future, thus advancing the discourse on the intersection of built heritage and ecological context.