

# HAUS BILL

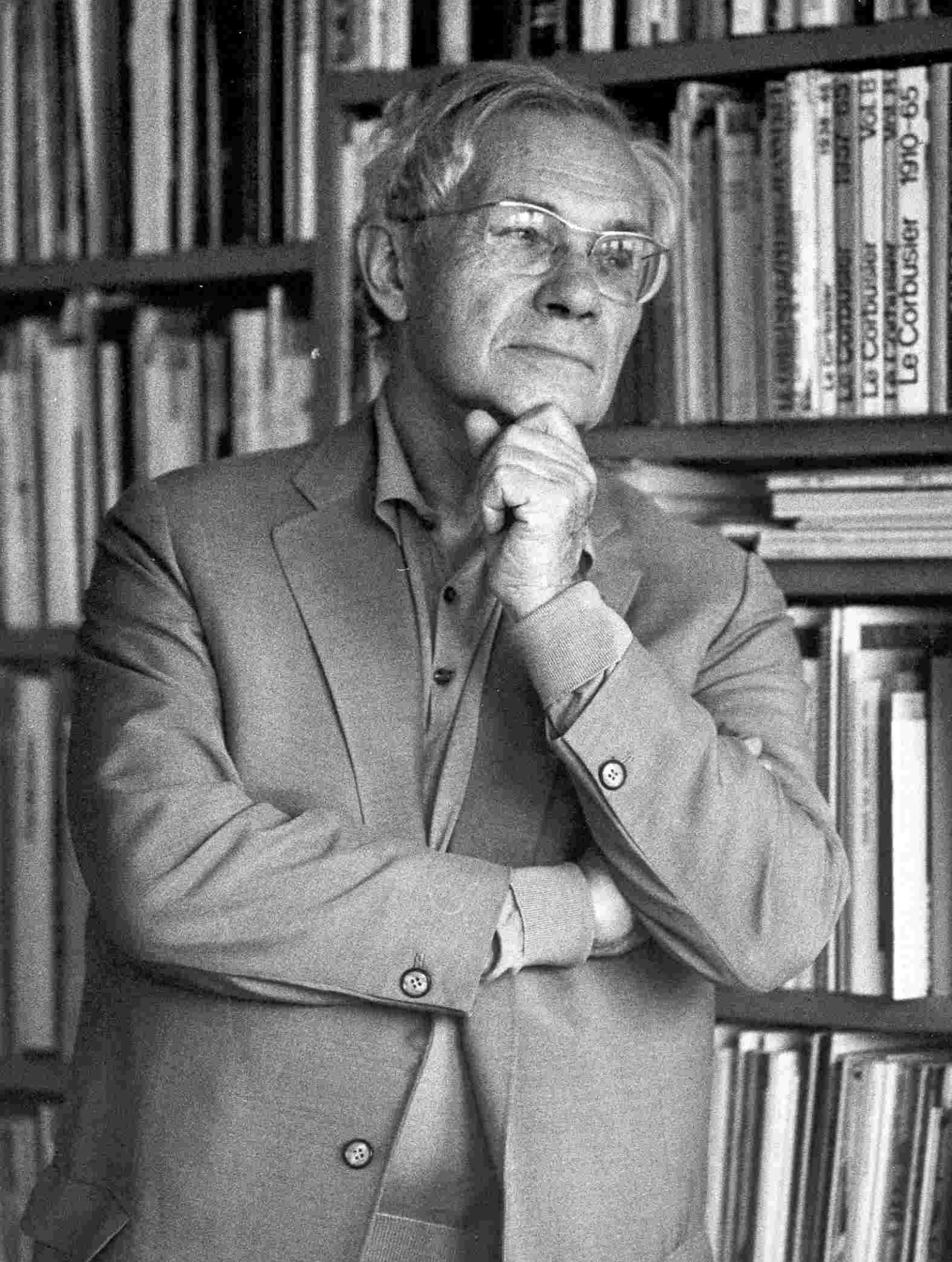
Studio Sergison  
Autumn Semester 2016

Institution I



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## Introduction

This semester the studio will focus on 'institutions' as a theme, and more specifically cultural institutions.

We will work on the house and studio designed by Swiss architect, artist, sculptor and designer Max Bill for himself and his family between 1967 and 1968 in Zumikon, just outside Zurich, which we will consider as a cultural venue, while retaining its character as a home.

The task will be to consider how the existing house and sizeable garden can be reconfigured, and a new programme of exhibition spaces and supplementary service infrastructure buildings can be accommodated within the existing and neighbouring site.

Throughout the semester our discussions will focus on the nature of cultural institutions and how new structures can sit alongside the work of an internationally significant architect while projecting a public character and their own architectural ideas.

There is a long and well established tradition of homes becoming public institutions. Sometimes this is because running costs and scale make them unviable as homes for their owners. In some cases the house is no longer a home, in other cases it retains some domestic functions while allowing some form of public accessibility.

This semester we will be considering the model of a home and public programme working side by side but retaining a sense of autonomy. You will be asked to develop a concept for a cultural centre that will exhibit the permanent collection of Max Bill's own paintings and sculptures, as well as his collection of some of the greatest artists of the twentieth century. The building should also operate as a venue with a changing programme of temporary exhibitions. Accommodation for artists in residence, as well as service spaces and the facilities needed for events and receptions should also be incorporated. A detailed brief description will be issued separately.

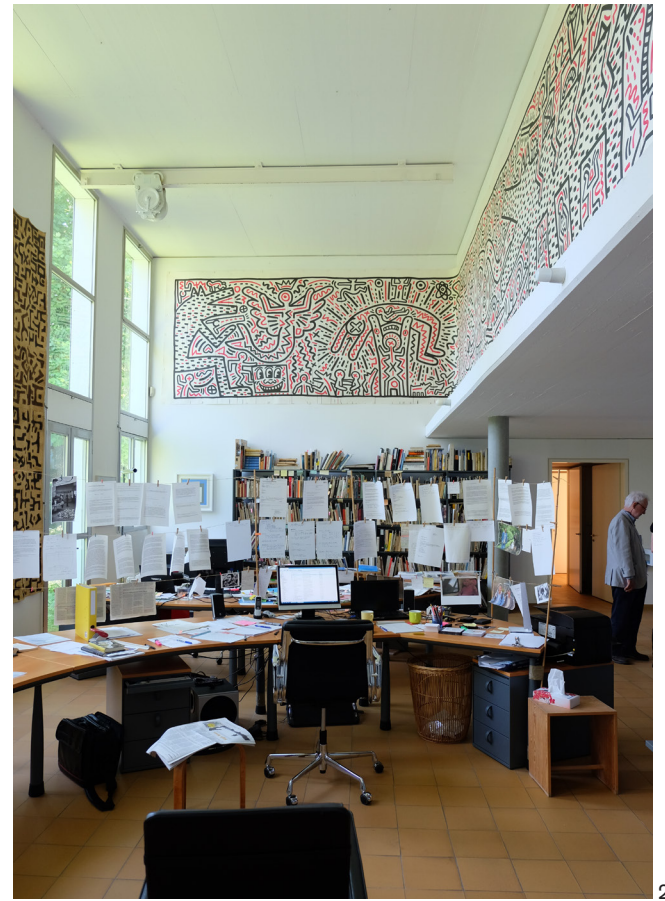
The position of the new building on the site needs to be carefully appraised and a study of options should be undertaken considering its relationship to the existing house. The area that should be considered is illustrated in the accompanying plan.



1  
Max Bill, Pfäffikon, 1977



1



2

- 1  
Courtyard, Max Bill House, 2016
- 2  
Double-height studio space, Max Bill House, 2016
- 3  
Living room, Max Bill House, 2016



3



1



2

1-3  
Archive, Max Bill House, 2016



3

Whereas in Bill's first studio house in Zurich-Höngg the restricted budget and Bill's lack of experience in building determined the framework of the design, in his second home and studio in Zumikon Bill was able to plan without any significant restrictions. Having purchased the 2.5-hectare sloping site with a copse and some meadowland and a small moor for a good price during the second world war, Bill was now at the height of his powers. The topography and the distances that had to be maintained to the site boundaries gave rise to an L-shaped house with studio, with the two legs of the L opening towards the garden and the wood. Bill proceeded from an analysis of the inhabitants' daily activities and prepared sketches for the layout of the rooms in the initial phase. This would explain why the house consists of different independent wings, open and public, as well as closed and purely private, rooms and sequences of spaces.

As in the pair of houses (the Fleckhaus and Bold houses) near Cologne, the Zumikon house also presents itself to the approach from the road as a simple, single-storey volume with a series of garage doors and two entrances. The two-storey studio, which gives northwards through large windows onto an unspoiled landscape forms the pendant to the entrance situation. The entrance facade and the north facade are the two outer edges of the L-described by the building's plan. Bill worked through various versions of the situation in a number of design sketches – in one version with a museum-like entrance to the studio wing, even – finally arriving at the chosen solution in which the studio is at the northern corner in the part of the house furthest from the road.

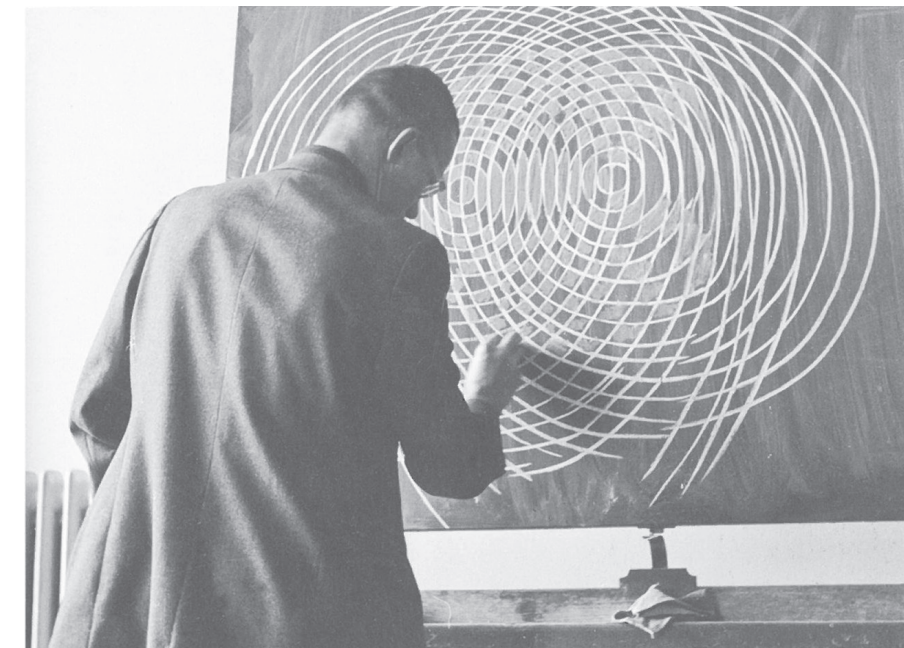
The entrance to the house lies at the join between the building's two principal volumes. Having passed the entrance, a vestibule on the right leads the visitor to two guest rooms and down three steps to a studio used by Bill as a study. From there, a corridor leads to a living room in the northwest of the house with a terrace in front of it. Bill's son Jakob and his family originally lived in this wing. One can also proceed from the entrance up the staircase into the large living room, around which smaller rooms are grouped. This space, which has a lower ceiling around the fireplace, forms the focus of the house, as it is open on all sides and seems to continue into the surrounding rooms as well as outdoors. The columns, like *pilotis*, are cleverly positioned both inside and outside, giving the space a rhythm and creating interesting axial views that lead on the diagonal into the garden. In addition, a brown clay tile floor links the interior with certain outdoor spaces. Bill gave the living area, which measures 100 m<sup>2</sup>, an intimate character using furniture he designed himself, his own artwork and pieces by respected colleagues as well as his collection of Jugendstil vases and prehistoric finds. There is a direct connection between the living room and the bedroom area, which in turn is connected to the double-height studio. Like all the rooms originally used by Max Bill as work-spaces, this latter space lies on the north side of the building. A flight of steps leads down to the painting studio and the painting storeroom a floor below, on the level of the lower courtyard garden.

The various levels of the house reflect the nature of the sloping site, which is defined in the garden by a series of walls and steps. In general, the project has an exciting quality that results from the contrast between the large surface areas of the outer sides of the two wings and the conglomeration of the small cubes, terraces, loggias and courtyard gardens that is created between the two legs of the L. This

small-scale articulation is also applied to the garden, which extends on a diagonal to the layout of the house. The living room – the hinge and corner point of the entire plan – lies in the angle formed by the two wings.

In construction terms the Zumikon studio house is made of prefabricated Preton panels that were originally covered with an even, white render. As the solution did not prove successful a new facade had to be made later. Bill again chose a prefabricated modular element, fibre-cement panels made by the Eternit company with whom he had already worked in the Expo-64 in Lausanne. On the outside the L and the large-scale panels establish a regular grid into which the windows are inserted, whereas on the inside of the angle made by the building, in response to the smaller scale of the volumes, a different rhythm is set up in which wider panels are combined with smaller ones. The wider Eternit panels are the width of the window opening, whereas the narrower panels match the distance between the windows. After Bill's death in 1994 further changes were made to both the interior and exterior.

*Max Bill Architect, in 2G n.29.30, pp.208-211*



Max Bill teaching the theory of artistic form, Zürich School of Art, 1944

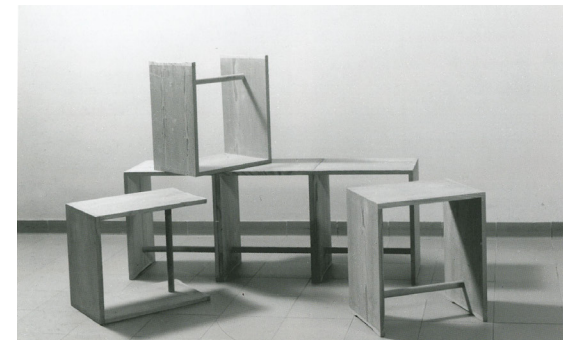




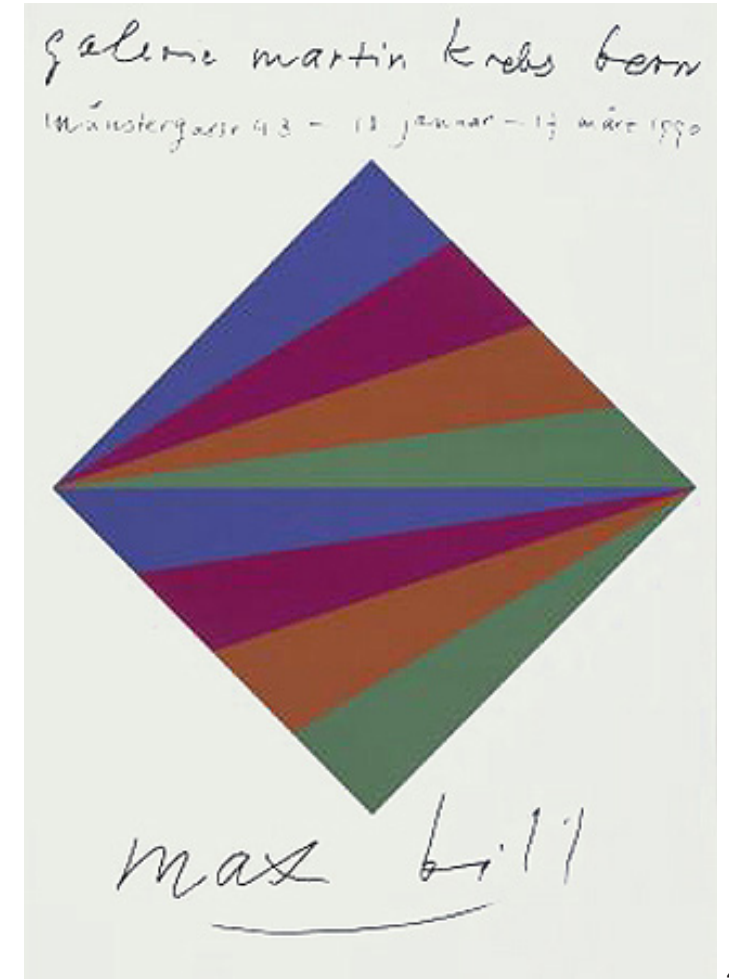
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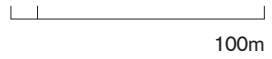
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1 Hochschule für Gestaltung, Ulm, Max Bill, 1950-1955

2 Konstruktio aus drei Quadratgröße, Max Bill, 1939-1941

3 Ulmer Hocker, Max Bill, 1954

4 Graphic work, Max Bill





## First exercise: Study of an art space

The first exercise we would like you to undertake is designed to help you develop an understanding of the character of a space intended to display works of art. We invite you to study a room in one of many galleries and foundations we have selected in Switzerland and northern Italy. You can select which of the spaces you wish to photograph, but should ensure it serves the purpose of displaying works of art and that you are able to gain access to photograph it.

Having made your choice, you will need to study the space carefully and find a good position to photograph it, taking care with the light level and composition of the photograph. You will then be asked to make a model of the space at a scale of 1:10 based on a print of the photograph you have taken. The model should accurately recreate everything that can be seen in the print. Having done this, you then need to photograph the model you have made. Care should be taken to recreate the lighting levels and atmosphere you observed in the room chosen and in the photograph you took. You then need to take a photograph of the model and print it at the same size as the original print.

In addition we ask that you make a survey of the plan of the museum or gallery you have been given to study. This is to help you understand the circulation concept and way that a sequence of spaces work as an ensemble. The plan should be drawn at a scale of 1:100.

An introduction to this exercise will be offered at the start of the semester.



pages 18 and 19  
Living room, Max Bill House, 2016

1-2  
Photographs of apartment interior and final model  
Maria Cagnoli

## Second exercise: Building concept

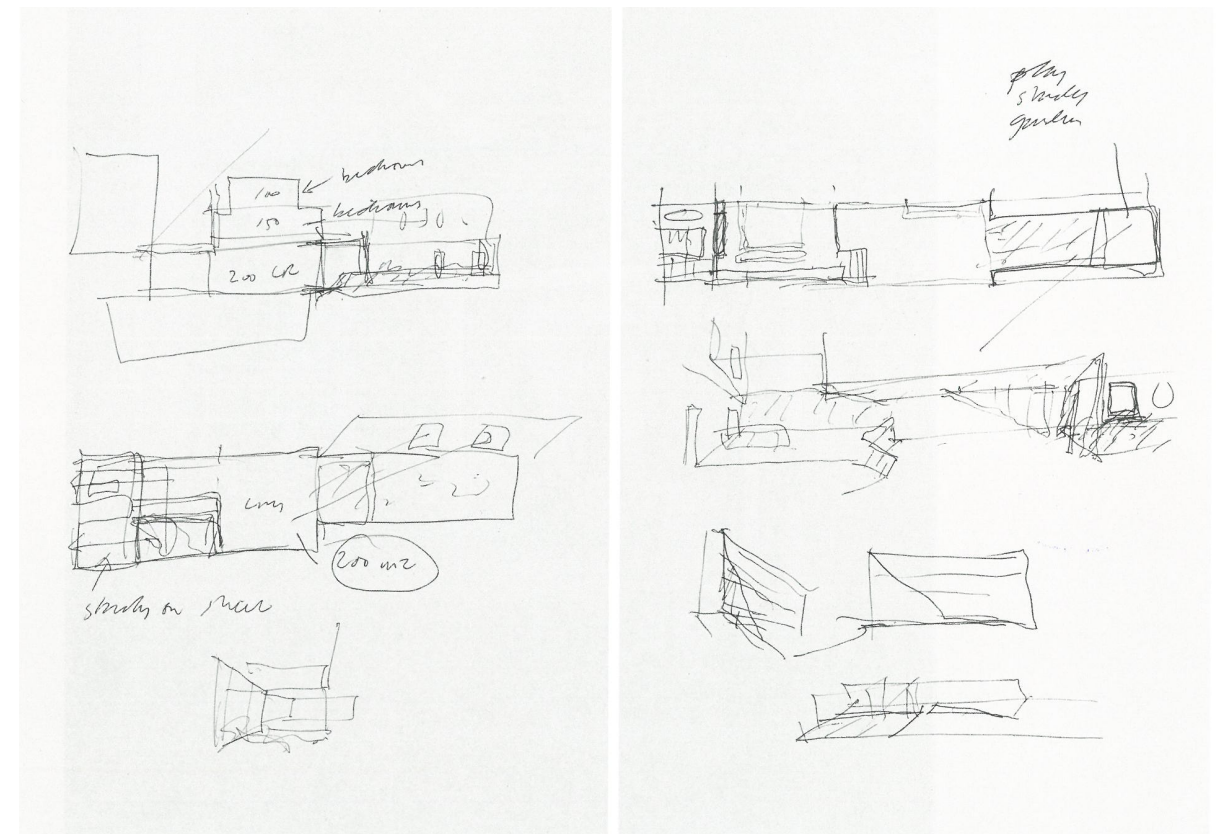
All students are required to produce a 1:500 timber block model of the site and the wider surrounding area as a group project. This requires both accuracy and careful coordination. Particular care should be taken in the representation of trees.

The model produced should then be used as a tool to help develop a concept for your own project. Consideration should be given to the scale of the building, the way it accommodates the programme and the relationship it establishes with neighbouring buildings and the surrounding landscape.

While priority should be given to an extensive exploration of different massing possibilities, you will be expected to produce drawings in the form of sketches, plans sections and elevations.

A lecture by Tony Fretton will be given at this stage in the semester to broaden your understanding of the themes and issues we are inviting you to consider.

1  
Sketches, Fuglsang Art Museum  
Tony Fretton



### Third exercise: Room study

With the knowledge you should now have developed of your project, you will be asked to build a model of a room at 1:10 that accurately represents the atmosphere you want it to hold. Representing a room may require you to indicate its relationship with neighbouring rooms, or the view out to the landscape.

You are expected to make a number of models to explore ideas for this single space. The final version should then be photographed as carefully as the room you selected for the first exercise. This is a key aspect of the work you will produce this semester.

An introductory lecture will be offered on this aspect of your work.



1



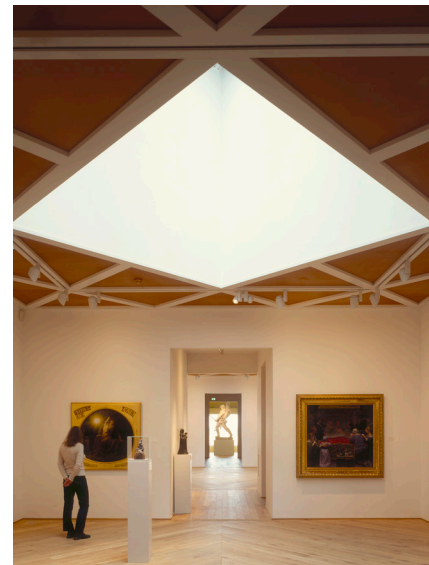
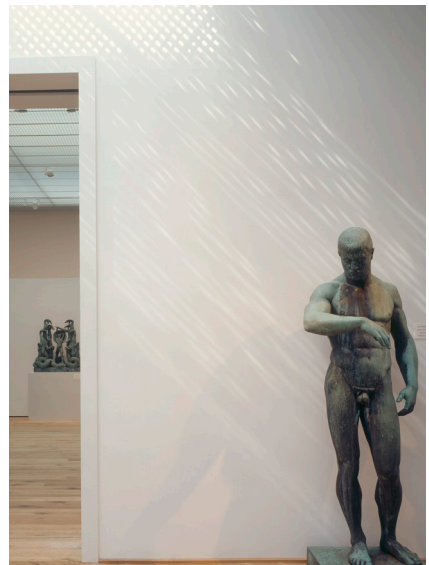
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1, 2  
Study models, Ruthin Craft Center  
Sergison Bates architects

## Fourth exercise: Project

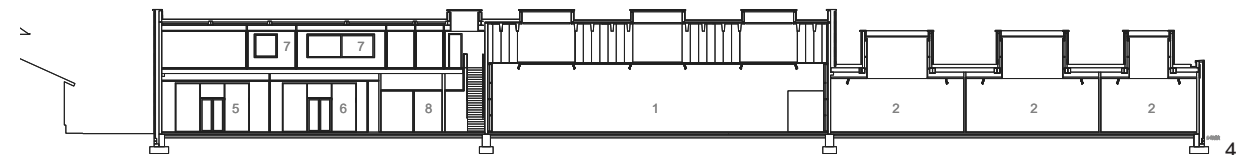
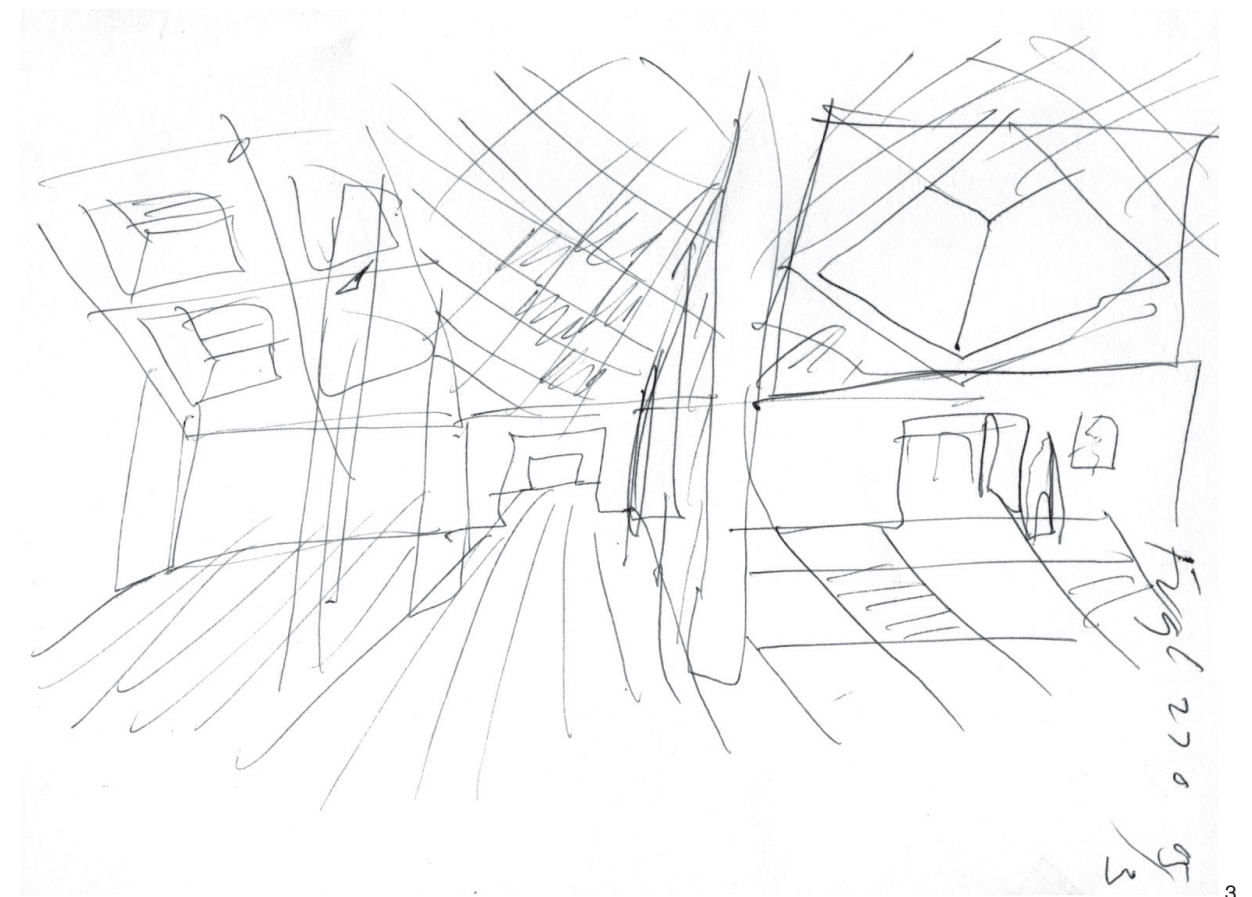
This exercise is intended to build upon the understanding you have begun to develop during the previous stage of your work to refine your project further. The focus will be on plastic qualities: you are asked to produce study models at a scale of 1:100 and 1:50. These will allow you to consider your project in relation to the wider context. The base model should be sufficiently detailed and include enough of the neighbouring buildings to enable you to understand the immediate relationship your project has to its surroundings.

As in the previous exercise, while priority should be given to the making of models that explore ideas about the form, volume, elevation and internal organisation of the building, the process should be supported by drawings.



1, 2  
Photographs, Fuglsang Art Museum  
Tony Fretton

3, 4  
Sketches, Fuglsang Art Museum  
Tony Fretton

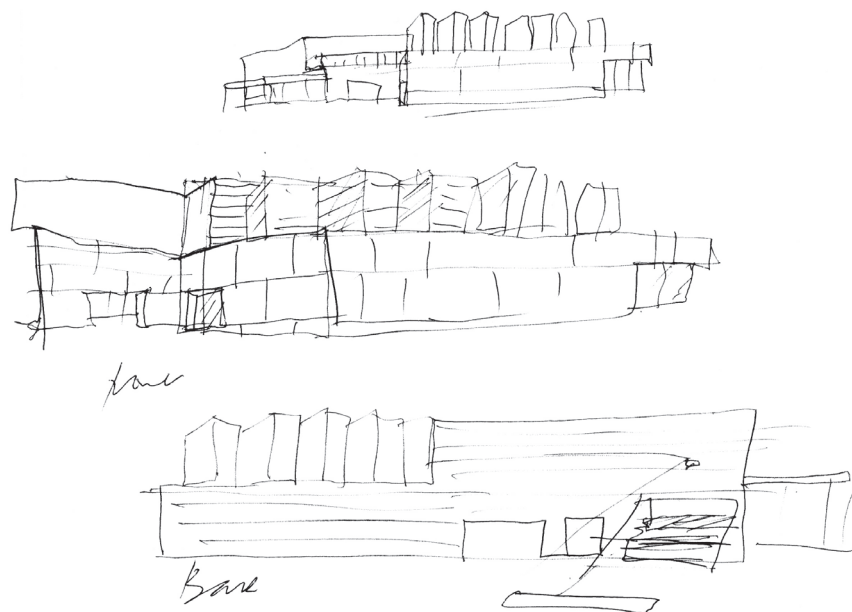


Fifth exercise: Final drawings

At this stage in the development of your project you will be asked to consider the internal organisation of your building at a larger scale. The organisation of the plans and sections should be repeatedly drawn and refined through a reflective and critical process. The choices you make about how to produce drawings and their representational character should be carefully considered.

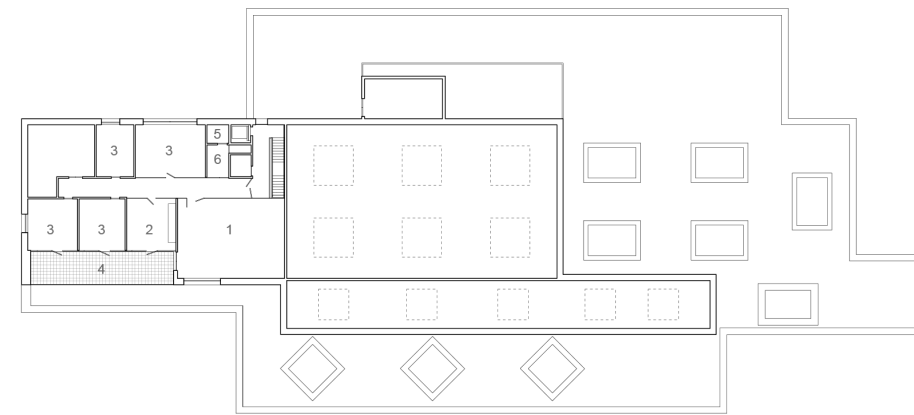
A final set of drawings should be submitted 2 weeks before the final reviews to give you sufficient time to produce the final model.

A lecture on ways of drawing will be offered to support your work.



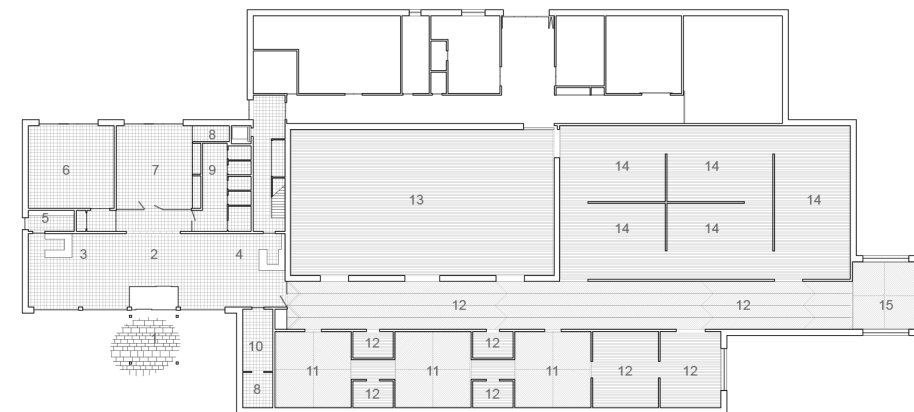
1  
Sketches, Fuglsang Art Museum  
Tony Fretton

2  
Plans, Fuglsang Art Museum  
Tony Fretton



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

- 1 Library
- 2 Staff room
- 3 Office
- 4 Terrace
- 5 WC
- 6 Cloakroom



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

- 1 Entrance canopy
- 2 Foyer
- 3 Cafe
- 4 Ticket desk / Bookshop
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Lecture room
- 7 Art classroom
- 8 Store
- 9 WCs
- 10 Cloakroom
- 11 Exhibition room for Older Art
- 12 Exhibition space
- 13 Temporary exhibition room
- 14 Exhibition room for Modern Art
- 15 Rest area



## Final review

The final review will consider all the components of the work produced during the semester, including a large-scale model of your project produced using carefully selected materials.

You should also prepare a beamer presentation of your project. It is important that you are able to describe the development of your work accurately and precisely and include models of your final project at 1:500, 1:200, and 1:50 or 1:20, an image of the room you have chosen and a revised version of the image you made earlier in the semester. You also need to produce drawings at an appropriate scale in plan, section and elevation.



1-3  
Final reviews  
Spring semester 2016

Date	Event	Details	Assignments
22 September	Studio introduction		
23 September	Studio briefing and site visit	Autumn semester studio presentation by Jonathan Sergison (JS). Lecture "Room survey" by Lea Prati (LP)	Photographs of display space Visit to galleries and museums
29-30 September	Tutorials	Survey studies	1:10 model of room
6-7 October	Trip to Zürich and Ulm	See separate programme	See separate programme
13-14 October	Review	Survey studies and initial strategies for building programme	Survey photographs (display space) 1:500 site model
20-21 October	Tutorials	Building concept review of model, plans, sections and elevations Lecture "Applied art" JS Lecture "Drawings" Taro Sakurai	1:500 site model 1:500 situation plan Initial ideas for building
27-28 October	Review	Project reviews	1:200 site model 1:200 plans, sections, elevations
3-4 November	Intermediate review	Review of all material produced so far A space to display art Lecture "Making space for art" Tony Fretton	1:500 site model 1:10 interior model, 1:200 plans, sections, elevations Beamer presentation
10-11 November	Tutorials	Building studies	1:100 / 1:50 model studies, 1:100 / 1:50 plans, sections, elevations
17-18 November	Tutorials	Building studies	1:100 / 1:50 model studies, 1:100 / 1:50 plans, sections, elevations
24-25 November	Tutorials	Building studies	1:100 / 1:50 model studies, Plans, sections, elevations Detail section and material concept

Date	Event	Details	Assignments
1-2 December	Review	Review of drawings	1:100 / 1:50 plans, sections, elevations Detail section and material concept
8-9 December	Tutorials	Submission of drawings	1:100 / 1:50 plans, sections, elevations Detail section and material concept
15-16 December	Tutorial	Model submission	Model to agreed scale
21-22 December	Final review	Final review	Beamer presentation 1:500 model Presentation model 1:100 / 1:50 plans, sections, elevations

## Reading list

- Kunst + Design**  
Donald Judd, Stankowski-Stiftung, Stuttgart, Cantz, Stuttgart, 1993
- Donald Judd: Architektur**  
Marianne Stockebrand (ed.), Cantz, Stuttgart, 1992
- A way of life. Kettle's Yard**  
Jim Ede, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984
- Owning art: the contemporary art collectors handbook**  
Louisa Buck and Judith Greer, Skopia, Genève, 2007
- Gerhard Richter: Doubt and Belief in Painting**  
Robert Storr, Museum of Modern Art, New York 2003
- Fischli/Weiss: Flowers & Questions. A Retrospective**  
Bice Curiger, Peter Fischli, David Weiss (eds.), Tate Modern, London, 2007
- Buildings and their territories**  
Tony Fretton, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2013

## References

- Max Bill**  
Eduard Hüttinger, ABC Verlag, Zürich, 1977
- Max Bill: ohne Anfang ohne Ende**  
Marta Herford, Scheidegger & Spies, Zürich, 2008
- Max Bill Architect**  
2G n.29.30, Barcelona, 2004
- Max Bill: Aspekte seines Werks**  
Dieter Schwarz, Sandra Gianfreda (eds.), Niggli, Sulgen, 2008
- Max Bill, pittore, scultore, architetto, designer**  
Thomas Buchsteiner, Otto Letze, Marion Ackermann (eds.), Electa, Italy, 2006
- Minimal tradition, Max Bill and 'simple' architecture, 1942-96**  
Stanislaus von Moos, Lars Müller, Baden, 1996
- Max Bill - The master's vision (film)**  
Erich Schmid, Ariadnefilm, Zumikon, 2008

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