

A Monument to Loneliness

Masterstudio SS 2024 Institute of Architecture and Media

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Concept

This is a studio about loneliness. Loneliness is an emotion, a state, a frequently discussed condition in the modern world. A growing number of people suffer from loneliness and isolation. It is a serious problem in many societies. Britain famously created a ministry of loneliness in 2018 to address the growing threat to its population. In 2023 the World Health Organisation (WHO) made loneliness a global health priority with a new commission on social connection. Paradoxically, loneliness is also something we sometimes do not get enough of in today's connected world. Loneliness allows for introspection and contemplation. For many creative pursuits and types of learning we need to be alone and undisturbed.

This studio project invites students to explore loneliness as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon and to design and build a monument for it: **A Monument to Loneliness**.

A monument is a structure that is created to commemorate something, usually a person or an event. Monuments also have the power to inspire us, to remind us of our shared humanity and the values that bind us together as a society. According to Adolf Loos, the monument is one of the most essential and most challenging architectural tasks. To make the challenge less daunting, we have already made certain decisions about how we will develop our monument to loneliness: **Its size is limited to 3m in height on a 1.5m x 1.5m footprint. The monument will be built out of clay and we will use digital fabrication techniques in its construction.**

In other words: We will use the design of the monument as an opportunity to experiment with contemporary interpretations of ornament and material effects in architecture. Clay is a material that symbolizes fragility and impermanence. We will explore ways to endow this material with beauty and finesse and to create structures that spark reflection, curiosity and conversation. We will **collectively construct a monument in one-to-one scale** at the end of the semester. Placed in a public space, the monument should be a thought-provoking piece of pure architecture.

Keywords: *loneliness, fragility, sustainable materials, generative methods, digital fabrication*

Design Development:

- **Digital Exploration:** Students will begin by developing 2D/3D construction games related to themes of social isolation and collaboration. This hands-on experience will introduce them to digital design tools (Rhino, Python, GH) and fabrication techniques (laser cutting, 3D printing, CNC milling).
- **Patterns and Ornaments:** Through historical, mathematical and contemporary research, students will delve into the role of patterns and ornaments in conveying emotions and symbolism. These insights will inform the design of the monument, ensuring its form and ornamentation effectively communicate the complexities of loneliness.
- **Biomimicry and Construction:** This exploration will foster a deeper understanding of the dialogue between nature and architectural expression. Drawing inspiration from nature, students will engage in biomimetic design, translating the structural essence of chosen natural phenomena into the 1.5x1.5x3 meter monument. Using clay as primary material, students will collaborate to assemble individual elements into the final structure.

Exhibition:

The completed **Monument to Loneliness** will be exhibited in a public space. An accompanying exhibition will share information about the project's concept, design process, construction, and the issue of loneliness. Visitors will be encouraged to reflect and engage in dialogue about this important topic.

Key Learning Outcomes:

- Explore the complex emotion of loneliness through artistic expression.
- Translate natural phenomena into structural design concepts.
- Develop proficiency in digital design and fabrication tools.
- Gain a deeper understanding of the role of ornaments in design.
- Collaboration to create a 1:1 scale artwork.

Excursion, Guest Speakers:

- An **excursion** will take us **to Vorarlberg and Switzerland** where besides architectural tours we will visit the company **Lehm Ton Erde GmbH** of rammed earth construction pioneer Martin Rauch, digital wood specialists **Blumer-Lehmann** as well as facilities of the **NCCR Digital Fabrication** at ETH Zürich.
- There is a special meeting on **Friday March 1st at 10 am** at IAM for **coordinating the excursion**.
- The studio will be accompanied by a series of interdisciplinary guest lectures on the studio topics. Experts in psychology, art history, generative design and digital fabrication will engage the students in a seminar setting.