

Emanuel Christ
The Ideal City

Lliçó inaugural 2023–24

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Opening Lecture 2023–24
Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona

Emanuel Christ
Christ & Gantenbein

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THE IDEAL CITY

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The lecture *The Ideal City* was given by the architect Emanuel Christ on 27 September 2023 as the opening lecture of the 2023-24 academic course of the Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona.

Architecture, however – the world of objects created by architecture – is not only described by types, but also produced through them.

– Rafael Moneo

SEVEN FRAGMENTS OF A POSSIBLE THEORY OF ARCHITECTURE

I will introduce seven fragments of a theory of architecture, or rather a possible theory of architecture as an attempt to share elements on the reflections at the base of our practice. Considering our roles as teachers and architects, we feel an obligation to repeatedly reinforce that bridge between practice and academia.

At home, I have many books. Oddly enough, books are the first thing that really make me think of architecture as architecture. More than the daily experience of the city and its buildings, it is only when architecture is referred to and described as such that it becomes architecture in the academic sense. I really believe that only through editing and publishing, buildings are turned back into ideas, consequently remaking them as architecture. Explaining buildings as a "History of Ideas" or as a "History of Intentions" serves as the entry point into this possible theory.

I. IDEALISATION

Idealisation of a project, or even of an image, can distil the idea out of architecture. We look at something to grasp the essence that we can then relate to. Thus, through idealisation, we translate buildings into ideas, and as such, they become raw material for our own designs.

And we should be ambitious enough to idealise our own work. By taking our own ideas and juxtaposing them with architectural history, we become aware of the fact that whatever we do, we are immediately becoming part of architectural history. We are constantly making history.

We are paradoxically producing the architecture of the past for the future, given our position in relation to time. I consider it both a great privilege and an obligation in our profession, as well as in our education, to be aware of that perspective of time and the role we play in history making.

In 1998, Christoph and I went on a journey to discover that history of architecture and to become part of it. We looked for ideas of architecture in Italy, like so many before us. So perhaps there is also a sparkle of irony when I speak about idealisation. The outcome of that journey was a book called *Pictures from Italy*¹. The introduction speaks precisely about this interconnection to history and the attempt to confront our own existence through the legacy of our predecessors.

But what we discovered were not just the classics. Back then and even today, it's the everyday of the city and its buildings which interests us most: a normal house in Italy or here in Barcelona or in many other places. And by simply looking and identifying, we already start to design and to partly integrate that building and the idea of a green volume with white shutters as our own.

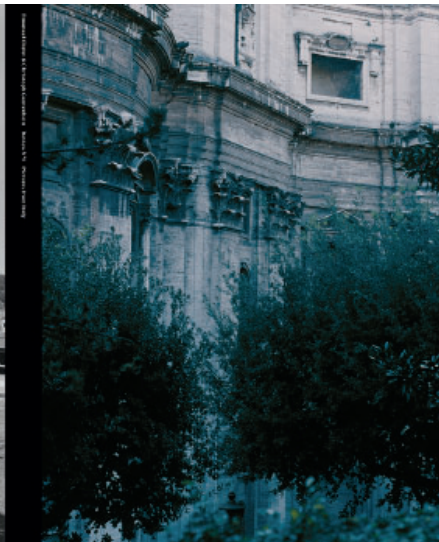
Within the book, we explicitly create the previously mentioned juxtaposition. We conduct the experiment of placing a photograph of our own work next to a photograph

from *Pictures from Italy* without trying to prove anything, since we are not claiming that the image on the right has informed the image on the left.

Reflecting on history while simultaneously planning for a time that lies far in the future diminishes the temporal aspect in one's own work. Quoting Anthony Vidler in *Histories of the Immediate Present*², we could say that an architectural project is immediate history. Once it is designed and built, it is history. In other words, architectural projects produce history. Ultimately, I am asking myself whether the true cultural, social, and

04 political function of architecture is to produce history through its very existence.

With this first publication, we had demonstrated something important to ourselves. Although the book was not very popular in the beginning, it was significant for us. With this small yet very ambitious publication, our aspiration was nothing less than to actively express this "becoming part of history" and to let it become a pictorial reality. So editing and making books, as I said at the beginning, is a way of making architecture. Ergo, *Pictures from Italy* is essentially the idealisation of our own work.



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Wiederherstellung, Neufunktionales Umfeld, 2008/2009, 1000 m²

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Foto: © G. P. / Contrasto

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Foto: © G. P. / Contrasto



Wiederherstellung, Neufunktionales Umfeld, 2008/2009, 1000 m²

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II. RE-USE

Yes, we are part of history, but at the same time, remember that we're just a drop in the infinite sea of architectural history. Learning from history and working with it could be called "re-use".

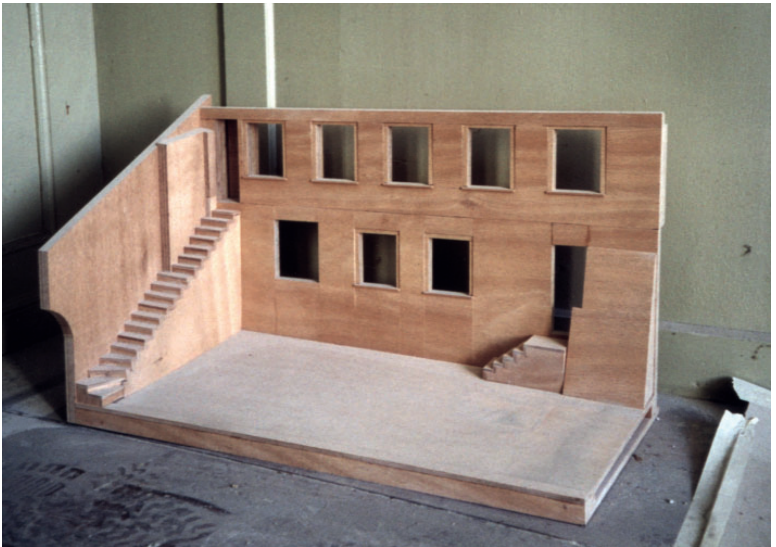
It's important to embrace the concept of re-use, but I think it's equally important to understand it in both material and immaterial terms. Indeed, we're using building elements and we're working with physical buildings and their components. However, it's also about learning the language inherent within them. At least that was true for Christoph and me in the beginning. We were learning an architectural language from buildings, reusing ideas, forms and principles in order to add a fresh layer that would provide a new interpretation. Even though one must admit that we hardly ever create something truly new.

The Torkelhaus is one of our first realised projects . The project is in a small town in eastern Switzerland with a medieval core and buildings from the late 18th and 19th centuries. Our building is not a particularly old one, but it's an idyllic, beautiful place with a small vineyard and a barn next to it. Our intervention was the renovation and minor refurbishment of the house. 05

What I think is important – what we described back then as our position, and which remains valid today – is that every architect needs realism to correctly assess his or her own impact. When we add new parts to a building, they obviously have an impact. What if it's just a little door? We didn't have to introduce our own language. We were hiding our interventions and we were proud of that fact. We spoke about it as "camouflage," as the almost invisible project. And we meant it. We were really humble and also impressed by the quality that we found. Sometimes we just added a coat of paint. The kitchen, however, was completely rebuilt with a new stone floor that we found just 10 kilometres from the town. So it was locally sourced and still trying to stay as close as possible to what this house already was before we arrived. We were not only learning to speak the language of the existing building, but we were learning from that building. 06



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Torkelhaus Sargans 05 06

III. BIG HOUSE

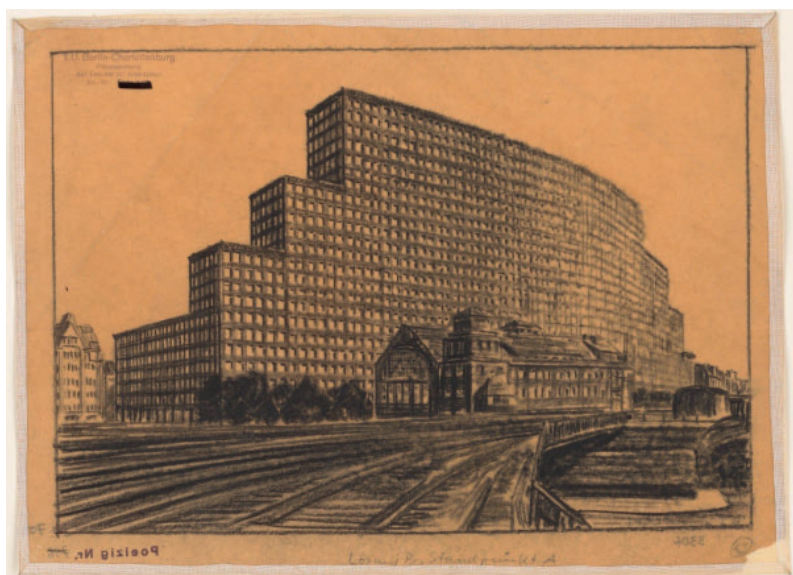
I suppose you are starting to see that my inconsistent line of argumentation is a bit of a roller coaster. We idealise and then we disappear. And now: think big!

I think all good architecture somehow wants to be big. And by big, I do not necessarily mean just in size. Of course, it can be large, but it might also relate to the word grand. In the very first studio course that Christoph and I taught together when we started in Mendrisio, we called the first semester "Dreamhouse" – back to the idealisation – and the second semester "Big House". 07

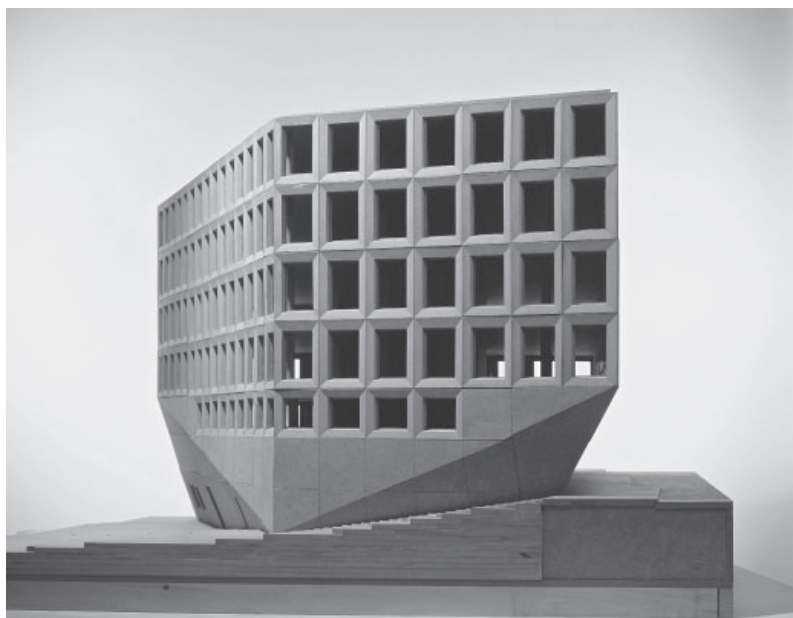
There is a very famous text by Rem Koolhaas on "bigness", which tries to make the point that in contemporary architecture (referring to the 90s and early 2000s), the only notion that really matters is dimension. Despite that, we wrote a small text for our students when we were teaching in Mendrisio in the early 2000s, which we called the "Didactical Purpose". Here is an extract:

By studying the potential of bigness in architecture, we learn a lot about the fundamental qualities of the architectural project: physical presence, order, and tectonic structure, rhythm, physiognomy, and expression, but also interaction with the site. We could almost say that every good architectural project is, in a way, a big house, even if its dimensions are very modest and small. Since bigness, the French grandeur and the Italian grandezza is not only about quantity, but also a matter of quality.³

It reminds me of an unrealised project by Hans Poelzig for a trade fair building in Hamburg in the 1920s⁴. Poelzig was a German expressionist architect whose work we truly admire and love. Christ & Gantenbein's version of "bigness" actually is not a very big building. It's an office building in Liestal, a town in Basel's conurbation. Looking at the model, we understand that it sits on a slope, on uneven ground, 08



Hans Poelzig, *Messehaus Hamburg*, 1925 07



Christ & Gantenbein, *Office Building, Liestal*, 2011 08

which results in an irregular geometry for the foundation. And since the site is very small and surrounded by train tracks and bus lanes, etc., it stands there a little bit like a boulder or a rock, growing in size in order to create this floor plan.

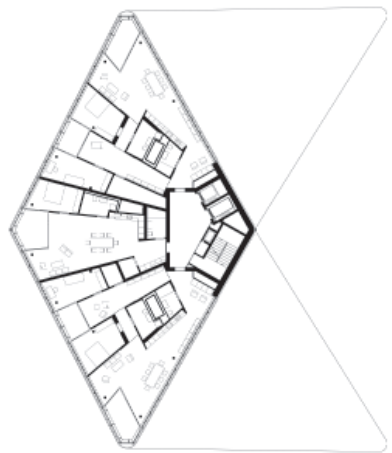
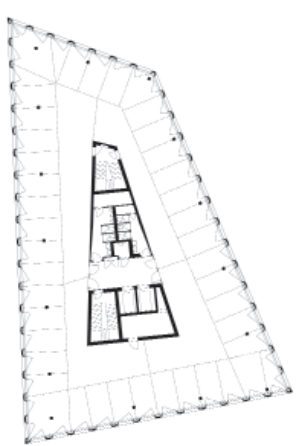
A distorted quadrilateral core set within a distorted 09
quadrilateral shell. It is almost a generic form of office building: a flexible layer of space around a core that provides the service. In that sense, it's a very simple project, but the effort was in its construction. It has a prefabricated concrete structure that creates a vessel-like body. There are shops in the lower level, which is why there are little windows in the back for deliveries.

This was our first "Big House". It's still there, and I think it ages well and has a form of resilience. We're still proud of it because it's very straightforward and bold. There is a very strong physical presence, which I associate with the very nature of architecture.

The second project related to the theme of the 10 11
big house is an office and housing tower. It's not a very high tower, only 20 stories in total. And it is different from the one that we just saw. Here, I would point out the configuration since I was mentioning physiognomy.

Does the building have a face or two arms? We naturally relate our design and the way we look at buildings to anthropomorphic standards, which is something very architectural. We always measure a building in relation to the human body, as an attempt to see an analogy.

There are always very specific conditions for each project. In this case it was a commercial real estate project on a site that is an almost impossible setting because of the heavy train corridor running by with a lot of noise. According to Swiss law, apartments have to be organised in a way that allows for natural ventilation without excessive noise. All the north-south cargo trains from Germany to Italy pass through here. To avoid confronting the noise, the building is set back to a certain extent. Unlike the previous project, where the core was in the middle, the core here shifts to one side to protect the building, and it opens the



Office Building, Liestal, 2011 09

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Christ & Gantenbein, Mixed-Use High-Rise at the Railway, Pratteln, 2016 10 11

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plan like a fan to the south with three to five apartments per floor. Below the residential tower are three floors of offices, and shops on the ground floor.

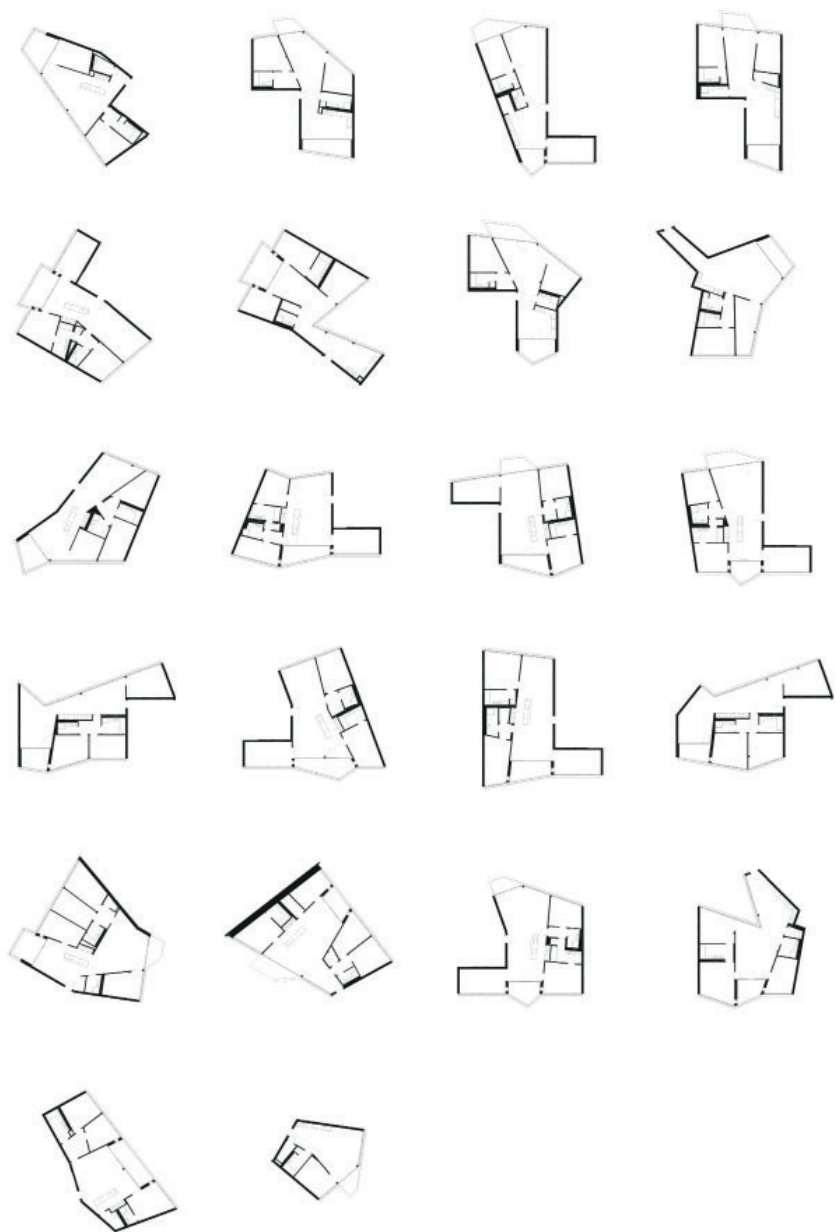
This building looks like a strange person staring at you with its eyes almost closed. You can literally see how strongly it has to react to the context of the site. It is an interesting battle between heavy constraints and the quest for order. I believe making architecture has a lot to do with creating order. Here, we had a very clear idea about geometry and form. This was our attempt to create an organisation of space that is the unique product of the highly specific conditions of this site.

In terms of construction, it's a classic column-plate structure in concrete, but the envelope was the first high-rise building in Switzerland with a wooden façade. We had to protect the wood against fire on the inside with plaster and on the outside with a shield of metal. It's galvanized steel that starts to change over time. Sometimes it looks like stone and sometimes like brilliant metal. And that again was a response to the specific context.

The third big house is a residential building that we finished 13 years ago. A 180-meter-long building in an urban, perfect triangular block in Basel. Speaking of rationality in architecture, a 90-degree angle is a different problem than a 60-degree angle, for instance. How to deal with this geometry and how to turn the corner were interesting problems. We tried to make the problem an asset, and even tried to benefit from it.

Sometimes, we need our hands in order to formulate ideas. So this line of the inner courtyard façade was hand-drawn in many, many, different versions. But it wasn't just for the sake of a more or less evident or elegant line. It was our attempt to create an additional orientation into the courtyard. Because the courtyard is oriented directly north, zigzagging allowed us to create a façade that turns slightly towards the west or the east while also introducing variation to the depth of the plan.





At VoltaMitte housing, we tested the potential of a systematic variation of one apartment type. By stating that every apartment should be slightly different from the other, we attempted to also deal with the problem of
13 bigness and length. And it became an interesting research into the relationship between individual form versus typological principle. In the end, one could say it's one type in 45 variations. The statement here – in relation to bigness – would be that typological variety might produce social diversity. There are small and big apartments that represent different lifestyles, families and constellations. The different apartments have different identities and to a certain extent they attract – and this is true even after more than 10 years – different types of people. It is a regular rental building and it's very well adopted, even today. However, this brings me to the next fragment in terms of my possible theory, which refers to the notion of typology.

IV. TYPOLOGY

In relation to bigness and modesty, one could say: be rational and see the bigger picture of architecture. And I would claim that typology is something like the bigger picture of architecture. It's our cultural, as well as our historical and systematic context.

The famous text "On Typology"⁵ by Rafael Moneo, published in 1978, helps to clarify a few fundamentals. "What, then, is a type?" asks Moneo. 14

In the first place, he's not a theoretician, so he asks that as a designer. He is a practitioner, so he tries to understand – in the 1970s, in the heyday of postmodernism – how type and typological thinking could help architecture. Therefore, he gives a very compact, but also very beautiful overview of the history of type. Type can most simply be defined as "a concept which describes a group of objects characterized by the same formal structure"⁶. And another quote that I especially like suggests "it might even be said that type means the act of thinking in groups"⁷. So, yes, we are individuals, and yes, we are designing our individual projects, but somehow, they belong to a bigger family. Moneo concludes: "Architecture, however – the world of objects created by architecture – is not only described by types, but also produced through them"⁸. In other words, types are design principles used to organise a limited amount of material, space, or money in the most intelligent and efficient way, and are therefore always related to the reality of making.

However, in the very last paragraph, Moneo asks: "Does it still make sense to speak of types today?" That was in 1978 and we examined that question roughly 30 years later, when Christoph and I were appointed as assistant professors at ETH in Zurich, and we said: "Yes, absolutely!"

4 Cheyenne village, Western Plains, U.S.A. 5, 6, 7, 8 Houses in Cebreiro, Lugo, Spain.



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We believe that it is still relevant and productive to speak about types today. What buildings have in common is the problem of urban architecture. How do we arrange buildings in relation to others? How do different buildings react to the same conditions? That's why a contemporary understanding of type and typological design became a central element in both our practical and our academic work. And out of this, we developed a research project, but also an editing and publishing one. Its outcome is a collection of ordinary architecture of the modern metropolis.

The first book is about Hong Kong, Rome, New York and Buenos Aires⁹. It is a catalogue of selected buildings, which are ordinary structures found in the city. Not the exception, but the big mass. The second book is about Paris, Delhi, São Paulo, and Athens¹⁰. And in this second book, we were able to publish the first German version of Moneo's text "On Typology".

We conceive these typology catalogues in a very systematic manner. We consider the two books as design tools, and many students use them. For example, they show some key moments in Paris, in the beginning of the 20th century, when we can still see the urban block, Hausmann's interventions, and the dense 19th century city, but also some first attempts to introduce more light and air. So hygienism is transforming the types. Typology is almost always about evolution. New creations are very rare, so you can literally see how the traditional types start to transform in different projects. For example, we found out that modern Athens is basically one single type. It's the domino system with a column-plate structure, but in many different versions: Sometimes it's a garage, sometimes an office, sometimes a house...

This research has strongly defined and influenced our teaching. We do not only conduct research just for the sake of documentation but we try to use it for design too. We want to discover principles of spatial organisation in order to experiment with these types and models and

to test them in different contexts. Adapting, transforming and transferring the type is an interesting issue: Typology Transfer¹¹. Creating new out of old types. And here we'll come back one last time to Moneo. He stated that working with types is not a frozen mechanism, but rather a very lively concept. And that brings me to the fifth fragment, the one of "Collective Authorship".

T TYPOLOGY

PARIS DELHI SÃO PAULO ATHENS

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PARIS

TYPE 1 IMMEUBLE ÎLOT



TYPE 2 ÎLOT OUVERT



TYPE 3 GROUPE- MENT



TYPE 4 REDENTS



TYPE 5 INSERTION



TYPE 6 COUR SUR RUE



DELHI

TYPE 1 UNIT



TYPE 2 CLUSTER



TYPE 3 TERRACE



TYPE 4 NEIGHBOUR HOOD



V. COLLECTIVE AUTHORSHIP

Architecture is a design discipline based on shared principles and common understanding. Therefore, it's possible to share the design and to collaborate, which we often do in practice. We successfully do that in different constellations, and you gain a very fruitful understanding of architecture when you try to define a common ground.

As I said earlier, designing with types is more about evolution than mere invention. It's about a shared knowledge, which is particularly interesting when we discuss authorship. Even if it requires individual effort and personal contribution, you never design a building by yourself. I think authorship is responsibility expressed in architectural form. However, I must stress that authorship must never be confused with ownership.

There is architecture that is owned by its author through one spectacular gesture. Such a building stays for centuries, representing that sparkling moment in Zaha Hadid's or Frank Gehry's life. Fantastic architects, but the buildings are owned, in a way, by their authors. And I'm not saying this is good or bad. My position, our position, is different. We believe that authorship is there to be shared and I would even go a bit further: "If value, then copy" as the Danish artists collective Superflex once said.

During one of our typological research trips in Athens, we walked through the already closed fish and meat market where we saw these small architectures: the blocks where you would chop the meat. Years later, we were invited by a Belgian gallery called MANIERA, to design of a piece of furniture. MANIERA is a gallery that collaborates with industrial or product designers as well as artists and architects to create functional furniture that can make a statement. We wanted to express this theoretical concept of type and collective authorship through a piece that we would produce. We searched for an idea on how to distil the type, perhaps by creating a new one. And through idealisation, we 16 went back to this image of the butcher block.

16 We thought, it's like a Greek temple; you can almost see the frieze! So, we started some preliminary sketches to understand how this object is technically created. With the bolts we saw, we began to imagine this connection via different wooden sticks. We created a small family of three different types: a stool, a high table and a low one. It is about how to assemble this wood without using glue or screws, just by putting these timber blocks together, drilling a hole, and then placing one layer of sticks or rods in one direction and another layer on top to create a sort of fragile tectonic stability within that small object. Is it architecture? Is it a model? Is it a piece of furniture? I don't know. It is collective ownership.

We were trying to understand what the object was. If it was a building, maybe we should add a façade with some render. We thought about the work of Cy Twombly and how he put white gesso on everything. So we started to cover, protect and partly hide the tectonic of the object. Out of this *objet trouvé*, we created a typological series.

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18 19 Vaugirard Housing in Paris is another project that we recently completed. It's also an *objet trouvé*. Originally an industrial infrastructure site for metro car maintenance and garages in the city's 15th arrondissement, it has been there for nearly a century and is now set for repair and rebuilding. It's particularly specific as it sits within the inner city. The site is owned by the RATP, and they initiated the idea of a project to densify it.

The new residential building is particularly interesting from a social standpoint. I spoke a lot about forms and how we ultimately consider them. As we discussed, every form has its function, whether direct or metaphorical or symbolic. So every form is, in that sense, both social and political. However, in this case, the intention is clearly stated: to create roughly 100 socially funded apartments, primarily for people who work for the metro system. This is also about proximity. Since people cannot commute two hours in order to fix a metro car or a train, they can be accommodated in this new building.

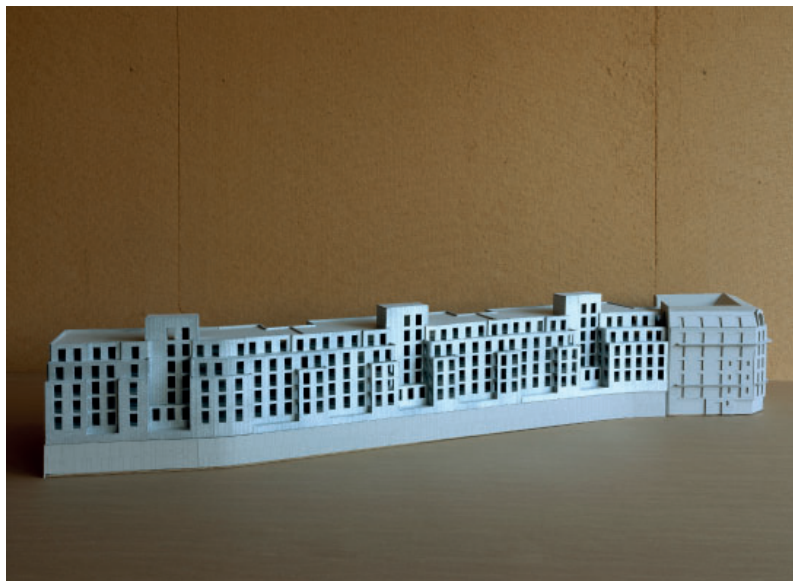


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16 17 Christ & Gantenbein, Athens Series, 2017



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Christ & Gantenbein, Vaugirard Housing, Paris, 2023 18 19

The context is a master plan designed by another architect, Dominique Lyon. We won the competition for the housing portion on top of the workshops, which is also an interesting layout that is in sync with the contemporary city. In the typical floor plan, there are three entrances. Three staircases that also have to do with the ground floor, since it's used for another function. So there's an economy of means at all levels. The distribution system has to be efficient because the space available is minimal, and the financial means are very reduced... which is, of course, exactly the challenge in such a project.

We tried to establish a type or a rule, and then to create exceptions. We see that the building has to attach on the left side to the existing building, so the plan bends slightly. There's a little curve at the end, and in the typological system, this creates the exceptional spaces. There are seven or eight apartments in total for each staircase. They receive daylight, which provides a point of reference in the centre when you arrive on each floor. Also, every apartment either has double-aspect or a corner with terraces, and the terraces are used as loggias.

Speaking of collective authorship, the typological understanding that we gained from our research in Paris was directly applied here, resulting in a very dense and rich variation of spaces, seen in the classical enfilade and the varied layers of space. Every kitchen has a double-glazed door which establishes a more generous relationship with the adjacent room, and allows for diagonal views. Also, there is a loggia, which functions as a kind of additional room. Therefore, even in a very small apartment, there is a certain complexity which is not just about making the space more interesting. It's also about offering additional modes of utility. There is only one type of window: the Parisian window, which we repeated . 20
I don't know how many hundreds of times. The façade is a light construction since we are on top of another system. It's clad with metal to be light and efficient. It's a bit like a train itself or the Parisian roofs. Maybe just a sheet of steel with a transparent veneer isn't enough to convey that the plan does not just meander in order to create these corners and bring in light; it's also about stepping back to the top and giving it explicit plasticity as an object. 21



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Christ & Gantenbein, Vaugirard Housing, Paris, 2023 20 21

VI. MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS

I previously mentioned responsibility when we do a project because if it gets built, then it's supposed to last. And speaking of sustainability and responsibility, time plays a major role in using the resources that we have – the very limited ones – whether we reuse or not.

At the Biennale in Venice in 2016, we used light 22
to project the phrase *More than a hundred years* onto 400-year-old bricks. That's the name of the book that we presented there and created together with the Italian artist and photographer Stefano Graziani. It's on the Kunstmuseum Basel, the project that we realized in our hometown. But to better explain, it's a small book about the problem of architectural form. It's about behaviour over time. We claimed that we want to make buildings that last *more than a hundred years* in physical, material, and also immaterial terms, so that they can in turn propose a form adaptable to a future use.

I don't know whether we will manage to do that; only the future generations will tell. But I think this is our ambition, and that's what we should achieve in every project. So this small publication is a manifesto for what we call the sustainability of form: a form that is generally understandable, open to the future, physically solid, but also anchored in its context.

The main building of the Kunstmuseum Basel is a 23
1930s palazzo, which houses a fantastic art collection, mainly of paintings. And there is a new building, a strange polygonal object. Speaking of typology and rational strategies, extending the museum across the street or across a plaza is a challenge. How do these buildings relate to each other? There may be a physical connection, but there is also an architectural, formal, and urban connection where the two buildings relate not only functionally but also culturally. I should point out that the new building's program included only galleries. Therefore,



Christ & Gantenbein, More Than a Hundred Years, 2016 22



Christ & Gantenbein, Kunstmuseum Basel, 2016 23

it is almost like a storage building. The new building has its own entrance but it matches the height of the main building. It's reminiscent of two brothers, they are somehow related and they engage in conversation at eye level. That's what we aimed to achieve. We worked on this analogy by considering commonalities between the two buildings. But, of course the new building is also a very independent, self-confident, contemporary building.

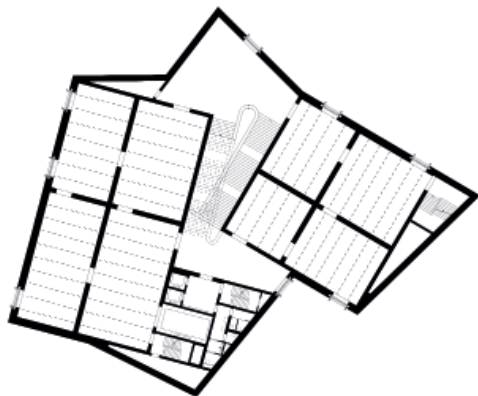
The building features a brick façade with layers of grey bricks. One specific element is an integrated frieze where texts or patterns can be displayed. The information itself is actually a shadow, with LED lights beside it to compensate. So there is a form of almost digital intelligence in this fundamentally archaic brickwork. The frieze can be static or dynamic. It was quite an invention. The digital age has left its imprint on that very simple brick wall, employing it like an open book, celebrating the materiality of its timeless expression. We could debate whether this is *Pictures from Italy*¹² making a comeback through the back door. In the end, architecture is always tangible. I speak about ideals and idealisation, but it's very much real. And luckily, architecture is never perfectly ideal either, and therein lies its beauty.

Looking at the new building from the rear, we can also see that it relates to a series of other buildings. A museum is not an icon, but a part of the urban community. It's a civic building, and in this case, perhaps a cornerstone of the urban fabric.

The new form is directly shaped by the conditions of the site. The plan, the typological figure, comprises two buildings within one. One compartment is parallel to one street, and the other compartment is parallel to the opposite street. At the intersection of these geometries, there is a big staircase. It serves as the primary public space within the building. It is an attempt at a contemporary interpretation of a classic museum. Additionally, there are some *pochés*, or add-on spaces, as a third order. What I'm trying to convey here is that



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26 Christ & Gantenbein, Kunstmuseum Basel, 2016



Christ & Gantenbein, Swiss National Museum, Zurich, 2016 27



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designing involves finding a guiding principle. Once again, it may involve referencing precedents and looking at other types to establish a clear hierarchical order within the plan.

More than a hundred years is also true for the Swiss National Museum in Zurich. The extension is essentially the contextual counter piece to a 19th century structure, which is the existing museum. The new building, which is almost like a sculpture, attempts to redefine the entire urban environment. In this case the museum acts as a small city. 27 28 29

Every museum project carries a symbolic value. Here, the present is looking at the past and they engage with each other. The relationship is not just symbolic but also spatial. The open figure of the old structure is completed by the enclosed form, which consists of all the new galleries. The new building provides complementary functions and creates an opening – a bridge under which one can enter the courtyard. The interior is reminiscent of a workshop or an industrial hall. It's designed to be very open and flexible, suitable for many functions, yet it can still accommodate classical exhibitions. And ultimately, this project is also a social space. There's a plaza, with the museum as a background – an infrastructure for social urban life which is an important task for every public building which shall fulfil the goal to stand *more than a hundred years*. 30

The next project is located in a medieval town in Switzerland. It's situated at a key junction of an important river crossed by a bridge for centuries. However, the previous one didn't even last a century. Only roughly 70 years after the last bridge, which was built in the 1940s, we won a competition to rebuild this important structure, utilising the existing foundations. Thus, there is a moment of reuse which influences the definition of the span and rhythm of the bays, but there is also imagery which evokes an old, enduring bridge that informs the design. It's a depiction of a bridge that is solid and even massive. Yet it is a highly engineered contemporary bridge. Built in concrete but highly optimised in the sense that the concrete is 31 32

largely hollow. It represents a crossover of the arch bridge combined with the beam principle, emphasising minimal use of materials.

- 33 The bridge may represent architectural history, but it is also public space. It's not just for the buses and trucks crossing that important road; it's also for the people using the two river banks. The project was more than just a bridge. We extended the lateral retaining walls and integrated them into a broader urban intervention.

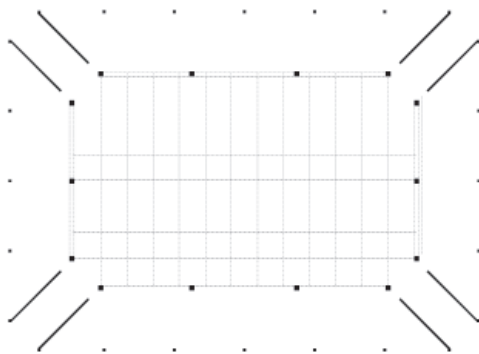




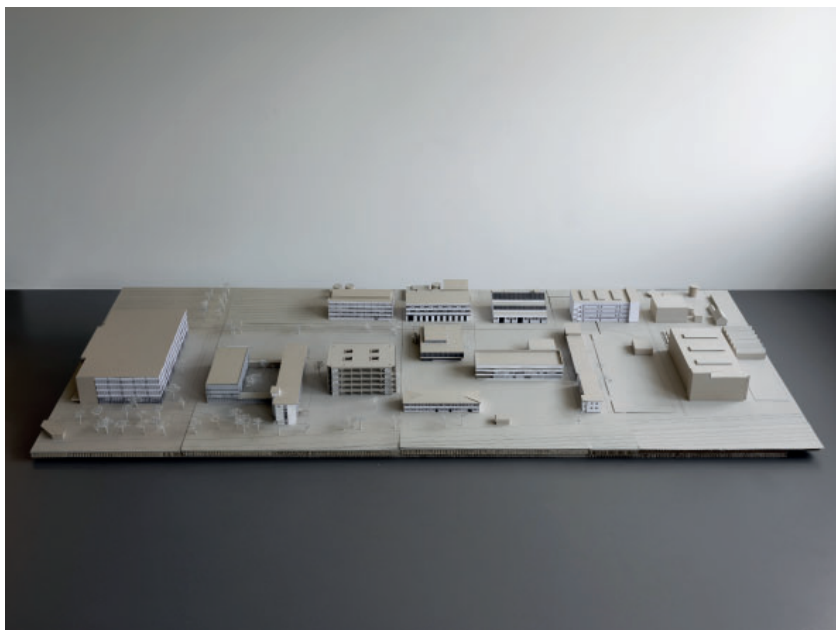
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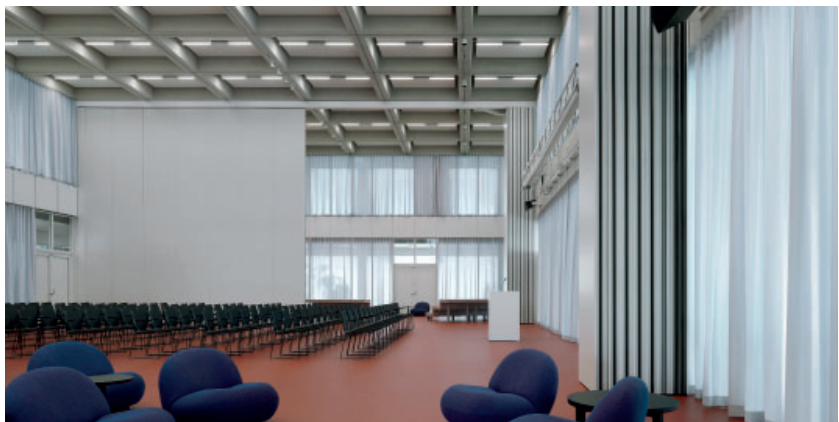


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34 35 36 37 Christ & Gantenbein, Flexible Office Building, Grenzach-Wyhlen, 2021



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VII. THE IDEAL CITY

The Ideal City should synthesize all the precedent claims. The ideal city is a real city that is based on ideas. It is responsible and self-assured – a confident part of history. Yet it remains simultaneously modest and megalomaniac. The ideal city reuses what is there. It is big and monumental, systematic and economical. It is based on the premise of collective ownership and design. It is long-lasting and integrated within its context.

The Roche multi-functional workspace building sits within a campus as a manifestation of an ideal city. It's a simple box that we built for a pharmaceutical company, completing two buildings that were already realised a decade ago. Speaking of adaptability for the future, not every project is ideal. However, in this case, we could address one of the issues I mentioned earlier when I showed you an office building with a central corridor. In the Roche building, the stairs and infrastructure were shifted to the corners, creating an open plan. The only oblique and spatially dramatic moment occurs when the stairs intersect with the central area. We've created a highly versatile and inspiring environment for congregations, conferences and workshops across all floors. There is a double-height floor at the centre, which has a particular feature that allows for subdivisions, etc. And the only hint you get from the surface that the building may be unconventional is the visible cross-bracing, which provides structural stability because of the central void.

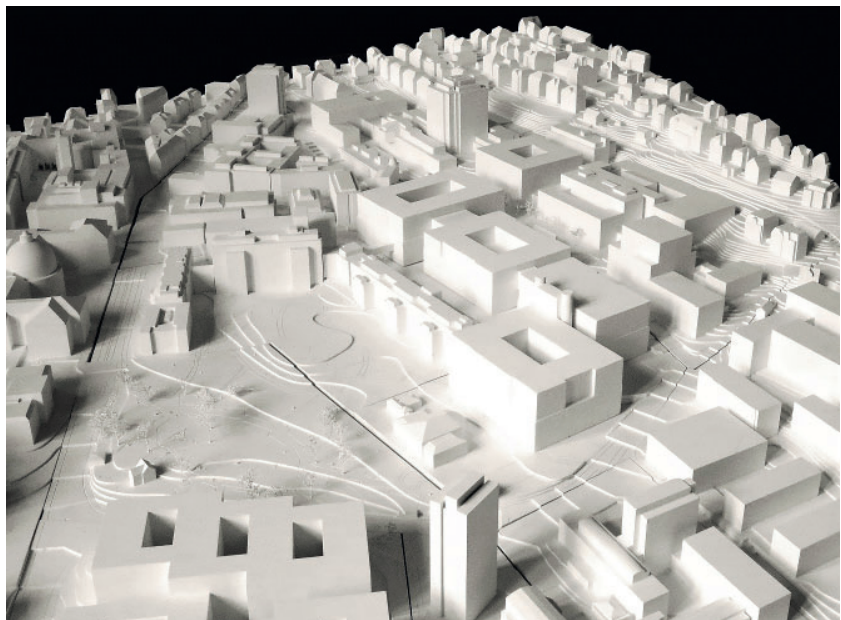
To add to my argument, we'll look at another ideal city: the extension to an old chocolate factory that is still in production along the shores of Lake Zurich. Founded on the outskirts of the city in the mid-19th century, this factory is now in the city centre, surrounded by residential buildings. The air there carries a hint of chocolate, mingled with traffic and heavy infrastructure. The company aimed to establish a public space; a sort of research centre, combined with a



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40 41 Christ & Gantenbein, Zurich University Hospital USZ, Zurich, 2019-2028

large chocolate shop and museum – all while maintaining its function as a factory. It is the transformation of an industrial site into a mixed-use urban neighbourhood.

We liked the idea of adding another box – an industrial hall clad in bricks that opens to the public with a screen and a grand entrance gate. It's a box and a bite. In the centre, there's something akin to a large machine. It's a space machine – an atrium supported by 14 structural elements. Every architect, at least once, aims to integrate structure and mechanics, as Louis Kahn would have done. So we integrated pipes and elevators into the structure of these 14 columns. I like to refer to it as irrational rationality.

I spoke about the "Big House". The Lindt Home of Chocolate is indeed a "Big House"; perhaps even a monumental piece of architecture that tries to provide a certain autonomy to the structure, allowing the building to evolve over time while its skeleton remains. There are also offices and a conference centre located on the open floors because only the columns and the façade are load-bearing.

That was the last finished project. But I still have a few sketches to show. The university district of Zurich is a large campus comprising the University Hospital, the University of Zurich, and ETH Zurich. We won a competition to propose a new master plan to add five new buildings, and now we are constructing a completely new part of the hospital next to the existing one.

While preserving parts of the old structure, we are also adding new elements. We aim for typological rigour, clear form, and long-lasting, hopefully flexible structures. It is quite a big project, consisting of one building divided into two. One is for the patients with all the rooms, and the other has labs and operating halls. The two are, of course, related and articulated. The new hospital is an urban project, which is what makes it specific.

Situated in the city centre, it embodies the concept of the ideal city. While it is never truly ideal, we strive to work with what we have, creating order and a solid framework for the future. The façade of the building

aims to express the layering of all the different technical and logistical infrastructures that are needed. It is a grid providing shade, solar panelling and access for maintenance. The project is an attempt to create urban architecture that is strongly based on contemporary technology. It is not only about our building, but the development as a whole.

Our most recent urban development is called Swissprinters. The site is next to a railway station in a small town in Switzerland. It became available for development after the closure of a large printing facility that was formerly situated there. Once again, with this project, we aim to apply principles of sustainable construction. We're reusing existing buildings, reusing materials found on-site, and using locally sourced building materials like timber. There are four buildings: an L-shaped, an O-shaped and two towers, which are mainly residential. You can discern the typological rigour in the project. I was speaking about order and variation within the system. We are looking at existing buildings which we leave almost unchanged, just reprogrammed alongside some new buildings to allow for a dialogue between the old and the new. 42

That was my definition of the *Ideal City*. We all know of *La Città Ideale*, immortalized in these very famous 15th-century Italian paintings, such as the one by Fra Carnevale¹³. Those were different times, yet perhaps they resonate with our aspirations for the ideal city today. 43 44

Thank you very much.



Christ & Gantenbein, Swissprinters, Zofingen, ongoing 42



43 Christ & Gantenbein, Swissprinters, Zofingen, ongoing



44 Fra Carnevale, *The Ideal City*, ca. 1480-1484



NOTES

1. Emanuel Christ, Christoph Gantenbein, Review No. I, *Pictures from Italy*. Zurich: Park Books, 2011.

2. Anthony Vidler, *Histories of the Immediate Present. Inventing Architectural Modernism*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008. [Spanish Edition: Anthony Vidler, *Historias del presente inmediato. La invención del movimiento moderno arquitectónico*, trans. Moisés Puente (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2011)].

3. For three non-consecutive semesters in 2004, 2006 and 2009, Emanuel Christ and Christoph Gantenbein taught at the Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio. In 2010, they joined ETH Zurich as assistant professors and initiated their research on Typology.

4. Around that time, Hans Poelzig wrote his influential essay "The Modern Factory", exploring the principles of functionalism within industrial architecture and its harmonisation with artistic expression. See: Hans Poelzig, *Reflections on His Life and Work*. New York: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.

5. Rafael Moneo, "On Typology", in *Oppositions* No. 13, 1978, 23-45.

6. Moneo, "On Typology", 23.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Emanuel Christ, Victoria Easton, Christoph Gantenbein, *Typology. Hong Kong, Rome, New York, Buenos Aires*. Review No. II, Zurich: Park Books, 2012.

10. Emanuel Christ, Victoria Easton, Christoph Gantenbein, Cloé Gattigo, *Typology. Paris, Delhi, São Paulo, Athens*. Review No. III, Zurich: Park Books, 2015.

11. The inaugural lecture "Typology Transfer— Towards an Urban Architecture" by Emanuel Christ and Christoph Gantenbein at ETH Zurich to mark their appointment as assistant professors has been transcribed and published within the first *Typology* book.

12. Emanuel Christ, Christoph Gantenbein, *Pictures from Italy*. Review No. I, Zurich: Park Books, 2011.

13. Fra Carnevale's painting 'The Ideal City' exemplifies Renaissance principles of perspective and architectural perfection, reflecting contemporary ideals of urban planning and aesthetics. Ca. 1480s, oil on canvas, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland, USA.

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EMANUEL CHRIST
CHRIST & GANTENBEIN

THE IDEAL CITY



Dimecres, 22 de setembre
Sala d'actes 13.00h



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Rafael Moneo, “On Typology”, in *Oppositions* No. 13, 1978, 23-45.

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Són moltes les veus que han passat per l'Escola i han deixat una forta empremta en el pensament de generacions d'alumnes i professors. Aquest coneixement, sovint transmès i dissipat en forma oral, ha contribuït a la construcció de la memòria històrica i col·lectiva de l'ETSAB. La col·lecció *Lliçons* busca deixar el testimoni escrit i perdurable, tant del passat més recent com llunyà, d'algunes d'aquestes manifestacions.

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